

STAGES

Sustainable Theatre

—
A Casebook



**STAGES
SUSTAINABLE THEATRE**

A Casebook



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Young actors Naomi Temitope Okoli, Eva Markulin, and others in
A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction at the Croatian National
Theatre in Zagreb (Croatia) © Mara Bratoš

FOREWORD

Building a Sustainable Future for European Theatre

BY

HEIDI WILEY

Executive Director, European Theatre Convention
(Germany)

At a time when the urgency of the climate crisis remains undeniable, yet political will behind the European Green Deal appears to weaken, the performing arts remind us of what lasting commitment and collective imagination can achieve. The *STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift* stands as a remarkable example of European cooperation – a large-scale alliance of 14 theatres, networks, and research institutions across Europe and beyond, united by a shared belief that theatre can and must take an active role in the ecological transition.

Through STAGES, we have demonstrated that sustainability in the performing arts is an environmental necessity, but also creative opportunity. Together, partners have reimaged production models, pioneered low-carbon touring, tested new organisational tools, and connected artistic practice with scientific research. This alliance has mobilised our sector, created tangible knowledge, and built a foundation for change.

For the European Theatre Convention, STAGES is a cornerstone of our wider **ETC Sustainable Theatre Programme**, which guides theatres toward climate neutrality and embeds sustainability as a defining value of contemporary European theatre. With a network spanning over 30 countries, ETC has the power and reach to act collectively – and to share the pioneering methods and insights of STAGES with partners worldwide. Together with our other leading initiative, the **ETC Theatre Green Book**, this project offers a practical and visionary framework for transformation, proving that sustainability and artistic excellence can go hand in hand.

STAGES Sustainable Theatre – A Casebook joins ETC's publication series on emerging theatre trends and practices

that reflect the needs of our time. It documents the creativity, resilience, and responsibility of theatres that have turned experimentation into systemic change – demonstrating that the path to sustainability is built through collaboration, not isolation.

The progress made through STAGES is both an achievement and a beginning. The knowledge, tools, and relationships forged through this alliance are now in our hands. We invite and encourage theatres, artists, and citizens to continue this journey, be inspired by our learnings to adapt theatre in a sustainable way. Theatre may not change the world alone, but it can shape how we understand and respond to it – as an art form that imagines alternatives, and as public spaces where communities come together to face shared challenges and explore new ways forward. Managing our theatres sustainably is essential to our future – ensuring that the spaces where we gather reflect the values we stand for.

I warmly thank **Serge Rangoni**, General Manager and Artistic Director of Théâtre de Liège and his team, for leading this bold and inspiring project, and express deep gratitude to the **European Commission** and the **Creative Europe programme** for their steadfast support.

As political priorities shift, our collective responsibility must not. STAGES proves what theatres can accomplish together globally; now it is up to all of us to carry that momentum forward.



A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction
at NTGent (Belgium) © Michiel Devijver

FOREWORD

A Shared Journey Towards Sustainable Theatre

BY

SERGE RANGONI

General Manager and Artistic Director, Théâtre de Liège
Lead Partner of STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for
a Green Environmental Shift

When the COVID-19 lockdowns brought theatres across Europe to a sudden halt in early 2020, our stages went dark – but in that pause, a new possibility emerged. For the first time in many years, we had the space to ask ourselves: What can we change in our way of working to make our work more sustainable? Those conversations, shared with colleagues across Europe, quickly revealed a common will: the environmental crisis demanded immediate artistic, organisational, and social reflection.

The answer, as *STAGES Sustainable Theatre – A Casebook* shows, lies in creative thinking and collaborative learning processes across borders, connecting art, research, and education. The 14 STAGES partners have each contributed a valuable piece of a larger mosaic of environmentally and socially responsible theatre.

The production part of STAGES is based on a project by Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, which has spent several years working on an initiative called *Sustainable Theatre?*. It was here that the long-distance collaboration with artists Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel began, attempting to answer three fundamental questions:

- How can we deal with the multiple issues of sustainability on stage?
- How can these issues be taken into account throughout the entire process of creating and touring with a show?
- How can theatrical institutions come together and question their practices and working models?

The STAGES partner organisations built on this innovation – and at the Théâtre de Liège, we are proud to have led

this alliance, and to have seen how the project's spirit of cooperation has grown beyond its initial framework.

Across the project, partners have developed innovative approaches to sustainable performances, reimagining touring entirely. Urgent new productions addressing the climate crisis have been recreated in multiple locations across Europe and as far afield as Taiwan, without moving any people or materials. Each staging draws entirely on local resources, from directors and actors to sets and even locally generated electricity, demonstrating that artistic quality and sustainability can go hand in hand.

Beyond the productions themselves, STAGES has fostered organisational transformation. A new auto-analysis process, developed in collaboration with Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the Competence Centre in Sustainability at UNIL, helped partners identify key areas for sustainable change within their theatres. Drawing on the holistic principles of Doughnut Economics, this process considers everything, from buildings and waste to audience travel and organisational practices such as work-life balance, encouraging theatres to embed sustainability into all aspects of their operations.

Finally, STAGES looks toward the future. An annual series of participatory forums and workshops brings together artists, scientists, and audiences to imagine and co-create 'desirable futures'. These events provide a platform for dialogue, experimentation, and collective reflection, showing how theatre can extend its influence beyond the stage to foster a broader cultural engagement with sustainability.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the partners, artists, scientists, theatre staff, and more, who have nourished and supported this project.

May this publication inspire others to join the conversation and to take action in their own contexts. Theatre has always been a space of imagination – and it is through imagination that we can build the futures we need.

INTRODUCTION

Why Theatre Needs an Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift

BY

HEIDI WILEY

Executive Director

& ÖZGÜL DEMIRALP

Digital Communication Officer,
European Theatre Convention (ETC)

It is crucial to understand that in our globalised and inter-connected world, the theatre sector is part of a complex, interdisciplinary ecosystem. When addressing the challenges of today's reality, our success depends on enabling knowledge transfer through cooperative and collaborative ways of working. No one needs to reinvent the wheel when an approach has already been tested and proven – especially given the accelerating pace at which the climate crisis affects our lives and our planet.

“Sharing is caring” has been a guiding principle of the European Theatre Convention's (ETC) visionary Sustainable Theatre Action Code¹. Its purpose is to enable as many theatre organisations and professionals as possible to adapt to more sustainable ways of making theatre and to move towards climate neutrality. Networks like ETC and projects such as STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift (2022-2025) form vital alliances that act as hubs for experimentation, accelerating the exchange of ideas and knowledge that inspire others to take concrete action.

Creative Europe's support was decisive in allowing STAGES to scale up what no single theatre could achieve alone: a systemic ecological transition of the performing arts. The funding provided time and resources for experimentation, enabling partners to test and adopt new methods of creation and touring that now inform the sector's short-, mid-, and long-term strategies. Ultimately, STAGES created a Europe-wide network of expertise, linking leading

¹ <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/page/advocacy/sustainability/etc-sustainable-action-code-for-theatres>

scientists, artists, and institutions. Cross-border collaboration gave credibility and visibility to restagings, sustainable productions, and research outputs. Indeed, by pooling expertise and resources, the alliance allows partners to experiment on multiple levels: artistic (rethinking touring and creation models), organisational (introducing sustainability protocols), and civic (connecting with communities, various organisations, and policymakers), amplifying their impact beyond local contexts and benefitting the wider European theatre sector. It also supported in-depth self-analyses that led to the development of the STAGES Doughnut Protocol and the drafting of a sustainable action plan for each participating theatre – complementary to and a first step towards using the ETC Theatre Green Book self-certification.

Cooperation among diverse European organisations was essential. Involving multiple countries and institutions made it possible to design the self-assessment protocol adaptable to different contexts, and to develop solutions relevant for theatres of various sizes and types. It also enabled partners to compare how national and institutional frameworks influenced their results. Together, partners built a collective laboratory to explore new ways of producing and organising workplaces, sharing both best practices and challenges. The project further highlighted the importance of building networks with scientists to make these innovative creative processes more effective.

Sustainability in the arts is a systemic issue that crosses borders, disciplines, and hierarchies. It touches not only environmental practices but also governance models, working conditions, accessibility, and cultural policies. Structural

change can therefore only result from an impulse driven by collective effort – by coming together, partners share research, engage in joint experimentation, and accelerate transnational learning. This is why theatre needs an alliance.

The articles and essays presented in this *Casebook* gather the knowledge, practices, and reflections generated throughout this process. Together, they show how collaboration can catalyse a green transformation that is embedded within an ecosystem – one that drives structural and systemic change, involves diverse actors in an active and participatory way, and preserves the creative, social, and cultural vitality that lies at the heart of theatre.

By now, we know what works. This publication stands as evidence of tested practices and shares this knowledge with the broader community. At the same time, it is a call to sustain European-level funding – through programmes such as the European Union’s **Creative Europe** – to ensure that alliances like STAGES and the ETC network can continue to exist and thrive. European networks that span the continent form a unique ecosystem on a global scale, one that must be nurtured to ensure theatre’s sustainable future.



I Sustainable Productions



Une pièce pour les vivant·e·x en temps d'extinction
(A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction)
at Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (Switzerland) © Claudia Ndebele

SECTION 1

UTOPIA: Imagining the Future of Sustainable Productions

A Heart in the Desert

BY

GUILHERME GOMES

Co-coordinator, CRETA - theatre lab
Teatro Nacional D. Maria II (Portugal)

I often say that a poet writes, unlike an essayist, for example, writes not to say what he knows but to know what he knows.

– Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

Opening night at the Teatro de Bairro Alto (TBA), one of the most important venues in the centre of Lisbon. Between the audience and the end of the stage, a large empty space as a performance area. At the end of this stage, there is a machine. A two-meter-high manual generator that will power the show, activated by four people at the same time. It's a monumental machine. When it's activated, we turn off the lights in the TBA, this well-equipped theatre venue in the centre of Lisbon: we are off the grid.

And I'm thinking of the Harlequin and Pierrot that André Derain painted making music in the desert. Without an audience, these two figures carry with them a sensibility without deception. They are like an entourage transporting a treasure - and their treasure is the heart of a song. They carry this heart across the desert, repeating the song probably so that they don't forget what it sounds like. They guard it with repetition.

I remember reading a book by Oscar Niemeyer, the historic Brazilian architect, in which he writes that at the beginning of each project, he does the exercise of imagining Rio de Janeiro without buildings. The hills and mountains inhabited only by vegetation, as they would have been before human action got there. A kind of human desert. Then he would begin his work as an architect.

Tonight, at TBA, when we activate the machine, we repeat Niemeyer's gesture: we destroy the walls of this theatre. We treat it as if it didn't exist in order to start

inventing a new one. We ignore its technical equipment, its ability to deceive. We treat the theatre's chairs like a hill, and the stage like an open field, in order to focus on its heart: the relationship between an actress and the audience. Then we are like Derain's Harlequin and Pierrot: we repeat the heart that we carry through the desert. A show that was not invented by us, but which we have been entrusted to bring to life here too.

In *A Play for the Living in Time of Extinction* there are two ways of reflecting on sustainability issues: on the one hand, the idea of not touring with a show but with its heart – something that we can associate with oral tradition and certain festivals that have been repeated every year for generations –, and the other hand has to do with this invitation that both Niemeyer and theatre director Katie Mitchell, with this staging, give us: to imagine that the theatre, as a technical building, doesn't exist.

At a time when these places offer us the chance to do almost anything, choosing not to do so is an act of resistance. To focus on the essential: to ask what is at the heart of the show.

Imagining a sustainable future for the performing arts, I inevitably return to an ancient image. The intuition of the raw material. The basis of the work. The heart. Here, by giving up what is superfluous or artificial, we can find the transparency, the invention, the originality of a work of art. It's a scale that brings us closer to nature. Maybe the most sustainable way of creating is to focus on the essence of what we have to transmit. This subtle and unique song that we repeat in the desert, even without an audience, so we don't lose it.

Opening night at the TBA. Like Oscar Niemeyer, I'm thinking of a theatre without a building, just like that Harlequin and Pierrot we bring a heart to deliver. No tricks, no cheating. As if we were in the desert.



SECTION 1

Rethinking Touring: Lessons from a No-Travel Theatre Experiment

BY

TRISTAN PANNATIER

Producer, Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (Switzerland)

& EMMANUELLE LEJEUNE

Sustainable Advisor and STAGES Coordinator,
Théâtre de Liège (Belgium)

In 2019, theatre director Katie Mitchell, choreographer Jérôme Bel and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne embarked on a bold experiment together: they set out to create an international theatre project that would not only address ecological concerns but also embody them in its very mode of production. This meant radically rethinking one of the pillars of contemporary performing arts, namely touring. Mitchell provided the starting idea: a touring theatre production where no people or materials move between venues.

Mitchell and Bel's involvement stemmed from deep personal commitments. Katie Mitchell had begun integrating environmental themes into her artistic work as early as 2012, notably with *Ten Billion*, a collaboration with scientist Stephen Emmott. The project profoundly reshaped her understanding of the climate crisis and led her to renounce air travel. Jérôme Bel reached a similar turning point in 2019, when he decided that neither he nor his company would travel by plane. Instead, he started to develop new working practices, such as collaborating with foreign choreographers or rehearsing by video. Mitchell reached out to Bel to open the door on a collaboration, after being interviewed by the New York Times about Bel's decision to stop flying.

Together with Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, they launched *Sustainable Theatre?*, an initiative to test an alternative touring model on a European scale. In this model, rather than transporting performers, sets, and directors, a production would be passed on as a script – allowing local teams to recreate the show themselves. Only the script would travel – no people or materials.

Two new works were created to pilot this approach: Katie Mitchell staged *A Play for the Living in a Time of*

Extinction, while Jérôme Bel developed *Jérôme Bel*. Both shows were first created in Lausanne during the 2021–2022 season. Crucially, they were conceived not as fixed performances, but as scripts and staging solutions that could be adapted by local teams in each touring venue. Between 2022 and 2024, the STAGES partners committed to presenting one or both of these works without importing their creators or teams. Each venue agreed to restage the piece with local artists and resources, following a shared framework while allowing for context-specific adaptation.

This article reflects on the artistic and environmental lessons learned through this process. What does it mean to tour a piece without anyone and anything moving? How does such a model shift authorship, aesthetics, and institutional culture? And can these experiments help shape a more sustainable future for the performing arts? To explore these questions, feedback was gathered from Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel and the artistic and production teams of some of the participating theatres through a series of structured video conversations or in written form. These exchanges, rich in reflection, form the foundation of the observations presented here.

(Re)staging ***A Play for the Living in a*** ***Time of Extinction***

Katie Mitchell already had experience with remote work prior to this project. In July 2021, she directed rehearsals over Zoom for *(Not) the End of the World*, a two-bike-powered

environmental production by Chris Bush at the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin.

Katie Mitchell chose to work with *A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction*, an ecofeminist monologue by Miranda Rose Hall that explores individual and collective responsibility in the face of the climate crisis. She came across this play by chance, as it had been shortlisted for the 2021 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a UK-based competition for female playwrights. She was struck by its fresh eco-feminist approach to climate change – where the death of the protagonist’s mother intersects with humanity’s destruction of the planet – and by its ambition to recount how we arrived at the current ecological crisis, from the Big Bang to the present day.

For the local restagings, Mitchell established both technical and artistic parameters to ensure the environmental efficacy of the production. One of the most visible parameters was the requirement to operate entirely off-grid, generating all on-stage electricity without exceeding 150 watts. Casting also came with specific guidelines: the performer playing Naomi, the central monologue role, had to be a female-identifying actor of colour and/or from a locally relevant ethnic minority. A live choir was integrated into the staging, which determined the final parameter: the involvement of a choir to encourage an interaction between the theatre and the larger community. While the text allowed for limited adaptations to reflect local context, further changes required the playwright’s approval. Within these fixed parameters, however, local directors were completely free to shape the production.

Reflections on the Experiment by Katie Mitchell

Katie Mitchell explained that she was entirely comfortable giving the local teams complete freedom, with contact determined solely by their needs rather than her own. She never initiated communication herself: sometimes directors wanted to talk before rehearsals began, while in other cases she provided feedback on a run-through or took part in a discussion after the premiere. Delegation is a regular feature of her working practice, and this project allowed her to develop it further — placing her trust in the artistic imagination of the local directors, working within the intellectual scaffolding established by the producing theatres that had selected them. She was happy to take responsibility for the idea behind the project without being practically involved in delivering the final product.

The experience also deepened her understanding of the complexities of the producing process, offering new insights into the pressures and challenges that theatre producers may face as systems evolve. “My view of the possibilities for a shared creative process between producers and artists has changed completely for the better,” she highlighted.

Reflections on the Experiment by the Local Artistic and Production Teams

Casting and Performance Across the partner theatres, casting proved to be both a creative opportunity and a

significant challenge. The National Theatre in Taipei cast an actress from the Atayal tribe, one of Taiwan’s Indigenous communities; this choice became a key element of how the show was localised. At NTGent, the casting requirement sparked political questioning from the performer herself. Some teams struggled to find performers from minority backgrounds who also had the stage experience required to carry a complex monologue like *A Play for the Living*, while in some contexts, the demographic situation led theatres to look for a performer from other minorities. In Vilnius, for instance, a queer actor was chosen. The inclusion of a local choir and cyclist-generators in the show created space for non-professional participants to contribute to the staging. This opened a door for people unfamiliar with theatre to discover its backstage realities, and to become part of the “staging community” and the broader reflection on sustainability. In Milan, the presence of an elderly choir brought a moving authenticity to the theme of extinction through the simple presence of ageing bodies. In contrast, Zagreb’s decision to cast children resonated with the climate anxiety and urgency felt by the youngest generation.

Text Adaptations Several theatres chose to adapt the original text to better reflect local contexts, in dialogue with Katie Mitchell and Miranda Rose Hall. In Zagreb, the casting of two teenage girls — one Croatian and one Nigerian — required a broader rewrite of the script. In Taiwan, the team sought to shift away from Western-centric ecological narratives, highlighting indigenous perspectives and local cultural values around coexistence. These adaptations were not only practical responses to demographic

realities — they also deepened the local relevance and resonance of the production.

Direction and Authorship Restaging an existing show placed local directors in an unusual position — creating a performance that did not originate from their own initial desire. They had to engage with some elements that they hadn't chosen and with which they might not feel an immediate connection. And yet, the production was not entirely Katie Mitchell's either: directors were not simply reproducing her work, but reinterpreting it — shaping what many described as a “third object.” The script indeed offered clearly defined moments of freedom, and several directors spoke of the excitement of inhabiting these spaces. Still, this shared authorship posed real challenges. It raised questions about artistic agency: how far could one go in adapting or reimagining the material? It introduced a kind of internal constraint, requiring directors to constantly negotiate between their own vision and the need to keep the structure of the original work. Some found this framework stimulating; others experienced it as limiting.

Aesthetics and Scenography Despite the material and energetic constraints, maintaining a strong aesthetic ambition and creating true theatre — poetic, immersive, and sensorial — was a shared priority across many productions. Several teams found that working with minimal light and energy sharpened perception, revealing how little is needed to create a stage aesthetic: a few projectors by a few bicycles were already enough to power striking lighting and soundscapes. Others highlighted how the scenography

felt complete without building anything new — resources already available in the theatre proved more than sufficient. The experience showed that artistic richness doesn't require a high energy consumption, and that limited means can inspire great creativity.

Audience Engagement was generally strong across the partner theatres, despite the challenges of a post-Covid context. Many spectators — especially younger ones — seemed to be drawn to the show's experimental format and ecological focus. The self-generated energy device sparked curiosity and emotional responses, while participatory elements such as local choirs and pedal-powered systems fostered a sense of community, particularly through the involvement of non-professionals. In Milan, these dynamics contributed to strong word-of-mouth. Several venues further boosted engagement by integrating the production into broader sustainability-themed programmes, often accompanied by expert talks and local partnerships. In Stockholm, the audience was unsure whether they were attending a conference or a piece of fiction, and this ambiguity led to some confusion, while in Lisbon, some viewers were uncertain whether the sustainability focus lay in the energy limits or the alternative touring model. Notably, the production in Zagreb received the Yellow Frame Award for Sustainable Development from National Geographic Croatia, underlining the project's public impact.

Pre-Existing Practices For the local directors who had previous experience making works in the independent scene, sustainability was already part of daily practice long

before this project — less as a political choice than as a pragmatic necessity. Working with limited resources had fostered habits of precision, minimal waste, and informal networks of mutual support. For these partners, the restaging process largely confirmed their existing convictions, while offering new inspiration and institutional visibility.

Institutional Engagement and Internal Culture A key factor in the success of many restagings was the depth of institutional engagement. When departments beyond the artistic team — technical, communication, administration — were actively involved, a genuine culture of shared responsibility emerged. Theatres reported a shift from sustainability as a label to sustainability as an ethic, embedded in day-to-day decisions. This fostered a sense of collective rigour and ongoing dialogue, with teams questioning not only how to meet constraints, but also why certain choices were being made. In several venues, technical teams described the project as a creative playground — an opportunity to break from routine, test new approaches, and tackle unfamiliar challenges. This experimental spirit was especially present in theatres that allocated more preparation time than for a usual production.

Local Networks and Collaborations One of the most significant and unexpected outcomes of the project was the formation of new connections beyond the theatre sector that was prompted by the need to meet the parameters in the script. Collaborations with engineering students, environmental organisations, and alternative energy providers enriched the creative process with new skills and

perspectives. In several cities, individuals with no prior experience in theatre discovered its inner workings, fostering a sense of shared purpose across disciplines. These cross-sectoral exchanges not only enhanced the productions but also led to invitations for further dialogue and collaboration, such as talks at universities or future project development.

Legacy and Shifts Beyond its immediate impact, the project sparked long-term shifts in both mindset and practice. Several theatres implemented concrete changes — such as Piccolo Teatro’s decision to abandon printed programmes in favour of digital formats, a measure that has remained in place ever since. In other contexts, the project catalysed new initiatives: in Milan as well, it led to a collaboration with engineers on sustainable urbanism; in Lisbon, the energy-generating machine developed for the show will be repurposed for a future outdoor venue. For many, the experience prompted a broader rethinking of artistic processes. Directors accustomed to more resource-intensive methods were surprised to discover a new sincerity and creative precision through material restraint. Yet the project’s legacy also revealed its limits. Some teams acknowledged that sustainability did not remain a central concern in later productions — except in terms of interpersonal relationships and rehearsal dynamics. The question remains: how can the sustainability mindset endure once the specific framework is lifted?

Sustainability While conceived as resource-light, the project was not necessarily low-cost. Many partners

emphasised that producing locally — building custom power-generation systems, involving communities, and experimenting with new technologies — required significant investment, in both time and money. Teams noted the paradox: a low-energy-consuming production did not equate to financial savings, nor necessarily to a lower carbon footprint. Several questioned whether recreating the off-grid system in each city was truly more sustainable than touring a single machine. From a CO₂ perspective, centralising that element might have made more sense — and certainly would have saved time. Yet this decentralisation forced theatres to actively engage with their own energy use, challenging habits and awakening new awareness. Having to build their own solutions made energy a shared concern, shifting sustainability from an abstract principle to a tangible practice. At the same time, a deeper, more holistic understanding of sustainability emerged. It extended beyond energy or emissions to encompass networks of trust, shared knowledge, and collective responsibility. In this sense, sustainability became synonymous with interdependence: the ability to collaborate, to ask for help, and to grow stronger through mutual support. Directors highlighted the value of simply picking up the phone to call a peer who had already done the show, or the solidarity that came from working toward a common goal. Theatres were transformed into spaces of experimentation — not only technical but human. This spirit of cooperation, dialogue, and long-term thinking was widely seen as one of the project's most enduring legacies.

(Re)staging *Jérôme Bel*

Jérôme Bel already had experience with remote forms of restaging before the STAGES project. When his daughter was born, he decided to stop flying, both for personal and ecological reasons. From then on, he and his collaborators worked via videoconference, drafting detailed protocols and relying on assistants abroad to lead rehearsals.

The COVID-19 lockdown period prompted him to write what would become *Jérôme Bel* — an “auto-bio-choreographic” solo piece tracing his artistic journey, ethics, and influences — from the AIDS epidemic to his decision to stop flying and touring. With only himself for material, he looked to Anton Chekhov for inspiration — whose plays have long circulated freely across languages and contexts, often without sets or directorial oversight. His idea was to create a similarly “ecological” work: a script and set of instructions that could be performed anywhere. Drawing on today's tools — video, text, stage directions — he created a protocol that others could follow. In doing so, he sees himself as part of a tradition, reimagined for the present.

The script he developed for restaging the performance specifies that the text must remain unchanged — with only pre-identified lines that may be omitted if not relevant to the local context. The performer must speak in the first person, embodying Jérôme Bel himself. The stage design is intentionally minimalist, consisting only of a screen, a chair, a table, and a computer to project the videos, all contributing to the performance's low-impact, stripped-down aesthetic. Jérôme Bel's script explicitly outlined several key sustainable practices for the restaging of the performance. He specified that no new costumes or props should

be purchased, and that only the theatre's existing technical equipment should be used. In line with these principles, the evening programme should not be printed: the performance credits would be projected on slides as the audience entered.

Reflections on the Experiment by Jérôme Bel

Initially, Jérôme Bel offered to stay in touch with the local directors, concerned that he might need to supervise their work. But he soon decided it would be fairer – and far more interesting – to step back entirely. “Do it as if I were dead,” he told the teams. He fully embraced the risk of transformation – or even betrayal – believing that a work must evolve rather than remain fixed in a single version. For years, he sought to reproduce the same model everywhere, one conceived in Europe – an approach he now recognises as neo-colonial.

The project had a profound impact on his relationship with work. He found it deeply liberating to renounce the power he normally exercises as a director – a role he now sees as inherently coercive. It allowed him to focus on what truly interests him: writing and creating, not repetition or faithful reproduction. The experience also opened new perspectives on authorship and absence. It inspired him to consider a future beyond his own presence. “It’s a kind of death,” he reflects. “The death of the director—and in a way, my own.”

Reflections on the Experiment by the Local Artistic and Production Teams

Casting and Experiment In his script, Jérôme Bel stated: “The greatest freedom is left to the choice of the performer. It can be a woman, a disabled person, a non-Caucasian...”. The experimental nature of the project created a space for bold choices and new approaches. The Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, for example, broke with its usual practice by inviting Anna Javoran, an artist from the independent scene rather than selecting someone from its institutional ensemble. Conversely, at Trafó House of Contemporary Arts, the team made the unusual decision to work with Dorottya Udvaros, a renowned classical actress, instead of their usual collaborators from the independent theatre scene.

Direction and Authorship Among the eight STAGES partners, three theatres selected a performer who was also a choreographer or dancer – as Jérôme Bel – whereas four chose to include a director in the process. Faced with a script that contained no choreographic material and few detailed directives, directors and choreographers naturally tended to bring their own vision to the stage – as they would when restaging any existing work – and reported contrasting experiences. Some embraced the challenge of stepping outside their usual methods: “I think one of the most powerful things about this project was how it prompted us to think critically about the way we work,” said Marco D’Agostin. Others, however, encountered friction in trying to balance fidelity to the original piece with their

own artistic instincts. Several performers spoke of feeling simultaneously constrained and autonomous, directed by the structure of the script, yet left alone to interpret it. The script encouraged “delegated performances,” where the performer replicates what Jérôme Bel would have done on stage, and is not meant to dance or reinterpret the material. In some sense, it seems to be more of a touring production, only with a different actor in the role, than an invitation to new versions of the play. Some choreographers and directors expressed frustration at not being able to add their personal touch to what they considered their version of the work, while others still managed to find a space of freedom: in Lausanne, the extract of *Gala* was reenacted by performers instead of being shown on video; the Milan version went even further in that direction by having all the dance parts reenacted. When experienced, the tension between strict transmission and creative appropriation may have stemmed from a disconnect between the project’s conceptual framework and the professional backgrounds of the invited artists.

Audience Perception The stripped-back model raised questions about audience perception: did spectators grasp the ecological intent behind the performance? In many cases, the environmental dimension was not immediately visible. However, this invisibility proved revealing: the quality of the performance demonstrated that artistic power need not be tied to resource intensity. Programme notes and post-show discussions were sometimes used to clarify the project’s sustainability objectives, fostering a deeper dialogue around its intentions.

Low-carbon Impact One of the most notable achievements of this experiment was its successful reduction of environmental impact generated by Bel’s parameters that no new costumes or props be purchased and only simple, already existing technical equipment be used. All these parameters meant that the project effectively delivered a low-impact theatrical experience.

Sustainability For some, the notion of sustainability extended beyond the environmental, embracing the social aspect. As Marco D’Agostin (director of the Piccolo’s version) noted, sustainability also resides in the collective: in creating a temporary yet meaningful community of performers, audiences, and collaborators: “My approach to sustainability was to work with as many people as possible. We recreated all the choreography with a group of 22 performers, which I felt was necessary. Sustainability in theatre is not just about reducing environmental impact; it’s about connecting with people, making sure they feel seen and heard. The effort we put into the project, the inclusivity, and the way we worked together as a team, it all comes together to create something sustainable — not just in the literal, environmental sense, but in a deeper, human sense”. Others emphasised the power of symbolic action: while reducing travel has measurable effects, the gesture itself - refusing to tour, delegating interpretation - can spark new imaginaries and provoke essential conversations within the theatres, the performing art sector and with the audiences.

Conclusion: From Experiment to New Practices and Strategies

What does it mean for a theatre production to be sustainable, not only in ecological terms, but also socially, artistically, and institutionally? The STAGES restaging experiment opened a rare space to explore this question. Its findings are not definitive but rather offer a map of tensions, learnings, and possibilities.

One core takeaway is that sustainability cannot be reduced to a formula. Each project requires a systemic and situated approach, in which each phase of the production process is interrogated through the lens of environmental impact. This means critically assessing the full range of possible options – technical, logistical, and artistic – and making informed decisions that prioritise the least ecologically damaging pathways, without losing sight of contextual specificities and artistic intent.

Reducing carbon emissions remains a critical goal, but it is not the only measure of impact. Symbolic gestures – like refusing to fly or delegating authorship – can be just as powerful in shifting mindsets and prompting new imaginaries. Yet these gestures raise important structural questions: who has the visibility, resources, or legitimacy to undertake such experiments? Would similar opportunities be extended to lesser-known artists working outside established circuits?

The restaging model offered mixed reflections from Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel and the local teams. Katie Mitchell doesn't necessarily see it as something that others will replicate exactly, but she believes it offers valuable

proof that artistic practices can adapt in response to climate change – and that it can serve as a meaningful starting point or reference for future projects. On his side, Jérôme Bel feels there is a growing interest in this restaging model within the theatre field. He also observes similar shifts across other disciplines: museums rethinking the status of originals, architects refurbishing existing structures, filmmakers delegating shoots to local crews. Theatre's collaborative tradition makes it especially well-suited to this transition – towards more sustainable, decentralised artistic practices. Among the local teams, many praised the restaging model as an elegant alternative to traditional touring – favouring local reinterpretation over the carbon-heavy movement of sets and teams. In some contexts, like Taiwan, producing everything locally – without flying in a European team – was seen as a strong institutional gesture, lending new legitimacy to local practices. Yet the model also raised concerns: can it scale fairly, or does it risk reinforcing a “star system” in which prestigious directors see their work revived internationally by lesser-known peers? Several noted a sense of disconnect when local artists were brought in only after key creative decisions – such as script and structure – had already been made. Some questioned whether this approach could truly be called touring at all: for audiences, each local version felt like an entirely new piece – and could be frustrating when expectations were tied to the original cast or director.

The contrasting approaches of Jérôme Bel and Katie Mitchell demonstrate the different ways to approach this model. Both scripts provided clear parameters, but Mitchell's framework allowed more room for directorial

interpretation. While the tension between artistic freedom and the constraints of restaging was sometimes palpable, it also proved fertile. Many artists described the experience as a challenge that pushed them to rethink their methods and rediscover freedom within limitations. It catalysed new practices and fostered fresh relationships among artists, across institutions' departments, between theatres, and within local ecosystems.

The experience also prompted broader reflections on what it means for a performance to be "sustainable." While the no-travel model limited emissions, it also restricted the work's lifespan, when local restagings were performed only once or twice. For several participating theatres, sustainability also entails allowing a work into which time, care, and resources have been invested, to continue its journey through touring. Other theatres, however, even without touring, found ways to extend the life of their local restagings by making use of the permission given to revive the show at a later time. In Stockholm, for instance, *Jérôme Bel* was added to the repertoire of Dramaten; Trafó House of Contemporary Arts in Budapest and Théâtre de Liège also presented later runs of the piece following initial success. This capacity to re-present a work locally – because the performer lives nearby and the setup remains accessible – emerged as a different but equally valid form of sustainability: one rooted in continuity, community, and the local anchoring of artistic resources.

Ultimately, the experiment demonstrates that sustainable theatre must be considered on multiple levels: materially, symbolically, socially. Beyond reducing emissions and material waste, it highlighted the power of collaboration and

the lasting impact of partnerships formed across diverse sectors. The project fostered new relationships between artists, institutions, and local communities, enriching the creative process with fresh perspectives and skills. By building new connections and working together towards a shared vision, it demonstrated how sustainability is, before everything, a collective endeavour. As Marco D'Agostin put it, it is "an exercise of utopia," a pursuit of a common dream through mutual effort.

The authors would like to thank Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel, and the artistic and production teams of STAGES partner institutions for their contributions to this article.



SECTION 1

Finding Meaningful Futures Through Co-Creation

The Open-Lab Method

BY

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The performing arts can be important actors in the transition to a sustainable society because of their high visibility and their ability to engage audiences in discussions about the larger social issues of our time. The STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift project is exploring ways to find hope and support each other in moving forward in the green transition. A particular question investigated is how sustainability research and the performing arts can work together to find new ways of producing knowledge to transform theatre and the way we act and think about art and the environment. This text discusses how science and the performing arts can co-create in the pursuit of sustainable development and aims to provide some initial important principles of participatory knowledge creation. The text briefly illustrates the process by describing some aspects of the boundary work of Royal Dramatic Theatre in Sweden (known as Dramaten), together with Stockholm University.

STAGES aims to organise a new kind of collaborative governance, to co-create, adopt and disseminate greener practices, and to raise awareness of sustainable development through cultural activities. A transdisciplinary approach is sought, involving artists, scientists and audiences in various processes of reflection and exchange, in order to generate new ideas, new themes, new artistic and creative experiments. Transdisciplinarity involves stakeholders in a significant way throughout a process, rather than just collecting data, informing stakeholders and/or engaging in knowledge transfer and valorisation afterwards. A transdisciplinary practice integrates knowledge across academic disciplines and engages with non-academic stakeholders to address societal

challenges. It could be said that the process is guided by the principle of “scientific rigour meets societal relevance”.

Stakeholder involvement in a knowledge co-production process should be reflected in both its aim and method, and participants ought to experience a practical and meaningful way to engage in the process. It is important that the co-production is based on the needs of the organisation, and at the same time the research context has to be relevant. To ensure this, Dramaten together with a scientist from Stockholm University, discussed and decided on two topics where employees had gaps in their knowledge and wanted to learn more. One topic was about possible exposure to chemical risks in the daily work of the theatre’s hair and make-up department, and the other was about the circularity of plastic materials used in scenography. The process continued through workshops and participatory discussions held by scientists with a range of staff and other performing arts professionals. These opportunities were informative and aimed to identify the most pressing questions that the participants wanted science to answer. An Open-lab approach was used to co-create and disseminate challenges, opportunities and knowledge on the selected topics. In the Open-lab setting, representatives from science and the performing arts meet in a mediated conversation around the pre-defined topics in front of an interested audience.

The STAGES project explores how to stimulate the construction of a mutual imagination of a future in transition that is motivating and desirable to be shared with the wider public. In this process, the Open-lab method represents a new social dynamics model based on networking,

breaking down institutional barriers and enabling integration/collaboration of different sectors such as science and the arts. When done right, it enables an inclusive and iterative process of knowledge production and solution finding with shared benefits. A special feature of an impactful Open-lab is to find the right balance between solid preparation and surprising discussion, including experimental interplay with both the participants on stage and the audience. A successful Open-lab experiment could germinate a common purpose and provide a space for co-production of knowledge relevant to improving both scientific and stakeholder understanding and organisational practices. More importantly, through its notion of togetherness and reflexive knowledge-making, the laboratory setting could create a sense of hope through a conversation between science, performing arts and the general public.

Open-lab Principles for Effective Knowledge Creation

- Bases the co-creative process on the needs of the organisation, while at the same time being grounded in relevant science
- Finds ways to mix artists, scientists and audiences in a reflexive process
- Balances between solid groundwork with pre-defined questions and experimental interplay among participants and audience
- Requires a mediator with issue-oriented knowledge to facilitate mutual understanding
- Is not afraid to ask the difficult questions while allowing a hopeful discussion of possible solutions

Open-lab: Chemical Risks in Hair and Make-up

The Open-Lab was preceded by a workshop between a scientist from the Department of Environmental Science at Stockholm University, and the make-up and wig department at Dramaten. It focused on three main themes: 1) mapping knowledge gaps, 2) finding pathways, and 3) linking hazardous chemicals in make-up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The last point opened a broader discussion on chemical risks to society, the environment and health. In addition, the Open-lab event was prepared by several dialogue meetings with the scientists who were to participate in the panel to identify feasible answers to the questions identified during the workshop, as well as study visits by the facilitator and one of the scientists to the make-up and wig department to get an image of their daily work. Finally, the facilitator and the project coordinator worked together to group and contextualise all questions in preparation for the Open-lab.

The Open-lab was framed as a conversation between science and the performing arts about the risks of cosmetics and how to be sustainable without compromising with the artistic expression. The participants were three scientists from Stockholm University with a broad knowledge of chemical risks in everyday products and two make-up and wig designers from Dramaten, who each performed a theatre make-up during the discussion to illustrate how they work with stage expression in the theatre. An actor and sustainability coordinator were models, discussing the role of hair and make-up in the artistic process and chemicals in daily practice. The lab was moderated by a Stockholm Chemical Centre employee, as a topic-knowledgeable facilitator is essential.

It comprised four sessions, with questions exchanged among scientists, designers, the audience, the actor, and the coordinator. A strategic choice of participants to get as many perspectives and a lively conversation as possible.

- **Session 1** had a broad introductory focus on chemicals in cosmetics, which chemicals and properties to worry about and how they can affect our health or the environment when used and discarded.
- **Session 2** described the regulatory landscape and explained how Europe can have the most ambitious legislation in the world to ensure that chemicals are used safely, while hazardous chemicals still can be found in everyday products and human blood.
- **Session 3** focused on concrete actions and choices in cosmetics and what employees need to know to make informed choices when buying new products or when a make-up and wig designer puts a mask on an actor and washes it off.
- **Session 4** was solution-oriented and discussed new ways of knowing and doing – how can professionals think and adapt in a working life that may involve exposure to hazardous chemicals.

The knowledge provided by the scientists was later developed into a guide for employees to use, for example, when choosing, buying, applying and washing off cosmetic products and/or when they want to learn more about a specific topic such as legislation, problematic and hazardous chemical groups, trustworthy labelling, or specific chemicals to avoid and their properties.



II

Sustainable Transformation

Une pièce pour les vivant·e·x en temps d'extinction
(A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction)
at Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (Switzerland) © Claudia Ndebele

SECTION 2

UTOPIA: Imagining a Desirable Future with MC93 Audiences

BY
MC93

Maison de la Culture de Seine-Saint-Denis (France)

What can a sustainable theatre do for a city? How might residents, neighbours, and audiences transform a cultural venue from an ecological perspective? Over the past two years, MC93 has been sharing experimental solutions to make the performing arts sector more socially and environmentally sustainable through the STAGES cooperation project, which operates at the European level. As part of this initiative, each season, the MC93 invites a group of audience members and neighbours to think through these changes during a workshop led by artist Louison Alix. Volunteers are recruited through a widely publicised call for participants. The groups are made up of people who will have met for the first time thanks to this opportunity.

The MC93 commissioned visual artist and actress Louison Alix to design this project. This young artist was born in the countryside and trained as an actress at ENSATT in Lyon. She performed in a show by Marguerite Bordat and Pierre Meunier, presented at the MC93. That is when the audience engagement team met her.

The project took place in two phases, each of which was presented to the public as part of a three-day event in April, '*Quartier Général: Un théâtre durable ?*' (Headquarters: A sustainable theatre?).

From January to April 2024, a 'Green Team Audience' was formed to imagine MC93 in 100 years' time, mirroring the in-house 'Green Team' made up of volunteers. After workshops focusing as much on documentation as imagination, and interviews with several personalities, a sound and visual installation was created. The aim was to depict a transformed world, where culture is present in every corner of the city, where the theatre building is no longer really

used, and where nature has partially reclaimed its rights. Among the many amateur artistic practices, professional artists produced astonishing works that are woven into the city. The mayor of the city was even unmasked as an AI...

From November 2024 to April 2025, a new group of people formed the 2093 Committee, the new name for the project, which met regularly over the course of eight sessions. This project, conceived as a participatory laboratory, invited partners, spectators, and neighbours of the MC93 to think about transformations and solutions for making theatre socially and ecologically sustainable. The ideas generated in these workshops are central to the life of a cultural venue. They involve thinking about art not only as a core societal concern, but also as a society in itself. A theatre cannot exist without the collective intelligence of the people around it.

In early September 2024, the MC93 launched a call for participation among its partners, audience members, and residents in the Seine-Saint-Denis area. Twelve people ultimately signed up. The participants first met once a month, every Tuesday, from 7 to 9 p.m., from November to January, at the MC93. They then met one Saturday a month, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., from February to April. During the first part of the project, the number of participants fluctuated constantly. In February, the final group was formed with six participants, ranging from 14 to 45 years in age.

During these workshops, the participants first got to know each other and come together as a group. They also discovered the MC93 during a visit to spark their imagination about the theatre of the future, starting from the present. Louison Alix also showed them archive documents

from the MC93 and the town of Bobigny to draw links between the past, the present, and the future. The 2093 Committee also met with Tristan Marseille, the administrator of MC93, to discuss approaches to making the theatre a sustainable one. The participants then began to define the form and content of artistic creation.

Accompanied by Louison Alix and the MC93 team, the 2093 Committee created and presented an artistic form that retraced the exchanges and moments of the workshops. While the first year's workshops focused more on understanding how to approach the subject of sustainable theatre artistically, the artist chose a specific artistic form to work with the group. The end result would be a 'sound walk'.

The participants played a group of ethnologists from the future, specialists in a form of theatre that no longer exists in their society. This group discovered a floppy disk that would give them access to the MC93 archives and parts of a holographic tour of the MC93 in 2025. The group of scientists then wondered what theatre might be like in 2025. The future was thus summoned to address present questions.

To do this, the 2093 committee constructed a utopian narrative during writing sessions. This narrative was fuelled by the invention of a new lexicon and a timeline spanning from 1977 to 2093. All the texts were then recorded for the sound walk. The participants then rehearsed for the performance. They were able to present their work during an audio walk entitled '*Fouiller l'avenir*' (Digging into the Future). This unique, forward-looking approach was presented by Louison Alix, a participant, and Elisa Castello, who works on projects with the public at the MC93. The result is playful and intelligent, interspersed with bold hypotheses that

question the ritual of theatre and its potential survival.

The artistic material produced over the last two years is rich and surprising. It has revealed the relevance of collective intelligence. The possibility of entrusting Louison Alix with the production of a podcast is now under discussion.



2093 Committee at MC93 (France)

© Jérémy Piot

SECTION 2

Mapping the Impact of STAGES Theatres: How to Walk the Talk?

BY

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As the ecological crisis grows in impact and regulatory frameworks strengthen, the green transition is entering the world of the performing arts as a natural step in the process of change. This report outlines the current situation in terms of sustainability at twelve theatres participating in the STAGES project, which are located across Europe (Belgium, Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland) and Asia (Taiwan). Despite differences in location, buildings, teams, repertoire and funding, all theatres use the STAGES Doughnut Protocol, a new approach to auto-analysis, to identify key areas for sustainable change in their organisations.

In Search of Just and Safe Space

“The most powerful stories throughout history have been the ones told with pictures,” states British environmentalist and economist Kate Raworth¹, emphasising the power of pictures and images at the heart of human storytelling, which also draws close parallels with the nature of the performing arts. STAGES auto-analysis brings the concept of Doughnut Economics², first published in 2012 and developed in 2017 by Raworth, into theatres.

The doughnut is a visually expressive tool consisting of two concentric rings. First, a social foundation to ensure that no one is left without the necessities of life. There are 12 dimensions grown out of the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 as minimum social

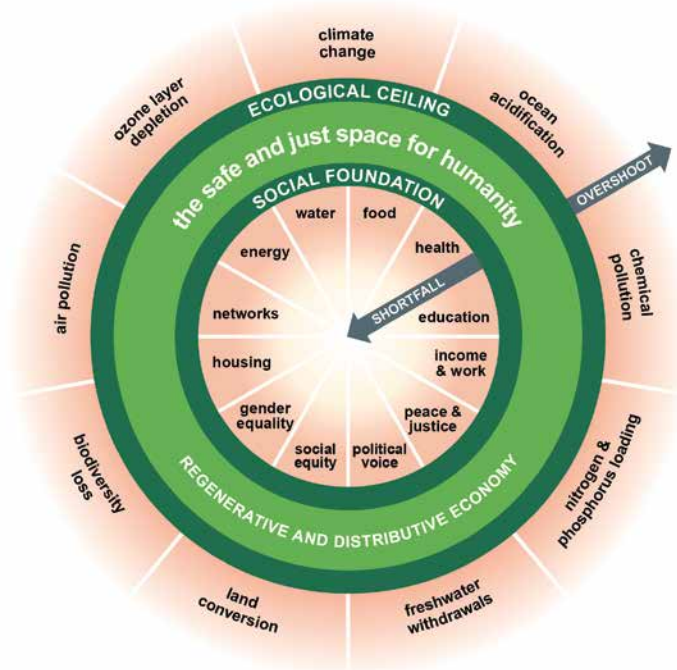
1 Raworth, Kate (2022). *Doughnut Economics. Seven Ways to Think Like the 21st-Century Economist*. London: Penguin Books.

2 Doughnut Economics: <https://doughnuteconomics.org>

standards for 2030. Second, an ecological ceiling, to ensure that humanity does not collectively overstep the nine planetary boundaries that protect the Earth’s life-supporting systems: including climate change, novel entities, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification, modification of biogeochemical flows, freshwater change, land system change, and biosphere integrity. A doughnut-shaped space lies between these two sets of boundaries. According to Raworth, sustainability is the process of maintaining society inside the doughnut-shaped area between those two lines – social and planetary boundaries. This is an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive.

The STAGES Doughnut Protocol, developed by STAGES partner Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, in collaboration with the University of Lausanne’s Competence Centre for Sustainability, is available as a free self-analysing tool for theatres. This method is a mindset-changing tool, firstly, for mapping the impact of the theatres’ activities on a range of criteria, both social (wellbeing, inclusivity, equity, governance, salaries, etc.) and environmental (waste management, pollution, energy consumption, carbon emissions, supporting biodiversity, etc.), and secondly, for structuring sustainability efforts, as well as setting the level of ambition within the organisation and organising concrete actions accordingly.

The tool can be downloaded and used via the STAGES Doughnut Protocol microsite³, providing all the necessary



The Doughnut of Social and Planetary Boundaries, Kate Raworth
 © Creative Commons

theoretical perspectives and practical tools via the online methodological guide *Getting into the Doughnut*.

The results of the auto-analysis, carried out in 2022 and 2023, are presented in four sections, covering 1) environmental aspects; 2) social aspects; 3) governance aspects; 4) community aspects.

³ STAGES Doughnut Protocol: <https://sustainablestages.eu/page/stages-doughnut-workshop>

Environmental Aspects: Beyond Low-Hanging Fruit

Theatre has a variety of environmental impacts, resulting from the operation of theatre buildings, the lifecycle of performances, and the daily habits of theatre teams and theatregoers.

Change of Everyday Habits

Sustainability actions in planned actions of theatres have primarily a strong focus on facilities (waste, utilities, food) and mobility. Several initiatives also aim to reduce the consumption of specific resources, such as water, electricity, heating, paper, and printing. Most theatres are working to change the mobility habits of both their staff and audiences by providing alternative transportation options to and from the theatre. These solutions include offering cycle parking, collaborating with nearby car parks, and partnering with public transport services to provide convenient shared ticketing. Concrete steps focus on changing everyday habits, such as replacing plastic bottles with water fountains and reusable containers or even installing a water softener, allowing water to be used directly from the tap. In terms of catering, theatres are increasingly focused on offering more vegetarian options in their cafeterias, creating seasonal menus, and planning meals to reduce food waste. For instance, NTGent has introduced a practice of designing the next day's menu using ingredients that are still suitable for cooking, minimising waste while maintaining quality. The theatres reduce the harmful effects on the health of their employees and the environment by

introducing guidelines⁴ for the safe use of cosmetics and makeup.

Circular Approach

The introduction of circularity into the daily operations of theatres and the production of plays is increasingly on the agenda. However, the shift towards circular practices is hindered not only by a lack of technical knowledge about the environmental impact of materials but also by the realisation that many materials currently in use have little or no recyclability. There is a need for the technical team to have access to a comprehensive library of materials and information on sustainable alternatives to facilitate more environmentally responsible decisions. The Slovenian National Theatre Maribor is working on establishing a digitally managed collection of costumes and textiles (the so-called *fundus*). Scenography must often be finalised much earlier to accommodate sustainability concerns, which can restrict artistic freedom and creative processes. Theatres also apply recycling principles beyond their own walls, raising public awareness. Piccolo Teatro di Milano is developing workshops for children, coordinated by the costume department and educational office, and collaborating with NGOs promoting circularity, while the MC93 House of Culture in Seine-Saint-Denis is repurposing used T-shirts to create new ones for theatre staff, thus reducing the environmental impact of the clothing industry.

⁴ The Royal Dramatic Theatre Dramaten developed a practical guide for professionals Chemical Risks in Hair and Makeup (2024).

Knowledge Gaps and Contradictions

Theatres recognise that environmental sustainability efforts are hindered by a lack of knowledge among their staff regarding the environmental impacts of theatre activities. This lack of understanding not only impedes proactive actions but also raises doubts about the effectiveness of set sustainability targets. In order to drive the necessary change, additional training and manuals on sustainability practices are needed, targeting specific issues for staff, for touring companies, and, at the professional level, for students before they enter the performing arts. The Lithuanian National Drama Theatre provides training for its technical staff on how to handle hazardous materials. As demonstrated by the experience of Théâtre de Liège, training lighting technicians in the use of LED projectors has been a key step in transitioning to more sustainable practices. Knowledge gaps and the absence of effective assessment methods contribute to diminished environmental awareness and foster questions instead.

Greening Infrastructure

While theatres are aware of the need for green infrastructure, a lack of knowledge about ecosystem services and their relationship to climate change adaptation hinders proactive actions of theatres in this area. However, there are theatres that aim to create green spaces, such as breathing sidewalks outside their buildings, and are taking steps to enhance the greening of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The Royal Dramatic Theatre's (Dramaten) new workshops incorporate the principles of biodiversity enhancement, enriching the suburban environment. An environmental

impact assessment was carried out when the building was constructed, and the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan was drawn up to show how the theatre would continue to mimic the newly created footprint on the site. The Théâtre de Liège has greened its terraces with the help of the Liège Horticultural School, planting edible plants for humans and beneficial plants for pollinators.

Short-term goals for greening infrastructure are mostly related to the shift from physical to digital solutions, as greening theatre infrastructure can also extend to the digital realm. The Trafó House of Contemporary Arts is working towards establishing a paperless office and expanding its online presence for promotions; meanwhile, Piccolo Teatro di Milano adopted an app for digital-only use of theatre programmes via QR Code cards, limiting the use of paper and using only recycled paper when necessary. The Slovenian National Theatre Maribor plans to reduce paper usage to near zero, with the option to print theatre programs and other materials only on demand. Meanwhile, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre is conducting a website audit to lighten its digital footprint, opting for a more sustainable hosting solution. Despite these efforts, theatres face challenges when implementing digital solutions, particularly due to a lack of digital skills among their staff, especially senior colleagues, who may feel apprehensive about complex IT and AI tools due to limited experience and knowledge.

Constraints of Buildings

Large-scale improvements to theatre buildings are further complicated by the fact that many are not managed by the theatres themselves, but by the city or municipality. Several

theatres are located in historic buildings protected as heritage sites. This status makes it challenging to enhance renewable energy solutions and the energy efficiency of the buildings. As part of a major refurbishment of the building, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre purchased part of a remote solar power plant in 2024 and switched to solar power, which provides 90% of the theatre's electricity needs. The historic designation not only complicates renovation efforts but also increases the potential costs incurred with building-specific solutions. The Piccolo Teatro di Milano is expanding its funding opportunities with a public-private partnership initiative aimed at radically transforming current facilities with more technologically advanced and, at the same time, environmentally friendly solutions. Following the renovation of the Théâtre de Liège and the purchase of new equipment just ten years ago, the institution decided to focus on reducing energy consumption and promoting biodiversity and responsible use of water. The measures selected, such as the installation of daylight sensors in addition to the existing motion detectors to switch off lights when not in use, an air lock at the theatre entrance to prevent draughts, and UV filters in the small auditorium to protect against heat in summer, now have to be budgeted for.

Guidelines, Standards and Contracts

The development of guidelines and standards for the selection of materials, substances and suppliers promotes choices at an everyday level. As the National Theatre & Concert Hall in Taiwan points out, the Sustainability Action Checklist helps to visualise examples of sustainable practices and put them into practice. The Théâtre de Liège has

developed a mobility policy in terms of choice of transport and touring solutions, with the aim of promoting low-carbon mobility for staff and artists, as well as for extended stays during touring. The theatres also intend to integrate their own sustainability principles into their supply chains and collaboration agreements, both with external partners and with the creative teams working on specific productions. Theatres are also developing new procurement policies to promote green purchasing practices. At the same time, existing laws and legal frameworks at the national level are often not flexible enough, thus restricting certain actions related to the implementation of circularity principles, such as the transfer of a piece of theatre equipment for use by others, etc.

Monitoring

In the absence of scientific, technical and material expertise, theatres face a problem of different forms of monitoring, both those that help to track the progress of projects and those that account for the consumption of specific resources. Nevertheless, the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, for example, not only monitors energy efficiency of the building as a whole, but also works with a lighting designer to analyse and reduce the emissions from the lighting of individual performances. However, in order to reduce the impact, there are indicators that need to be taken into account.

Social Aspects: Breaking Down Barriers

Social aspects identified by the theatres can be divided into two groups: internal, which concern employees of the theatre as an organisation, and external, which concern the wider public, including theatre-goers.

Internal Perspective

Planned actions reflect a wide range of social aspects aimed at employee wellbeing, both tangible (customised work and rest areas, transparent pay policies, reasonable workload planning, childcare support, possibility to disconnect from work duties after hours in online communication environments, etc.) and intangible (physical wellbeing practices such as yoga or exercise, mentoring for new employees, thematic team-building activities, psychological consultations, etc.). Improved working conditions contribute to the wellbeing of employees, which is an important prerequisite for their willingness to engage in structural change processes. Addressing these issues will help prevent burn-out and ensure that time management is good enough for employees to integrate new practices into their working lives, which is crucial for long-term sustainability.

The human resources department, which should be easily accessible and transparent, has an important role in fostering change management. As a practical solution to actively changing habits, some theatres are testing a reward system and gamification approach among staff, hoping for a more exciting change process. In order to keep sustainability issues at the forefront of its daily work, Teatro Nacional

D. Maria II has launched an open call for volunteers to form a sustainability team within the theatre. The group is made up of representatives from different departments. While the majority of the team supports the changes, there are generational differences in attitudes towards them. As the Slovene National Theatre Maribor points out, both artists recruited from outside, for whom it is important to include a socio-political dimension in their artworks, and the younger generation, who share the organisation's aspirations towards sustainability, are more ready for a sustainable approach.

External Perspective

By outlining planned activities, theatres demonstrate their commitment to being an open organisation, accessible to the widest possible audience. This is evidenced by the involvement of different social groups in certain activities, adapting the theatre environment and performances to their needs. The Royal Dramatic Theatre Dramaten and Teatro Nacional D. Maria II include relaxed performances in their repertoire, which provide a welcoming and tolerant atmosphere when it comes to movement and noise in the audience. Most theatres are testing various inclusive solutions, such as appropriate technical equipment, sound systems for the hearing impaired, touch tours for slow exploration of costumes and sets, building appropriate infrastructure, providing subtitles and sign language interpreters, introducing relaxed sessions for groups sensitive to light and sound effects, promoting performing arts library among target audiences, and adapting websites for different user groups. Piccolo Teatro di Milano also offers, for blind

or visually impaired audiences, poetic audio descriptions played through headphones that provide an account of the performance without neglecting the emotional aspect, giving the possibility to imagine the action on stage. Teatro Nacional D. Maria II emphasises that the efforts made over the years have not only increased the sensitivity of the organisation's own staff, but also contributed to strengthening the image of an open theatre at a national level.

Accessibility is described by the National Theater & Concert Hall in Taiwan as the need to break down both visible and invisible barriers. Theatres include awareness-raising and educational activities in their social sustainability plans not only for their own staff but also for the wider community, thus collectively contributing to a more inclusive environment for an even wider range of groups. Some theatres have taken steps to promote access to the theatre for social groups that are financially excluded.

When developing action plans, theatres find that social improvements are more difficult to monitor and measure than environmental impacts, which can be measured in concrete numbers. This points to the need to identify tools for monitoring social aspects and related change processes.

Governance Aspects: Who is Going to Take the Lead?

Sustainability in theatre depends not only on personal attitudes of the team members, but also on the strategic management of the theatre. Practical sustainability management is needed at different levels, both in the management of the organisation and in horizontal approaches, such as permeating attitudes in

different departments of the theatre, in the work of the artists involved, and in the approach to sustainability of other partners and supply chains.

Management

Theatres emphasise the importance of management commitment and support to enable the sustainability action plan to be implemented. They also emphasise the short decision-making process, as it is not always immediately clear who can make the final decision on a particular action or activity. The use of the STAGES Doughnut Protocol is an opportunity to align the sustainability values with the organisation's Board, thereby facilitating the strategic implementation of these changes. At the same time, the theatres see the Doughnut approach as a way of collaborative management that encourages horizontal decision-making. An important aspect is also inner sustainability as team wellbeing, which the theatres see as a key priority and as a way of involving the diverse team of employees in building the action plan together.

Coordination

Some theatres use their own internal resources for the auto-analysis, while others use a facilitator from outside the theatre in order to have both a neutral interlocutor and an expert on the issues, who can also explain the nature of the issues in the context of sustainability. The newly created action plans indicate the responsible department to address the specific idea. Depending on the action, responsibility may be assigned to Human Resources, Technical Services, Administration, Marketing and Communications,

IT, Producers or a Green Team if one has been set up in the theatre. Although the action plan will outline the responsible organisational structures, the implementation of the action plan should identify the responsible staff member (possibly combining the responsibility with the existing job responsibilities). It is also important to identify who will monitor the progress of the intentions within each structure in order to target progress. Several theatres point to a lack of human resources to implement the action plan, which will require the creation of new positions within the theatre team, such as a sustainability manager or green manager. The theatres also stress the disruption of succession in cases where the person in charge leaves the organisation.

Collaborating and Building Networks

The theatres consider it important to embed sustainability principles in their theatres to collaborate with external experts such as sustainability consultants, with scientists who can contribute to the realisation of artistic visions in technical solutions without compromising artistic integrity, with suppliers who can help find alternative and more environmentally friendly solutions, with the wider community by sharing new knowledge on social and environmental sustainability at thematic workshops. As the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II has pointed out, mediation between the engineers and artists' languages and working methods is valuable, seeing the need to make the scientist-engineer-artist network a routine approach in order to facilitate the translation of a vision and an aesthetic idea into a real and functioning sustainable solution, such as an energy-generating device for a performance.

Lack of Time

Conducting a full and comprehensive self-assessment is time-consuming for a number of reasons. Some of the issues involved in the analysis are new or less well understood by some of those involved, so more time is needed for research and understanding, as well as for thematic training. Time constraints also prevented open and direct discussions in some cases. The auto-analysis process involves many staff members at the same time, representing different departments, which means complex work and scheduling hours in a busy agenda and a huge workload related to the social aspects.

Financial Constraints

The action plan resulting from the auto-analysis includes sections on actions, responsible parties and timeframes for implementation. The plan lacks a budget section and a financial aspect, which in some cases appears in the form of comments on specific actions. The availability or non-availability of a budget directly contributes to or hinders the practical implementation of a given action. In the financial context, theatres point to the need for management support to integrate the sustainability action plan into the theatre's overall strategy and planning documents, and to the budget accordingly. There is also a challenge of continuing the already started sustainability journey without additional budget. Some of the theatres have already outlined possible sources of funding in their action plans to accelerate change, diversifying them into different thematic projects.

Legal Framework

Targeted national policies are needed to comprehensively address current sustainability issues, including social aspects and environmental challenges. The current situation in the respective countries does not provide a strong legal basis for implementing these changes, and in most cases the cultural sector is not included in specific plans. As the Croatian National Theatre points out, the role of the theatre manager is to lobby for the necessary changes to facilitate the green transition of theatres. At the same time, the action plan of the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre already includes as an important point working with the legal department to find a solution to include sustainability objectives in the various types of contracts the theatre has with artists, suppliers and other business partners.

Community Aspects: Political Dimension of Theatre

Theatre and community have a reciprocal relationship: they can encourage each other to make purposeful change by becoming agents of change in their own practices and attitudes. Theatre can speak about sustainability not only through its work, but also in the language of art.

Ambivalent Attitudes

Theatres are convinced that there is a lack of public awareness of sustainability issues and the theatre's sustainability efforts. Environmental issues do not receive enough attention from the audience, which also affects the financial side of the theatre. Some believe that the public does

not perceive the presence of environmental themes in the national theatre repertoire, believing that such themes are more appropriate for independent theatre groups and NGOs. As a compromise between the public's expectations and the theatre's sustainability efforts, Théâtre de Liège has included a newly created festival, *Sans Transition*, in its programme, where audiences can see thematic performances.

Performances

Experiences of STAGES restaging performances encourage a broader discussion on sustainability issues among the audience, allowing them to see the issues at hand on stage in both content and form. In contrast, some see in the practice of restagings the problem of what the long-term effects of such techniques are and how to talk about them with the audience, without giving the impression that sustainable theatre is a specific form of theatre. Addressing the issue of artistic freedom and corporate social responsibility, some theatres are committed to include at least one sustainability-themed or produced performance per season. Aiming to reduce carbon footprint, Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne supports artistic projects – theatre and dance performances – with little or no technical means at all. Theatres are also considering green-labelling productions that have been developed sustainably.

Change of Habits

Through targeted activities, theatres encourage a change in habits, both within themselves and in the wider community outside the theatre. By strengthening partnerships with local authorities, theatres offer new behavioural models

for audiences, for example by addressing mobility issues, improving cycle parking facilities, cooperating with public transport on certain routes, providing information on how to travel together, thus reducing the environmental impact of transport. The switch to digital ticketing and performance programmes is a targeted reduction in paper consumption, but the question of digital literacy among all age groups of audiences remains open. In terms of catering, theatres are also making changes to ensure that vegetarian and vegan options are on the menu. MC93 House of Culture of Seine-Saint-Denis provided its chef with hands-on training in the preparation of vegetarian and vegan dishes, which are cheaper than other options, thanks to a subsidy by the theatre.

In Between Magic Wand and Burden

The strength of the STAGES Doughnut Protocol is its ability to bring together multiple dimensions of sustainability in a single model. Theatres see this approach as practically useful and beneficial. Firstly, it broadens horizons and offers different perspectives of working, while also highlighting grey areas in the field of knowledge that need to be improved through targeted staff training. Secondly, the participatory approach is a key to encouraging horizontal collaboration between theatre practitioners and relational commitment to the cultural organisation, as the fact that employees are strongly involved in the process increases the likelihood that they will become committed to becoming changemakers themselves. Thirdly, it serves as a tool for assessing the current situation by identifying the multiple

impacts of the theatre on the environment and society, and allows for a practical action plan to be developed that is tailored to the specific needs of the theatre.

The STAGES Doughnut Protocol is not only useful for assessing the current situation in the organisation, but it is also a practical tool for setting priorities. However, the Doughnut approach is not a detailed long-term planning tool in itself. In order to plan and structure concrete actions in a transparent and coherent way, another practical solution is needed to build up targeted and well-monitored action plans.

Theatres acknowledge that the Doughnut approach to organisational self-evaluation, on the one hand, is participatory, systematic, coherent, instructive, eye-opening, thought-provoking, continuous, and even stimulating, and, on the other hand, time-consuming, laborious, sensitive, and, most importantly, requires experts in the field.

Furthermore, the auto-analysis raises a number of dilemma-type questions to which there is no single answer:

- How to put sustainability principles into action without sacrificing artistic freedom?
- How to assess which action, activity or material choice is less harmful to the environment?
- How not to become self-serving in our actions and attitudes towards sustainability?
- How to balance between micro-actions and macro-actions?
- How to work inclusively with those who are sceptical about the need for theatre to address sustainability issues?

Key Takeaways

- Sustainability is increasingly recognised as a strategic long-term issue among theatres.
- Challenges exist around scale and urgency of addressing sustainability, varying from micro-actions to macro-actions in the short term and long term.
- Governance complexities have to be taken into account, requiring commitment from top management.
- Responsibility for implementing actions and sustainability initiatives differs among theatres — responsibility for the green team, human resources department, and technical department is addressed, but external consultancy from the field and the action plan facilitator are mentioned as a valuable approach.
- Motivation — internal and external — has to be maintained in organisations, both from inside (additional education, thematic action plans, handbooks, guidelines, reward systems, etc.) and from outside (legal frameworks, community expectations, collaboration with scientists, municipalities, etc.).

- Building of networks consisting of artists, scientists and technicians is crucial in order to find new solutions to address environmental concerns in the performing arts sector.
- Financial and time constraints are critically important in ensuring the efficiency of the action plans.
- Theatres are planning to take a holistic approach by adopting strategic planning and practical tools such as the Theatre Green Book and monitoring systems.

The Shift Begins With Us

Auto-analysis is the beginning of a conversation about sustainability in theatre. This report not only provides insights into the experiences of theatres that have started their journey towards sustainability, but also an understanding of the knowledge gaps and practical obstacles, underlining the need for change not only in the performing arts sector, but also in the field of cultural policy. These recommendations for other theatres and for the cultural policy sector are based on the diverse experience of the STAGES theatre.

Recommendations to Theatres

Auto-analysis. Conduct an auto-analysis to identify grey areas in knowledge and practice.

Strategy. Incorporate sustainability considerations into strategic documents and practical action plans.

Accountability. Appoint sustainability managers not only in the theatre management but also in individual departments, using an external sustainability expert as support.

Education. Promote opportunities for staff training on sustainability issues, including circular economy, inclusion and diversity, energy efficiency, biodiversity, as well as much narrower and more targeted themes aimed at changing concrete actions.

Action Plans. Develop not only an overall sustainability policy, but also adopt thematic action plans with clear objectives, timeline and results, such as a mobility action plan, a training plan, a diversity and inclusion plan, etc.

Results. Define not only objectives in the action plan but also results, based on an initial auto-analysis. Start with concrete first steps, without trying to cover all aspects of sustainability at the same time.

Legal Framework. Work with the legal department to integrate sustainability aspects into contractual relationships with employees, suppliers, and partners.

Cross-sectoral Collaboration. Develop and strengthen collaboration between artists, technicians and scientists to create sustainable solutions during the creative process.

Collaboration With the Community. Promote cooperation with local municipalities to jointly address issues outside the organisation, such as biodiversity in the neighbourhood or sustainable mobility solutions.

Long-term Relationships With NGOs. Build long-term relationships with local NGOs working in the field of environmental and social sustainability, consulting on the best solutions.

External Funding. Exploit opportunities for specific projects to attract external funding.

Repertoire. Incorporate environmental and social sustainability aspects not only into theatre practice offstage, but also integrate these narratives into performances onstage.

Communication. Communicate sustainability aspects not only to staff, but also to partners and audiences.

Recommendations to the Cultural Policy Sector

Legal Framework for the Sector. Integrate sustainability aspects of the cultural sector into national strategic documents and sector policy guidelines, as well as develop regulations that promote a sustainability shift in the sector of performing arts.

Cross-sectoral Cooperation. Promote cross-sectoral cooperation by integrating culture into other sectoral policy documents and legally binding regulations.

Flexible Regulation. Adapt legislation to be more flexible in putting sustainability aspects into practice, e.g. circularity.

Procurement and Value Chains. Promote the use of green procurement principles in the performing arts sector.

Funds and Grants. Establish financial support for a sustainable turn, both supporting the green shift and ensuring the social wellbeing of teams and audiences.

Education. Expand the knowledge base on sustainability issues in the performing arts sector by providing additional educational opportunities and practical tools for theatre teams, as well as integrating sustainability aspects into national curricula for performing arts professionals.

Practical information. Collect and promote various practical tools useful for the sector, such as planning templates,

impact calculators, and monitoring solutions, localising them in the local language.

Best Practices. Collect and promote existing good practices in the sector and provide a practical opportunity to enhance international exchanges in the sector.

Reporting. Establish a valid reporting framework requiring the integration of sustainability aspects as a non-financial reporting dimension in the organisation's annual reports.

SECTION 2

From the Auto-Analysis to the Theatre Green Book: Working with Sustainable Guidelines



BY

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This article presents key insights into best practices that have been tested or established at NTGent and the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre since joining the STAGES project.

Lithuanian National Drama Theatre

Recently, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre (LNDR) has undertaken many sustainability-related activities.

Since 2022, after LNDR joined STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift alongside 13 international partners, the first performance based on sustainable methods was created – *A Play for the Living in Times of Extinction*, directed by Antanas Obcarkas –, while also encouraging the reuse of set design and costumes in other productions, and organising art and science residencies. The theatre has carried out a sustainability self-assessment involving all departments and regular meetings. Following the results of the self-assessment, changes have been implemented in waste sorting, elimination of paper documents, improvement of staff conditions, workload, and competency development.

The Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, implementing the project alongside international partners, was the first theatre in Lithuania to publicly talk about resource conservation in the performing arts – a field which is not inherently sustainable by nature. However, LNDR is convinced that it is at least possible to reduce its negative impact on the environment. The knowledge we have gained has been and continues to be shared with colleagues from other theatres,

companies, and cultural institutions to promote change on a wider scale.

Although the EU-funded STAGES project technically ends on 31 December 2025, LNDDT aims to continue applying the acquired knowledge and sharing its experience with Lithuanian theatre organisations.

Objective 1 – More Sustainable Sources of Energy

During the reconstruction of its building, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre implemented a number of energy-saving solutions. The energy efficiency of the building was improved by insulating the walls, replacing the windows, upgrading the heating system, and ensuring that energy is not wasted. Modern ventilation and heating systems were installed in all halls, allowing the optimisation of energy use in response to audience needs. Light bulbs were also replaced with more economical LED technology, among other improvements.

In spring 2024, the theatre acquired a remote solar power plant, another step towards a more sustainable theatre. Clean, environmentally friendly electricity not only helps to reduce electricity costs but also greenhouse gas emissions. In our 2024 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) study, we realised that this power plant produced more than 90% of the electricity we use ourselves, thus reducing CO₂ emissions. As the 2025 solar power plant runs from 1 January to 31 December, we expect the theatre to generate all the energy it needs from renewable resources.

Objective 2 – More Reuse in Productions

Despite certain legal restrictions on authorship, LNDDT has

managed to reach agreements with artists and find ways to reuse existing materials. For *Metamorphosis*, a set not used in *Sleepers* was repurposed, avoiding need for new production. Several productions used a set bought from second-hand shops, and *A Play for the Living in Times of Extinction* was created not only by reusing objects, but also by generating the electricity used for lighting and sound during the performance. The new premiere of *Ronja the Robber's Daughter* will also feature a fair amount of the scenery used in the production of *Revelation to Mary*.

LNDDT currently maintains a warehouse that has been cleaned up, sorted and organised to store props and costumes that can be used again. When starting a new production, a set designer is first presented with available items in the theatre's warehouse to ensure secondary use. In the process of creating scenography, we help select more sustainable materials or purchase costumes from second-hand clothing stores. Based on the response, theatre employees are also invited to bring items they no longer use, and we also cooperate with institutions that can support the theatre by donating unused materials.

Objective 3 – Responsible Topics

Sustainability in theatre is not only about saving material resources, but also about fostering relationships and psychological health, and maintaining healthy atmosphere. To promote societal healing and the ability to cope with difficult topics, we present premieres on socially relevant themes, such as suicide and coming to terms with it in *Stand-up for Meaning and for Meaninglessness*; mourning in *Things I Didn't Dare to Say and Now It's Too Late*; and

collective national traumas in Fossilia and Siberian Haiku. The themes of #MeToo and abuse of power are explored in *Silence of the Sirens and The Birds*.

Objective 4 – Social Sustainability: Creating the Community.

In recent years, LNDDT has paid special attention to the empowerment and motivation of employees. Special events have been organised for the theatre community, including Theatre Day, season openings and closings celebrations, a Christmas event for employees' children, etc. Since the 85th season, we have also introduced an internal newsletter to share information more actively about activities, initiatives, and interviews with staff members. We are also placing greater emphasis on improving staff qualifications, with increased participation in various training courses.

Objective 5 – Guidelines for Artists Working at LNDDT

At the initiative of employees, a series of meetings was held at LNDDT to discuss how to make the theatre an even better place to create and work, and how to create a space that respects people, creativity and the environment. Following these meetings, guidelines were created for artists working at LNDDT. This document defines LNDDT's values and aspirations to be sustainable, while emphasising mutual respect. LNDDT does not want to restrict creative freedom, but asks community members to adhere to certain guidelines that contribute to a healthy atmosphere in the workplace. These guidelines address interpersonal relationships and prioritise sustainable solutions during the creation of performances.

In the future, we plan to ask every artist invited to LNDDT to sign and agree to the provisions in the guidelines, which will continue to be improved and adapted as needed.

Objective 6 – Work-life Balance

In the 85th season, the theatre finally and fully reopened after reconstruction and began operating at full capacity. However, the new halls also brought new challenges, such as coordinating staff activities across three performance spaces and managing multiple productions simultaneously. After a self-analysis conducted at the theatre, we realised that the workload during the season was higher than usual, and we identified issues in the planning process that contributed to this. LNDDT is constantly learning and responding to employee needs and suggestions. Currently, more than 15 staff members from different departments are involved in the theatre repertoire planning, allowing us to draw attention to possible difficulties or limitations, and enabling better coordination and more balanced decision-making.

Objective 7 – Sharing Knowledge With Colleagues

In 2024, we began organising the Theatre Sustainability Forum to share the knowledge gained during the STAGES project with theatre colleagues. Currently, the event has an established format: sharing of good practices, expert lectures, discussions and networking. After each forum, we conduct a survey of participants to help us understand whether this event is needed and to provide suggestions from colleagues to discuss new topics. In the future, we plan to continue organising the Sustainability Forum and to involve both creative teams and organisations.

We also organise open calls for STAGES residencies for artists – open to anyone meeting the requirements. The selected artists develop their ideas in line with the theatre’s sustainability guidelines and in collaboration with scholars, further promoting awareness of sustainability. LNDT regularly announces the open calls, residency winners, and results, as well as information about the Forum, to raise public awareness of both the STAGES project and sustainability in general.

Objective 8 – Translating the Theatre Green Book

The Lithuanian National Drama Theatre has also invested significant effort in translating the *Theatre Green Book* into Lithuanian. Originally developed by theatres in the United Kingdom, this initiative provides practical guidelines on achieving sustainability goals across performance creation, organisational systems, and building management. We have decided not only to translate but also to adapt the *Theatre Green Book*, involving colleagues from other Lithuanian theatres to ensure the guidelines are relevant, practical, and aligned with our national theatre tradition.

The translated book will be made publicly available to the entire Lithuanian theatre community so that everyone can apply its sustainability principles. In December 2025, a presentation workshop is planned to introduce the translated *Theatre Green Book* and demonstrate how to apply its content in theatre organisation and production processes.

NTGent

What we have learnt after doing the auto-analysis developed by Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the Competence Centre in Sustainability of the University of Lausanne, is mainly that we are not yet at a time and place to give ourselves a major pat on the back.

The first necessary step to any change in response to a crisis is to become aware of the fact that there is a crisis, becoming aware of the status quo and feeling an urgency to fundamentally change how things are done both on an individual and an organisational level. This proves to be difficult in day-to-day theatre business in Belgium, as money, staff and time is short and we are more often than not already at the limits of our capacity in terms of doing what we are supposed to do: producing and touring high-quality theatre performances on a local and international level (in addition to having reflection and participation programmes, and a programme focused on developing new artistic practices without a full-scale production as outcome).

Still, being part of the STAGES project invited us to do a baseline measurement through the auto-analysis workshops, and this has helped us to become aware of our starting position with regard to sustainability, and to identify actions we could take to improve this position.

The analysis revealed a clear need for a structured inventory to measure the sustainability of productions (and other operations) within our organisation. Aside from identifying potential sustainability improvements to be made with regard to the wider themes the auto-analysis process focuses on, such as audience travel and work-life balance,

NTGent decided to dive into improving the sustainability in our production processes.

This is where the *Theatre Green Book* (TGB) comes into play. The *Theatre Green Book* is a free resource developed by theatre-makers in the UK, but has grown into a community initiative of theatre-makers across the world. In January 2024, NTGent invited the co-founders of the *Theatre Green Book*, Lisa Burger and Paddy Dillon, for an inspiring walk-through of the tool. In short, it consists of Excel inventories you can fill with information on productions, operations and buildings to track your progress towards net zero emissions. It introduces a self-certification process, available at four different levels: Preliminary, Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Each level is claimed by achieving increasingly tight requirements on embedding circularity and reusing materials.

After analysing two productions using the *Theatre Green Book*, it became clear that NTGent still needs to make significant strides towards sustainable production of performances, as both productions failed to achieve the 'basic' level. The findings suggest that there is still much room for improvement and that the implementation of the *Theatre Green Book* can serve as a valuable tool to facilitate these improvements. Based on these results, an action plan was drawn up with key objectives.

Objective 1 – Getting Everyone on Board

It is crucial to make both employees and managers more aware of the reasons why sustainability is important within NTGent's production processes and general way of working.

This can be achieved through carbon literacy training on the environmental impact of theatre production practices. Our good practice here is that we have a so-called eco-team that keeps NTGent on its toes with regard to sustainability, by organising workshops, questioning procedures, and by keeping sustainability on the agenda. NTGent is also a structural partner of the Greentrack platform, which is a local initiative in Ghent, stimulating a sustainability focus within the entire performing arts sector.

Objective 2 – Giving More Time to Future Productions

There is a need to allow more time for future productions to implement sustainability measures. This means that sustainability must be integrated from the concept phase, and sufficient time must be allocated for research into sustainable materials and practices. We aim to mention our sustainability policies in contracts for new productions. A good practice we have is to introduce the *Theatre Green Book* tool in the very first conversation we have with theatre artists and directors, so it does not get mentioned as an afterthought further down the line. A good practice we struggle with is finding a good timeline for the conceptualisation, development and production of scenography and costumes well ahead of time – albeit (or perhaps because of?) having the benefit of having our own in-house workshops for scenography and costumes.

Objective 3 – Establishing the Theatre Green Book Tool as Common Practice

The *Theatre Green Book* provides a structured approach to

improving various aspects of production, such as the use of sustainable materials and emission reduction. As we agree on the benefits of using a detailed yet straightforward tool such as the Theatre Green Book, a good practice we established is having a dedicated team member on each production team called the Green Book Champion - in other words a person making sure we know which standard each production is aiming for (Preliminary, Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced) and keeping a close eye on the implementation of the *Theatre Green Book*.

Objective 4 – Aiming for a Zero-to-Landfill

Approach

As the *Theatre Green Book* grading system shows, the focus in our production processes should be on reusing and recycling materials, before, during and after the creation of a new show. A good practice is that our technical production managers, together with the Green Book Champion, are becoming more and more accustomed to questioning every source material suggested by set and costume designers, and proactively engaging with them and our workshops to ensure each production aligns with the zero-to-landfill approach. NTGent also just redecorated one of their venues, completely in line with the TGB, and, together with the theatre company BERLIN, developed a project called YOU TURN, where scenography from prior shows has been (and will be) reused for new productions.

In summary, NTGent has, through the auto-analysis, identified key areas for sustainable change in our organisation. After deciding to focus on the production aspect of our

day-to-day theatre operations, we identified the need for an easy-to-use tool to assess our production processes and landed on the well-established *Theatre Green Book*. The TGB provides a structured approach to improving various aspects of production, such as the use of sustainable materials and emission reduction. By applying this tool, NTGent has started to contribute to a more sustainable cultural sector. However, the implementation and the success of these efforts are fragile and depend on the meticulous follow-up of the objectives outlined above and regular monitoring that good practices are still being followed and, over time, improved.

SECTION 2

Question Everything!

BY

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Questioning everything can be an exciting and fun adventure of learning (again) about ourselves, but also a difficult task of rediscovering our full potential. It is a journey from what we take for granted as our vision of work and usual perception of our ecosystem toward novel and unexplored avenues that unfold in front of us like missing puzzles, in imagining another type of theatre that operates in line with environmentally sustainable principles. From testing assumptions, confronting viewpoints, learning about each other in unknown terrain, all the way to converging on our common vision of ecologically and socially sustainable theatre.

Precisely that was a summary of the collective self-reflection exercise some staff members of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb experienced with the STAGES auto-analysis process, framed by a degrowth Doughnut model. Our intention was to engage in a collective process of reflection on the extent to which theatre lives together with nature, and how its work resonates with ecological sustainability and social justice.

Before we dived together for the first time into this joint exploration in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, we did a small experiment. An internal online survey was launched with the purpose of finding out how the theatre's staff members see the environmental crisis and how they see the role of their own artistic and creative work in addressing challenges related to the deep crisis our planet is facing. Are they aware of how many resources the theatre is consuming at an annual level, and what is their environmental footprint? Is there a safe and fair working environment that will attract new artists? Most of the staff members

were sceptical, some cautious, while few were more responsive in providing answers. It seems that the survey left some people puzzled about the connection between their work in theatre and the deep environmental crisis we are all surrounded by. Yet, the survey was like entering into the theatre's ecosystem through the window, trying to provide a short scan or screenshot of where the theatre collective stands with these issues. We have received useful information that served as a guiding light in the process of diving deeper into the auto-analysis exercise.

Parallel to that, some of the staff members who deal with technical, administrative, financial or production aspects of the theatre were interviewed or asked to provide hard data. They were asked: how much paper is being spent, how many times people were flying or travelling, how much heat, energy and water were spent? Furthermore, do they care about the corporate sponsorships from the fossil fuel industry, how much of the waste is recycled, and to which extent they reuse textile material used in theatre shows? What are the rules of public procurement? We, again, received a huge amount of data needed for us to create a Doughnut model for the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb and see if there are any major overshoots that the theatre's daily operation is producing. Is the theatre operating in the 'safe and sustainable space,' or if it does – in most cases not knowingly – make any detrimental environmental impact?

But then, we entered through the door – through the auto-analysis exercise with the Croatian National Theatre staff members. Indeed, it was about questioning everything: how we work and live in our working environment;

what role theatre can play in increasing awareness about the environmental crisis; how efficiently we manage our resources; how much electricity and water we consume; how much waste we produce, how much we leave behind, and how much of it can be recycled or reused; how much we contribute to CO₂ emissions through heating, flights, and road transport; whether, and how, we care about each other; whether we see any connection between our daily work and the environmental crisis surrounding us; how the Doughnut visualisation model can help us improve theatre performance; what can be done easily and what requires additional effort, procedural change, or investment. Can we – or should we – address the obstacles to making our theatre operate as an ecologically and socially sustainable ecosystem? What can theatre itself do to become a sort of lighthouse for society, showing what needs to change? And last, and most important question: what does all this have to do with us, after all? What is the role of theatre as a public institution in addressing the environmental and climate crisis?

When we delved deeper into this exercise together, it was like a short but shining momentum of discovery and awakening. Faced with various questions that challenged the 'status quo' and demanded a new perspective, the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb personnel from various departments and avenues of work became increasingly interested in its outcomes. With each question, their vision and understanding of the theatre's role grew clearer, sharper, more proactive and more creative. At times, it seemed that nobody had asked them these questions before – yet they were eager to offer answers. Working in different groups,

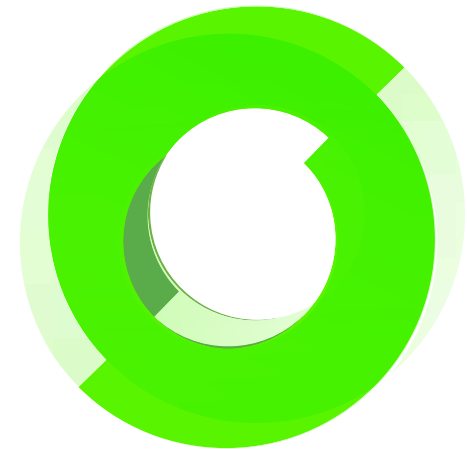
their curiosity to learn and hear from one another grew with each session. Still, for many questions, there were no final answers. But they also recognised that it is up to them, as a working collective, to relate to these questions seriously and responsibly, resolving these dilemmas with choices and decisions they must make collectively throughout the theatre. The Doughnut concept proved to be a helpful visual tool for identifying where and how their collective and individual behavioural patterns could become more risky or environmentally unfriendly.

Yet the process of imagination had been ignited, and participants actively sought answers in relatively unknown terrain to shape their vision of a sustainable theatre. Their answers often took the form of new questions, yet these questions clearly opened doors for change: Can we consume locally produced food during our catering? Can we print less and use more digital materials? Can we make our theatre surroundings greener? Can we provide more parking spaces for bicycles or for electric cars? Who could be our allies in making this happen? Is it practical to cycle to a theatre premiere? Can we install solar panels on our roof – or not? Can we motivate audiences to use public transport to attend our shows? How can we implement fully green procurement within our theatre?

Without a doubt, the questioning methodology proved to be a highly useful and instrumental tool in increasing awareness at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb about environmental topics, and for anchoring an understanding of the Doughnut model into their own day-to-day reality. During the auto-analysis, they have entered into new terrain where, at least for a moment, they realised how

both their individual and collective roles could make a real difference.

The key question, after all, was: what can be done? If it depends on the imagination of the Croatian National Theatre personnel, the answer is – a lot! But it is up to them to continue asking these same questions to themselves, to each other, and to the directorate to find out if even a modest vision of this imaginary can be translated into tomorrow's reality.



SECTION 2

What is at Stake?

BY

BEATA BARDA

Executive Director (2017-2024),

Trafó House of Contemporary Arts (Hungary)

When we started the STAGES project, we had no idea what the biggest challenge would be for us as a cultural institution in Budapest/Hungary. And no, it was not organising and running the workshops, performances, or debates, nor finding participants, but to get through the traps of bureaucracy and motivate our staff to participate more actively in the whole project.

Let's start with a recent statistic: nearly two-thirds of Hungarians are not willing to give up their standard of living to protect the environment, one of the highest rates in international comparison, according to a study on environmental attitudes, which shows that relatively few people in Hungary are concerned about climate change compared to other countries. In terms of selective waste collection, Hungary is already better off, with 79% of respondents saying they always or often collect waste separately.

However, when asked if Hungarians have taken part in any collective environmental action in the last five years, only one in ten of our citizens answered yes, putting us last in the country rankings. We are a long way behind our western neighbour, Austria, where 50% of respondents said yes.

This is the country in which Trafó House of Contemporary Arts is located. The institution¹, which is 100% maintained by the capital (ownership and funding are exercised by the city), is located in one of the oldest districts of Budapest, the 9th. It will be 27 years old in autumn 2025, but it is housed

¹ The venue's professional programme of events, presented inside and outside of the former electric transformer house, trespasses genres, remaining diverse, experimental and audience-friendly, inspired by innovations as well as cultural heritage. In a unique and authentic manner, it provides a space for the presentation of work by both domestic Hungarian and international artists.

in a building that is more than 100 years old, a former transformer house (hence the name Trafó).

In the first 20 years of our operation, the building was not accessible to wheelchairs, a temporary (and very difficult to assemble) ramp only occasionally allowed wheelchair access to the theatre through the service entrance, with the (physical) help of Trafó staff. When a disabled artist arrived, a temporary mobile toilet for disabled people was also installed in the car park in front of the building. Inside the building, countless stairs that prevented free movement, and it can be said that we did not even reach the minimum level of accessibility.

Finally, a permanent toilet for the disabled was installed in a lightweight side wing erected on the site of the car park just before COVID. But it was still very difficult to get into the theatre. It was a long and adventurous process until we managed to get permission from the district council to install a permanent ramp, as the pavement was now public land. At first, they set such strict rules specifying the material to be used, that it was impossible to implement the original plan for financial reasons. When we got involved in this Creative Europe project, a new opportunity opened up for us. Unfortunately, in the meantime, the prices had risen so high that the erection of the originally planned glass-reinforced concrete and permanent structure still seemed hopeless. A long bureaucratic process began as Trafó decided to build a fixed/permanent metal structure. More and more documents were required to present the technical, financial details. The municipality finally agreed, and we received a new permit – but then we had to find a contractor. What represents a serious financial outlay for us

is only a small job for a Hungarian contractor for a modest fee, and after a long and painstaking search, we finally found one who was willing to build the ramp – although he kept changing the deadline – and the “great work” was eventually completed. We can’t say that the building is fully wheelchair accessible, but at least the main theatre hall is, and the café now has accessible toilets. But wheelchair access to the upper and lower levels (the Studio and the Trafó Club) is still impossible. Still, it is definitely a (semi-)success, whichever way you look at it.

Another of Trafó’s commitments was to use the intensive dialogue with its audiences to encourage them not to drive to the programmes, but to use public transport or cycle. Luck plays a part in this effort, as the nearest tram and metro stops are just around the corner, and cycling is becoming more and more common in Budapest. However, since we built on our parking space, hardly any space was left for bicycle storage, so we could only provide additional parking in public spaces. It was not easy to come to an agreement with the municipality on this issue, but after several rounds of negotiations, we found a solution and were able to build some more parking spaces for bicycles in a corner of the neighbouring park.

We were also not sure how to get the entire Trafó staff to actively participate in the Doughnut Protocol – not just sit in on the meetings as a mandatory part of the project, but to honestly tell us what they think about the issues and problems that arise, to give their opinions, and, if they can, to give concrete advice.

We have found that it is crucial to find an expert moderator who is accepted by all and who can get even the

never-speaking participants to speak up. To find someone credible, experienced and committed to sustainability, who is not only able to formulate questions and answers from the heights of science. So, after some research, we found Gergely Litkai, who is experienced in both on-air and online news and features, and digital production, not only skilled in marketing with a law degree, but also a stand-up comedian who is a committed environmental activist, whose activities in this area also attract considerable media attention. His 'celebrity' status, humour and knowledge helped us to get through the initial but crucial phase of the programme quickly and without any major effort.

Conclusion? If there is any, it's that we have to face reality. Sustainability? Climate change? We should say, these are difficult projects. Not only because it is difficult to understand what is at stake, but also because the path to a result is complicated and slow. And finally, I would like to share one more reference. *The GreenDependent Institute has spent four years researching what the Hungarian population would need to be willing to reduce their carbon footprint and lead a 1.5-degree lifestyle. The devastating Hungarian reality is that a large part of society has in fact already met this Paris 2030 climate target, not because they are conscious, but rather because they are poor.*



SECTION 2

Slovene National Theatre Maribor



Transformation Towards Sustainability: “Getting There”

BY

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Introduction

Theatre institutions have a unique ability to shape societal values and highlight the issues that matter most to communities. In the face of growing environmental challenges, it is essential for theatres to adopt sustainable practices in both their programming and daily operations. By taking the lead with sustainable mobility initiatives, theatres can inspire staff, artists, and audiences to adopt more environmentally friendly habits, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond the theatre.

The impact of environmental degradation is undeniable, threatening public health, equity, and prosperity. While theatres cannot singlehandedly resolve the environmental crisis, they can make a meaningful contribution by taking responsibility for their own operations and setting an example for other sectors to follow. This responsibility includes sustainable mobility practices, which are crucial in reducing the environmental burdens of travel-related activities.

Sustainable mobility in the context of theatre operations involves minimising the environmental impact of transport used by staff, artists, and audiences. Travel, especially by motorised vehicles, contributes significantly to a theatre's environmental burden, including pollution, increased travel times, and decreased physical health. By promoting alternative transport options like cycling, walking, and public transport, theatres can reduce emissions and foster a culture of sustainability. Simple interventions, such as enhancing bike parking facilities, offering cycling incentives, and supporting electric vehicle charging stations, can have a significant positive impact. These measures not only reduce the theatre's environmental footprint but also

encourage audiences to rethink their travel choices, positioning the theatre as a catalyst for broader societal change.

Adopting sustainable mobility practices is part of a larger shift toward sustainability in theatre operations, which also includes waste reduction, energy efficiency and environmentally sound resource management. Mobility, however, stands out as an area where change can be implemented quickly and with immediate impact. By focusing on practical, low-cost measures such as improving cycling infrastructure and encouraging active transport, theatres can make a significant difference in their carbon footprint, while simultaneously building momentum for more extensive sustainability initiatives. This strategic approach to sustainable mobility not only helps reduce environmental impacts but also positions theatres as leaders in driving broader cultural and societal change toward sustainability

Key Challenges in Transitioning to Sustainable Mobility

To assess the current mobility status at Slovenian National Theatre Maribor (in Slovenian: Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor, hereinafter abbreviated as SNG Maribor), a survey was conducted in 2023 to evaluate the commuting habits of employees and identify potential opportunities for promoting sustainable mobility within the organisation. The primary aim of the survey was to gather insights into the modes of transport used for daily commutes and work-related trips, as well as to understand the challenges that hinder the adoption of more sustainable alternatives like cycling and public transport.

The results of a mobility survey conducted in 2023 highlighted that cars are the dominant mode of transport for staff (approximately 50 %) and even more so for audiences (over 90%). In contrast, only a minor share of employees cycle or walk to work, and public transport usage remains relatively low. These findings highlight the dependence on private cars and the potential for improvement in promoting sustainable travel options. They also underline the need for a shift towards more sustainable transportation options, such as cycling and walking, which are key components of sustainable mobility.

In this regard, it was also established that a key barrier to utilising or even increasing cycling is the distance many employees live from the theatre, with several respondents reporting that cycling would be impractical due to poor infrastructure. The lack of proper cycling infrastructure, such as dedicated bike lanes, and concerns about safety, especially during adverse weather conditions, were also frequently mentioned as obstacles. Additionally, some employees expressed concerns about their physical fitness and the practicality of arriving at work sweaty or unkempt, further discouraging the use of bicycles for commuting. Another significant reason for not using bicycles to commute was the lack of safe bicycle parking infrastructure, such as a designated shed or secure bike racks, which many employees felt would help protect their bicycles from theft and damage.

Similarly, public transport is not widely used due to several factors. Poor infrastructure, including inadequate bus routes, infrequent services, and long travel times, was identified as a significant barrier. Employees also

highlighted the lack of public transport options during late hours, making it an unsuitable choice for those with evening shifts. The overall perception was that public transport was inefficient compared to other modes of transport, contributing to its low usage.

The survey also revealed that while walking and cycling could be a viable option for audiences, given the theatre's central location, they are underutilised.

The execution of this survey and the obtained results have clearly helped to underscore the need for improvements in this field, specifically in both cycling infrastructure and public transport services, to encourage more sustainable commuting options. By addressing these challenges, including the provision of secure bicycle parking, SNG Maribor can create an environment that supports and promotes the use of greener, healthier transport options among its employees.

Moving Towards the Future — Overcoming the Sustainable Mobility Implementation Bottlenecks

Strategic mobility planning processes offer the appropriate platform to tackle the barriers linked to introducing sustainable mobility concepts. Firstly, it provides the benchmark for transformation, provides the best practices, presents success stories and insight into novel approaches. Inevitably, it provides an entrance into the academic and expert networks, which enhance the transfer

of knowledge and solutions among interested parties. The main idea thereof is to share the ideology and concepts of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP) (Rupprecht Consult, 2020). Namely, SUMPs offer key solutions to the challenges related to planning, implementation, operation and evaluation of sustainable mobility measures. Through a comprehensive and collaborative planning process, SUMP provides the framework necessary to address issues like car dependency and insufficient cycling infrastructure. For SNG Maribor, adopting SUMP will allow for a more structured approach to addressing these mobility barriers, starting with improving cycling infrastructure such as bike parking, dedicated lanes, and safety measures to encourage employees to cycle to work. Additionally, SUMPs help to implement measures to reduce the reliance on cars by promoting public transport, car-sharing, and other sustainable alternatives, by providing incentives for so-called “soft” measures, primarily addressing the organisational aspect of mobility. These are focused on changing behaviour and promoting sustainable transport options. These include public awareness campaigns, mobility management programmes, and incentive schemes to encourage cycling, walking, and public transport use. Stakeholder engagement, education, and training, along with personalised travel information, help guide individuals in making sustainable choices. Additionally, telecommuting, car-free days, and promoting Mobility as a Service (MaaS) streamline access to sustainable travel options. Soft measures complement infrastructure improvements and are crucial for creating lasting, sustainable mobility change.

SUMP also offers a roadmap for integrating multi-modal transport options, fostering better coordination between cycling, walking, and public transport. This holistic approach will not only contribute to a reduction in car use but also improve overall accessibility for theatre employees, performers, and audience members. By addressing the identified barriers and embracing the principles of SUMP, SNG Maribor can create a more sustainable, healthier, and accessible mobility system for its entire community. We believe that by taking these steps, we can lead by example and encourage other cultural institutions to adopt similar strategies, ultimately helping to reduce environmental impact and improve the quality of life for all stakeholders involved.

To support the successful sustainable mobility measures in theatres, several transport modes and specific measures can be applied to reduce dependence on cars and promote more eco-friendly travel alternatives:

Cycling

Promoting cycling within SNG Maribor involves overcoming several challenges, including financial, political, and cultural barriers. One significant challenge arises from the cultural heritage of the theatre and its surrounding area, where the preservation of historic buildings may limit the ability to construct bike sheds or stands in these spaces. Despite these constraints, strong political support and early stakeholder engagement are essential to addressing such barriers. A well-integrated cycling network with safe and secure infrastructure not only encourages cycling but also contributes to improved public health and enhances

the accessibility of the theatre for a broader audience.

One way SNG Maribor has approached these challenges is by integrating cycling into a broader sustainable mobility strategy. Workshops with staff and cycling NGOs have been organised to identify the main gaps and set the goals and proposals of related measures. The “Bike to Work” (B2W) initiative¹ is also a proven model that has successfully encouraged cycling in organisations. Implementing initiatives like friendly inter-departmental cycling competitions, providing cycling route maps, and offering rewards for regular cyclists can foster a culture of cycling within its workforce. Additionally, improving infrastructure is crucial. SNG Maribor has put its efforts into providing secure bike parking, shower facilities, changing rooms, and lockers, making cycling a more viable commuting option for staff. Support for bike maintenance, such as on-site repair stations or partnerships with local bike shops, can further reduce barriers to cycling.

To motivate employees to adopt cycling, theatres can offer various incentives. For example, providing performance tickets, discounts for frequent cyclists, or cycling-related prizes could increase motivation and participation. Organising company bike tours or offering health check-ups could also help maintain interest and engagement. Additionally, bicycles can be used for business-related travel, such as for short trips or transporting materials, further reducing the environmental impact of operations and reinforcing the theatre’s commitment to sustainability.

SNG Maribor is also investing in purchasing a company bike, which will be available for employees to use for daily

¹ <https://www.bike2work-project.eu>

work-related trips. This initiative will not only help reduce the need for car travel but also make it easier for staff to engage in sustainable transport practices for tasks that require mobility during the workday. The introduction of a company bike is an essential step toward enhancing sustainable commuting options, ensuring that staff have easy access to an eco-friendly transportation alternative throughout the day. Furthermore, the company bike offers an opportunity to showcase the benefits of cycling to employees who may not already consider cycling as a commuting option. Many employees who do not cycle to work may not realise how enjoyable and practical cycling can be. By making the company bike available for daily use, SNG Maribor can provide an incentive for staff to try cycling, allowing them to experience firsthand how cycling can be an efficient, affordable, and healthy mode of transportation. The opportunity to “try before they buy” is a key element in encouraging employees to embrace cycling as a regular commuting option.

Implementing these cycling initiatives not only reduces the theatre’s environmental footprint but also promotes a culture of sustainable mobility. Providing secure bike parking, on-site bike repair stations, and facilities like showers and lockers makes cycling more accessible and convenient for employees. By incorporating these measures into daily operations, SNG Maribor can create an environment that encourages cycling as a regular mode of transport, contributing to its long-term sustainability goals.

In addition to environmental benefits, cycling offers significant health advantages. Regular cycling can improve cardiovascular health, reduce stress, and enhance

overall well-being. Encouraging employees to cycle to work supports a healthier and more active lifestyle. Active employees are less likely to experience fatigue and stress, leading to higher productivity, improved morale, and a more engaged workforce. By prioritising cycling and promoting its health benefits, SNG Maribor can enhance employee wellness while aligning with its broader sustainability goals.

By integrating cycling into its mobility strategy, SNG Maribor not only reduces its carbon footprint but also promotes a healthier workforce. Cycling-related incentives, such as rewards for regular cyclists and hosting fitness workshops that highlight the physical and mental benefits of cycling, can help maintain long-term engagement. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, fostering a healthier workforce.

The STAGES project at SNG Maribor has provided valuable insights into integrating sustainable mobility practices into a cultural institution. One key takeaway is the importance of creating a strong culture of sustainability. Through friendly cycling competitions between departments, the theatre successfully motivated staff and built a sense of community around sustainability. This approach can serve as a model for other theatres looking to promote cycling and sustainable transport options.

Another key lesson is the value of supporting new cyclists with practical resources and guidance. SNG Maribor offered cycling maps, route planning, and workshops to help employees make the transition to cycling. These resources are essential in ensuring that new cyclists feel confident and equipped to change their commuting habits.

Investing in infrastructure is also critical. SNG Maribor's investment in secure, weatherproof bike parking, shower facilities, and lockers makes cycling more attractive to employees. On-site bike maintenance support, through regular bike check-ups or partnerships with local bike shops, helps ensure that bikes are in good working condition, reducing barriers to cycling.

Lastly, integrating cycling into business travel has helped reduce the theatre's environmental impact. Encouraging staff to use bicycles for short trips or for transporting materials has proven to be an effective strategy for furthering the theatre's sustainability goals. Through these combined efforts, SNG Maribor has made significant strides in creating a more sustainable mobility culture, providing a model for other cultural institutions to follow.

Public Transport

Enhancing public transport for theatre access faces barriers such as financial constraints, technological challenges, and institutional issues. However, improvements in service quality, integration of ticketing systems, and real-time data can help overcome these hurdles. One effective measure is offering free bus rides for passengers who present a theatre ticket for the day, which has been successfully implemented in Maribor for its main theatre. An important driver of increased public transport usage is the adjustment of bus schedules to accommodate theatregoers, including extending operating hours into the evening, ensuring audiences can rely on public transport after performances. Political support, collaboration between multiple transport operators, and good planning are essential to increase public transport use.

Car-sharing

To reduce car ownership, car-sharing services can be a viable alternative, especially in congested urban areas. Barriers to implementing car-sharing include political, financial, and technological challenges, but incentives like financial benefits and trial services can encourage adoption. Changing public attitudes and supporting legislative shifts are key to promoting the move away from private car use.

Alternative Fuels and Driving Technologies

Transitioning to cleaner fuels and propulsion systems for vehicles, such as electric cars, is an important part of reducing urban air pollution. This shift faces challenges related to technological gaps, financial planning, and legislation. However, with strong political will and proper planning, these technologies can be integrated into city transport systems, benefiting both the environment and theatre accessibility. If theatres have their own parking facilities, they can secure a number of electric filling stations there, or they can rent a certain number at a designated parking facility.

Efficient Logistics

Efficient freight distribution and delivery systems for theatres can also help reduce traffic congestion and pollution. Barriers related to SNG Maribor currently include spatial constraints (access to the theatre is limited), but with proper organisational coordination and stakeholder involvement, these systems can be successfully implemented to improve the logistics system.

Organisational Measures to Support Sustainable Mobility

Alongside the ongoing infrastructure and transport initiatives, SNG Maribor is actively implementing several organisational measures to further promote and support sustainable mobility within the institution. These efforts aim to encourage a shift towards more sustainable commuting practices among employees, reinforcing the theatre's broader sustainability goals.

A key initiative for theatres looking to strengthen their sustainable mobility efforts is to designate a person responsible for advocating and managing sustainable mobility within the organisation. This individual would serve as a point of contact for employees, audiences, and visitors, answering questions related to sustainable transport options, providing guidance on access to the theatre via eco-friendly transportation, and communicating ideas, proposals, and challenges to the management team. This concept is drawn from Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) and is also recognised as a driving factor for change in several sustainable mobility certification programmes. Moreover, pursuing sustainable mobility certifications, such as "Cycle Friendly Employer"², "Pedestrian Friendly Employer", and "SmartMove certificate"³ can further support the theatre's commitment to improving cycling, walking, and public transport accessibility. By obtaining these certifications, theatres can formalise their sustainability initiatives while

also motivating employees to embrace better commuting practices, ultimately fostering a more environmentally responsible workplace culture.

Additionally, theatres can provide employees with information packages that include essential resources about sustainable commuting options, such as local cycling routes, public transport timetables, and tips on reducing their carbon footprint. These information packages serve as a valuable ongoing tool, empowering staff to make informed decisions about how they travel to and from work. Together, these efforts can drive a broader cultural shift towards sustainable mobility within the theatre and its community.

As evident from these efforts, SNG Maribor has initiated several sustainable mobility measures as part of its broader strategy to reduce its environmental impact and promote a healthier and more accessible environment. By implementing these measures, SNG Maribor not only reduces its environmental footprint but also encourages a cultural shift towards sustainable mobility, benefiting employees, performers and visitors/audiences. As a model for other cultural institutions, these efforts contribute to broader sustainability goals while fostering a healthier workforce and improving theatre accessibility. This comprehensive approach, which integrates cycling, public transport, car-sharing, mobility marketing campaigns etc., creating a robust mobility strategy for the future. By prioritising these transport modes, SNG Maribor demonstrates how theatres can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable mobility, enhancing accessibility, and minimising environmental impact.

2 The cycle-friendly employer certification, <https://cfe-certification.eu>, accessed 20. 2. 2025.

3 SmartMOVE – Sustainable Mobility Certificate, <https://www.smart-move.si/en/about/sustainable-mobility-certificate>, accessed 25. 2. 2025.

Conclusion

The findings and activities from the STAGES project indicate a significant potential for increasing the adoption of sustainable mobility means as a commuting option at SNG Maribor. Based on the insights gained through the project, it is clear that with the right infrastructure, support, and incentives, walking, cycling, and public transport could be a practical and attractive choice for many employees (also in conjunction with other motorised transport modes – e.g. multimodality options). To leverage this potential, SNG Maribor will continue the implementation of several key initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable mobility within the organisation.

First and foremost, emphasis will be put on mobility marketing campaigns to raise awareness about the advantages of sustainable mobility options and encourage employees as well as audiences to consider them in their daily routines. This also includes providing clear and accessible information about how to get to SNG Maribor in the most efficient and environmentally friendly manner, whether through a dedicated webpage or distribution of informative leaflets (or links on event posters and tickets) outlining cycling routes, public transport options and walking paths. An area map highlighting all these options would further ease the transition for those considering alternative modes of transport. Such measures would not only promote the concepts of sustainable mobility but also foster a broader culture of sustainable mobility within the organisation and wider.

During the STAGES process, we have learned that, in order to ensure successful implementation of these

initiatives, intense communication, whether through general dissemination activities, by conveying messages through performances or by organising thematic workshops that engage the public, audiences and employees in discussions about the more complex measures. Such efforts offer an opportunity for staff to voice their concerns, share ideas, and help shape the future of sustainable mobility at SNG Maribor, or for the public and audiences to help co-create their own physical and cultural environment, and which would also serve as a valuable foundation for a comprehensive Mobility Management Plan, which could guide SNG Maribor's long-term efforts in fostering a more sustainable and accessible urban environment.

While SNG Maribor has already made progress by introducing initiatives aimed at promoting walking, cycling, and public transport, the next step is to formally adopt the principles of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). Although the SUMP process has not yet been fully implemented, there is a strong commitment to embracing its principles in the near future. By doing so, SNG Maribor will be able to further reduce its environmental impact, improve accessibility, and contribute to the health and well-being of staff and visitors.

SNG Maribor's initiatives offer a strong example for other cultural institutions to follow. By adopting sustainable mobility practices, SNG Maribor not only aligns with global sustainability goals but also contributes to the wider conversation about how public institutions can support a more sustainable future. Sustainable mobility is about reducing emissions, but also about fostering a culture of responsibility that extends beyond the theatre, influencing

the wider community in meaningful ways. Through its actions, SNG Maribor is demonstrating that sustainability is a tangible, achievable goal that can positively transform both the institution and its environment.

The STAGES project has demonstrated that successfully integrating cycling into the daily operations of a cultural institution requires a multifaceted approach. This includes infrastructure improvements, cultural shifts, practical support for employees, and collaboration with external partners. The lessons learned from this project can serve as a model for other theatres and cultural institutions that wish to reduce their environmental footprint while promoting healthier and more sustainable commuting practices.

As SNG Maribor moves forward with the implementation of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), the theatre is well-positioned to serve as a leader in sustainable mobility within the cultural sector. By continuing to take these steps, SNG Maribor will not only inspire other institutions but also contribute to creating a more sustainable, healthier, and inclusive urban environment for all.



Jérôme Bel at Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (Switzerland)

© Sabina Bösch

SECTION 2

Moving Minds and Bodies: Théâtre De Liège's Commitment to Low-carbon Mobility

BY

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The performing arts are alive because they set bodies and imaginations in motion. But behind the magic of a full house lies a logistical ballet of vehicles, journeys – and inevitably, emissions. Staff, artists, materials, sets, and of course audiences: today, mobility is one of the main sources of CO₂ emissions for a theatre. As shown in the think tank The Shift Project's study, *Let's Decarbonize Culture* (2021), mobility accounts for approximately two-thirds of the carbon footprint of an average city-centre performing arts venue. This is precisely the case for the Théâtre de Liège in Belgium, where 57% of audience members still come by car.

Faced with this challenge, responsibility is shared: local authorities, public transport operators and cultural institutions must work together. Fully aware of its role, the Théâtre de Liège has been developing an ambitious mobility policy for several years, rooted in the Liège ecosystem and built in partnership with many local stakeholders.

Encouraging Audiences to Change Their Habits

Together with TEC (Wallonia's public transport operator), the Théâtre de Liège finances free transport for spectators coming by bus or tram. Performance times have been adjusted to fit with the last bus and tram services. For train travellers, the partnership with SNCB (Belgium's National Railway Company) offers a 50% discount on tickets for anyone travelling to a show at the theatre.

These measures go hand in hand with continuous dialogue with the City to improve the conditions for soft

mobility: better cycling infrastructure, secure bike parking, public lighting... During a large assembly co-organised with the University of Liège called *Rêvons Liège 2030*, artists, experts, citizens, and associations gathered to imagine the Liège of tomorrow. On this occasion, some deliberately outlandish ideas were put forward, to break free from the usual constraints: slides to replace stairs, zip lines between buildings, or an endless tram loop providing continuous service. Alongside these playful visions, more immediately actionable ideas also enriched the debate: creating school walking buses, developing boat-trams on the Meuse, inter-modal apps rewarding users, setting transport costs according to income, adapting transport services to the cultural offer, or clearing pavements around the theatre. Following this collective brainstorming, these proposals were then presented to the City of Liège as concrete ideas to inspire and guide future mobility policies.

Rethinking Internal Mobility

Reducing the carbon footprint also means acting where one has the most control: internal mobility. For its teams, Théâtre de Liège reimburses commuting costs for public transport and cycling, provides bicycles for trips around the city, and has created a dedicated bike storage space. Professional travel has also been reconsidered: for any journey that can be done in less than seven hours by train (connections included), travel by train is now the rule, unless the train ticket costs more than 2.5 times the price of a plane ticket. Beyond that, flying remains possible,

especially to maintain an international programme – vital for fostering dialogue between cultures.

To acknowledge the impact of air travel, each plane ticket purchased includes a symbolic carbon contribution paid into a dedicated fund. At the end of each season, staff propose and vote for local associations working to protect the environment to receive this contribution. This measure has three aims: to recognise the pollution linked to our activities, to symbolically weigh this choice with a financial cost, and to support local actors who contribute to planetary sustainability.

Designing Tours That Travel Better

Finally, the mobility of the productions themselves is under scrutiny: each show is now designed following eco-design principles. Sets must be dismantlable, easy to store, light and optimised to limit transport volume – fitting into a single 100 m³ truck at most. Tours are planned with a sustainable itinerary in mind: maximising performances in the same region, activating national and European partner networks (Prospero, STAGES, etc.), and avoiding single performances whenever possible. For tours outside the European Union, transport choices are studied in detail: is it more sustainable to ship the set or rebuild it on site? Is maritime or rail freight feasible and preferable? One guiding rule applies: the show must stay at least one week on site (including setup and takedown) with a minimum of three scheduled performances.

Yet This Transition Also Brings Real Challenges

Providing secure bicycle parking for audiences remains an unsolved issue: there is no space inside the theatre to install dedicated bike parking, and although various solutions have been tested with spaces offered by the City, these facilities are often too far from the venue, and street parking remains unsafe for locking up bikes.

Financial constraints are another obstacle – discussions with funders frequently highlight the tension between sustainability and cost, with the cheapest travel option (often air travel) still being favoured. Many artists, whose means are more limited, must also choose air transport out of necessity when time and budgets are tight. Switching to slower modes of travel means longer journeys, which can weigh on the well-being of staff and artists who spend more time away from their families.

On top of this, coordinating multiple partnerships (with the city, transport operators and ticketing partners) requires significant administrative resources, and the theatre depends heavily on existing public transport infrastructure, which does not always serve all areas or late-night schedules. Encouraging audiences to give up their cars is another barrier, as some spectators remain attached to the comfort, flexibility and perceived safety of driving – especially when shows finish late at night and connections are less frequent.

Despite these hurdles, the theatre remains convinced that every step forward counts. By placing mobility at the heart of its transition strategy, Théâtre de Liège is betting

on a different kind of travel: gentler on the planet and true to its role as a house of imagination and a bridge between territories.



SECTION 2

Slovene National Theatre Maribor



Transformation Towards Sustainability: “Being There”

BY

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Slovene National Theatre Maribor (Slovenia)

Introduction

Theatre is not just a place for entertainment, moreover, it is a powerful cultural institution with the ability to address significant global issues, including environmental burdening and sustainability. As an important public institution, the Slovenian National Theatre Maribor (SNG Maribor), has the opportunity to lead by example in demonstrating how cultural organisations can align with sustainability and circular economy principles to reduce their environmental impact. This transformation, initiated through the STAGES project, aimed to enhance the sustainability of the theatre’s operations while addressing broader environmental challenges. The study and proposed measures examine how SNG Maribor can contribute to the transition towards a more sustainable and circular future.

The environmental burden faced by the theatre industry and other cultural institutions cannot be underestimated. The production and performance processes inherently generate environmental impacts, such as the energy use, consumption of resources, waste generation and, indirectly, pollution. As theatres continue to explore ways to reduce their environmental burdening and improve sustainability, the principles adopted by and implemented at the SNG Maribor offer a promising pathway and are showcased in this paper. Namely, theatres have a unique capacity to explore critical issues with audiences both on and off the stage. In the context of the environmental crisis, this includes communicating the importance of environmental action through projects, performances, and by sharing sustainable practices. Theatres are among the most high-profile public buildings, with approximately 34 million tickets sold every

year globally. They often serve as flagship institutions in town centres, representing arts and culture to the public. As such, it is essential for these institutions to lead by example in reducing their environmental impact and demonstrating that sustainability and creativity can coexist.

In today's world, environmental degradation represents an immediate threat to safety, equity, and prosperity. The cultural sector, while not able to solve the crisis on its own, can still play an important role in addressing it. Theatre, with its capacity to provoke, entertain, and surprise, can reflect the pressing concerns of current generations while providing meaningful opportunities for change. However, for theatre to maintain its credibility and relevance in this context, it must evolve itself. The transformation toward sustainability and circular economy practices within SNG Maribor Theatre is therefore an essential step in this direction, enabling the institution to act responsibly and sustainably.

Circular Economy Concepts in Action

As SNG Maribor moves toward sustainability, the implementation of circular economy principles becomes essential in transforming its operations and productions. Circular economy¹ offers a framework that goes beyond reducing waste; it focuses on maximising the value of existing materials, minimising resource consumption, and fostering a sustainable future (Calisto Friant et al, 2020, Castro, C. G

et al, 2022, Geissdoerfer, M., et al., 2020, Iacovidou, E et al. 2021, Reuter, et al, 2019). The idea and concepts of circular economy (CE) have been studied extensively in academia, business, and government over the past ten years. CE has been gaining popularity because it helps to minimise emissions and consumption of raw materials, opens up new market prospects and, principally, increases the sustainability of consumption and improves resource efficiency (Tunn, V. S. et al. 2019). For the theatre, this means integrating key principles that not only address environmental concerns but also align with its artistic mission.

The core principles of circular economy—*Reduce, Source Sustainably, Reuse or Recycle*—are integral to how the theatre operates and creates.

- 1. REDUCE:** The first step in the circular approach is to minimise consumption across all areas. From reducing energy use to lowering material purchases (such as paper or single-use plastics), the theatre actively seeks to lessen its environmental impact. Minimising resource consumption ensures that the theatre uses fewer materials, allowing it to reduce its overall carbon footprint and make sustainability a core part of its daily operations.
- 2. SOURCE SUSTAINABLY:** Once consumption is reduced, the next step is sourcing materials in an environmentally responsible way. This includes choosing sustainably produced materials for sets, costumes, and props, selecting renewable energy sources for the theatre's power needs, and prioritising

1 "Circular Economy Concept". www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org. Retrieved 23. 4. 2023.

local suppliers to lower transportation emissions. By aligning purchasing practices with sustainability goals, SNG Maribor sets a precedent for responsible consumption within the cultural sector.

- 3. REUSE or RECYCLE:** Reusing and recycling are vital to closing the loop in the circular economy. This principle encourages the theatre to repurpose materials wherever possible, from using recycled items for stage design to collecting waste materials for reuse in future productions. The process of recycling waste, along with fostering a culture of responsible disposal, helps reduce landfill contributions and allows the theatre to transform what would be waste into resources for the future.

In addition to these core principles, the circularity concept is further represented through the seven pillars of circular economy: material, energy consumption, water consumption, biodiversity, culture and society, health and well-being, and economic aspects (which go beyond just monetary value). These pillars are particularly relevant to the performing arts sector, as they align with the Doughnut approach (Raworth, K., 2012, 2017) adopted by the STAGES project. The Doughnut approach emphasises the need to balance the social and ecological foundations of sustainability while respecting the environmental boundaries. All of these principles can be applied to the performing arts sector, including the work being done at SNG Maribor Theatre.

Sustainable Theatre Practices

Guidelines and frameworks focused on sustainability and circularity concepts play a crucial role in helping theatres adopt more environmentally responsible practices (e.g. Theatre Green Book, 2021). These resources offer practical, detailed guidance on how to integrate sustainability into theatre production, operations, and building management. Typically, such frameworks cover areas like sustainable productions, green building practices, and eco-friendly operational strategies.

For SNG Maribor, utilising sustainability guidelines has been vital in shaping its transformation towards more eco-conscious practices. This approach has led to the adoption of low-emission, low-waste practices, increased reuse and recycling of materials, and the exploration of alternative, sustainable materials for sets, costumes, and props. By implementing these sustainability principles, the theatre aligns its operational practices with broader environmental goals, ensuring that every aspect of its operations – from production to administration – contributes to a greener and more sustainable future.

Before embarking on any major transformation, it is critical for any organisation to undergo a thorough self-assessment. After setting clear goals regarding sustainability, this process helps to assess and evaluate the existing practices and identify areas for improvement. A self-assessment helps uncover barriers and drivers that might influence the success of the transformation process. By examining areas such as energy use, waste management, and resource consumption, the theatre can better understand its strengths and weaknesses in implementing sustainable practices.

In line with the circular economy principles, the self-assessment for SNG Maribor focused on key aspects such as waste reduction, the use of sustainable materials, and energy consumption. Additionally, the assessment reviewed whether the theatre's practices align with the guidelines provided by the *Theatre Green Book*, a key framework for sustainable theatre operations.

Key Areas of Focus

Path towards sustainability at SNG Maribor encompasses every aspect of its functionality, from marketing to the final execution of performances, covering everything in between, both on-stage and off-stage. There are, however, several key areas of focus that are critical for ensuring that the theatre operates sustainably and which have been addressed:

- **Front of House Operations:** This included marketing and box office operations, where consumables such as paper and promotional materials have been reduced or replaced with digital alternatives. Catering operations should prioritise sustainable sourcing, including using locally produced and seasonal food.
- **Back of House Operations:** This encompasses areas such as workshops, rehearsal spaces, and dressing rooms, where energy-efficient systems have been implemented. All administrative processes have been redesigned to follow ALARA principles (As-Low-As-Reasonably-Achievable), and workshops and costume design have been set on a course to incorporate circular economy principles by reusing materials and recycling whenever possible.

- **Building Renovation:** The renovation of the theatre building focuses on improving its thermal envelope by enhancing insulation, upgrading windows and doors, and optimising the heating, cooling, and water systems. The outdated heating system will be replaced with heat pumps, and the building will be partially connected to municipal district heating to reduce reliance on gas. Additional improvements include upgrading wiring and addressing inefficiencies in the current systems, particularly in the summer when cooling is ineffective. The renovation also targets the façade and roof insulation, aiming to reduce heat losses by up to 40%. These measures will enhance the building's energy performance, contributing to a greener environment while lowering operational costs.
- **Energy Efficiency:** To improve overall energy efficiency, the theatre will adopt energy-saving practices across all operations. This includes using energy-efficient lighting, such as replacing incandescent bulbs with LEDs and installing lighting controls, as well as maintaining heating and cooling systems to optimise their performance. Additionally, the theatre will promote energy awareness among staff and visitors to further reduce energy consumption and minimise its environmental impact.
- **Waste Management:** At SNG Maribor, implementing a sustainable waste management system was crucial to reducing environmental impact. This involved preventing waste generation, reusing materials, and recycling or recovering energy from discarded

items. However, the current system faces challenges, including inadequate waste sorting and recycling infrastructure for all types of waste. While some materials like wood, metal, and paper are recycled, hazardous waste such as paints and textiles, as well as mixed municipal waste, are currently not effectively managed. To improve such situations, theatres could appoint a waste coordinator, increase the number of recycling bins, and actively encourage staff and visitors to adopt sustainable waste practices, ensuring more efficient sorting and disposal.

- **Water Consumption:** Regarding water consumption, there were no systems in place to reduce usage, and the outdated plumbing system led to significant wastage. Upgrading plumbing systems and exploring eco-friendly cleaning alternatives have proved essential to reducing water consumption and minimising waste.
- **Travel and Transportation:** To reduce emissions from travel, the theatre actively supports sustainable travel choices for its staff, artists, and audiences by promoting public transportation, cycling, and walking. Additionally, the frequently chooses low-carbon options for deliveries and touring productions.
- **Contracts and Procurement:** Procurement rules have been set to prioritise sustainability as much as possible, by sourcing materials and services from suppliers who share the theatre's sustainability values, ensuring that third-party contractors also adhere to sustainability standards.

Lessons Learned

SNG Maribor's sustainability journey has provided valuable insights that can serve as a model for other theatres seeking to reduce their environmental impact. The lessons learned from sustainable operations, productions, and building management underscore that small changes, when consistently applied, can have a substantial positive effect on both the environment and operational efficiency.

In terms of *sustainable operations*, the theatre first addressed front-of-house activities by shifting to digital marketing and ticketing systems, which significantly reduced paper waste and enhanced operational efficiency. By following the changes in dietary habits of employees, performers, staff etc., locally sourced, seasonal food in catering has been prioritised, through which the theatre reduced its food miles, supported local producers and minimised the environmental impact of its food supply chain. Energy efficiency measures, including the installation of energy-efficient illumination both on and off stage contributed to lower energy consumption and reduced operational costs. Additionally, the theatre improved waste management by implementing better sorting, reusing materials, and recycling more efficiently, which led to a noticeable reduction in waste sent to landfills. The theatre also encouraged staff and audiences to adopt sustainable travel practices by promoting cycling and walking as well as the use of public transportation, thereby reducing pollution associated with travel. Collectively, these operational changes proved that focusing on energy-saving practices, sustainable sourcing and waste reduction can yield significant environmental benefits.

Sustainable productions at the theatre were another key area of focus. By fostering a collaborative environment among directors, designers, and team members, the theatre prioritised creativity over material consumption, which minimised waste while maintaining the quality of its performances. Local production not only reduced transportation emissions but also connected the theatre's work more closely to the community, grounding performances in local culture. The theatre also adopted a system for tracking materials used in sets, costumes, and props, ensuring that materials were reused, repurposed, or recycled wherever possible. This system significantly reduced the need for new materials and helped decrease waste. The use of sustainable procurement practices, including sourcing low-carbon transport options and sustainable materials, further reduced the environmental impact of production.

In terms of *sustainable buildings*, the renovation of the theatre focused on improving its energy efficiency and reducing environmental impact. The building is currently undergoing significant upgrades to its thermal envelope, including enhanced insulation, energy-efficient windows, and optimised heating and cooling systems. The outdated heating system is being replaced with heat pumps, and the building was partially connected to municipal district heating to reduce reliance on gas. These measures helped minimise energy consumption and reduce operational costs. Additional upgrades, such as better insulation in the façade and roof, contributed to reducing heat loss by up to 30 or even 40%. The theatre's building renovation demonstrates that sustainable design principles can play a critical role in

reducing a cultural institution's environmental footprint, both in terms of energy use and long-term operational costs.

Conclusion: A Model for Sustainable Change

SNG Maribor's journey toward sustainability serves as a pioneering example for other theatres and cultural organisations aiming to reduce their environmental impact. Through focused efforts in sustainable operations, building management, and productions, the theatre demonstrates that cultural institutions can play a leading role in addressing the environmental crisis while maintaining high standards of creativity and performance.

By integrating the principles of circular economy into its operations, SNG Maribor not only reduces its environmental footprint but also sets an example for other cultural institutions. This approach shows that sustainability and creativity can coexist, where innovative solutions are found in rethinking resource use, reducing waste and maintaining artistic integrity. The theatre's commitment to sustainability goes beyond environmental benefits; it serves as a powerful reminder that cultural institutions have the ability to influence broader societal change, inspiring audiences and other organisations to act responsibly in the face of the environmental crisis.

The lessons learned from SNG Maribor show that small operational changes, such as energy conservation and waste reduction, can yield substantial benefits. Adopting sustainable practices in production – from material sourcing to creative processes – can reduce environmental footprints while

fostering a more inclusive, innovative culture. Additionally, the theatre's renovation efforts – such as improving energy efficiency and reducing heat loss – have not only led to lower operational costs but also exemplified how sustainable building practices can minimise a cultural institution's environmental impact.

Through these concerted efforts, SNG Maribor is adapting to a new environmental reality and leading the way for others to follow. By embracing circular economy principles, the theatre is positioning itself at the forefront of sustainability in the cultural sector, demonstrating that creativity, culture, and responsibility can thrive together. As SNG Maribor continues its transformation, it stands as a model for other cultural institutions, proving that with careful planning, collaboration and dedication to sustainability, the cultural sector can lead the way to a more sustainable and responsible future.

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SECTION 2

Sustainable Impacts from Daily Actions

BY

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As the most representative art venue in Taiwan, the National Theater and Concert Hall (NTCH) is committed to social inclusion in its daily operation. Since 2016, we have optimised 28 accessibility facilities, and developed 19 services for diversity and inclusion. Through programming and performance formats, we strive to offer diverse and inclusive perspectives to the audience. It is our goal to eliminate tangible and intangible barriers in society with the power of art.

Since our founding years, NTCH has been working on energy efficiency. In 1988, we reviewed and improved air-conditioning and lighting systems. In 2021, individual departments initiated sustainability action plans. Annual power consumption has reduced from 24 million kWh to 12.5 million kWh, or a 1.68% reduction on average each year. It's a significant and outstanding result among public institutions.

Sustainability strategies at NTCH cover both social and environmental aspects that complement each other. To be an authentically sustainable venue, a theatre needs to take care of both people and the earth. In the next steps, how should we continue to exercise our sustainability impacts on others?

From Individuals to Partnerships

We believe that long-lasting changes come from partner engagement and investment. Therefore, NTCH gradually evolves from individual efforts on carbon reduction to advocacy-driven practices. We extend our influence to performing arts groups and audience members. These advocacy

campaigns and actions eventually change habits and imaginations regarding sustainability. Even though these changes may be relatively smaller than before, it is more challenging than ever. These cumulative actions in daily life are what is needed to shape the future's structure.

Co-create Sustainability with Artists on Stage

Artists are crucial to NTCH in our sustainable development practices. We work closely with residency artists and external groups to implement various measures for sustainable productions. Green visions are included from the starting point. With consultation and resources, we encourage artists to reduce waste, save energy, choose low-carbon transport, embark on digital transformation, and provide inclusive services. Sustainability is not just a motif on stage, but also a fundamental element behind the scenes. These collaborations elevate sustainability capacities in the theatre. Artists also communicate sustainability values to inspire dialogues among viewers.

Green Practices Behind Tickets

To audience members, sustainability is more than a catchphrase, but a common option when they choose to visit the theatre. In 2025, NTCH works with transportation card companies to encourage viewers to choose mass transit options for lower carbon emissions. NTCH also continues to promote e-tickets and reduce paper-based tickets. Programmes are gradually switched to digital versions. Our

magazine *PAR* has been digitised as well. These efforts, by estimate, cut 800 fewer trees. From one ticket, one trip, to one piece of paper, these seemingly marginal adjustments are green actions involving the theatre and its audiences..

Theatre as Social Advocate

NTCH believes that theatre is valuable, besides shows, because of its connections with society. In the future, NTCH will enrich partnerships with artists, viewers, corporations, and international counterparts. We will continue to engage with local and international sustainable theatre networks, and drive substantial transformation in cultural venues.

Lasting impacts do not come from grand manifestos. Instead, sustainability relies on individual choices and persistence. These seemingly minor actions in daily life support a solid foundation for a sustainable and inclusive theatre in the future.



SECTION 2

Slovene National Theatre Maribor



Transformation Towards Sustainability: “Working There”

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Introduction

Slovenian National Theatre Maribor (in Slovenian: Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor, hereinafter abbreviated as SNG Maribor) has successfully undertaken an ambitious transformation toward sustainability through the STAGES project. This initiative was designed to reduce energy consumption, optimise resource use, and enhance environmental responsibility. As a cultural institution, SNG Maribor recognised its vital role not only in the artistic and cultural life of the region but also in promoting sustainability through its operations. The transformation was comprehensive, aiming to embed sustainability into the institution’s very fabric. This was not merely about implementing green measures but creating a lasting, systemic shift toward sustainability.

Theatre has a unique capacity to influence society and raise public awareness about pressing global issues like environmental responsibility and sustainability. As cultural spaces, theatres act as powerful platforms for change, fostering dialogue and challenging audiences to reflect on their roles in the broader societal context. Through their productions, outreach programmes, and community involvement, theatres can help shape public perception, provoke thought, and inspire action on sustainability. SNG Maribor understood that by embracing sustainability in its own operations, it could set an example and become a lighthouse of change — a role model for other institutions in the performing arts realm and wider, as well as individuals in the community. In this way, the theatre’s transformation toward sustainability is not only an internal commitment but also a public declaration of its dedication to environmental

responsibility and its role in leading by example.

The STAGES project, which served as a core element of this transformation, also acted as a significant awareness-raising initiative among the theatre's employees. As part of the project, the theatre emphasised the importance of sustainability through internal campaigns, workshops, and hands-on involvement. This sparked a noticeable shift in employee behaviour, particularly in areas like waste management and energy consumption. Employees became more conscious of their daily actions, resulting in reduced waste production and more mindful energy use across the theatre.

Beyond immediate awareness, the STAGES project contributed significantly to a broader change in practice within the theatre. The transformation of the building itself – through energy-efficient renovations and systems upgrades – has further reinforced sustainable behaviours. The renovations are not just about improving energy performance but also serve as a symbol of commitment, acting as a physical manifestation of the theatre's values. As the building's infrastructure was upgraded to more sustainable standards, it became a powerful driving force in stimulating environmentally friendly behaviour among employees. The transformation of the building will continue to serve as a benchmark, helping to instil a culture of sustainability among staff and the wider theatre community.

Additionally, the renovation will facilitate the implementation of a systematic evaluation process, tracking key performance indicators related to environmental impact. These indicators will allow the theatre to measure whether it is meeting its sustainability goals and identify areas for

improvement. This ongoing evaluation is essential not only to assess the success of the transformation but also to maintain a continuous focus on sustainability. By incorporating these performance metrics, SNG Maribor can demonstrate the tangible outcomes of its sustainability initiatives and ensure that the theatre remains on track to meet its long-term environmental objectives.

The process was guided by a clear vision: balancing operational efficiency, artistic objectives, and long-term sustainability goals, all while making difficult choices along the way. The journey involved both technical interventions, such as energy-efficient upgrades, and significant organisational change to ensure that sustainability became ingrained in the theatre's ethos. By engaging all stakeholders, the theatre sought to achieve lasting, meaningful change. This transformation was both a necessary and strategic decision to respond to the growing need for environmental responsibility within cultural institutions.

Institutionalising Sustainability Transformation

One of the initial needs for the theatre's transformation was to embed sustainability into the very governance and operational framework of the institution. Sustainability was not seen as a temporary initiative but rather as a long-term, strategic priority. To ensure its sustainability goals would be met, SNG Maribor needed to institutionalise these practices into every part of its operations, from leadership decisions to day-to-day activities. Without such integration, the transformation would risk being fragmented or short-lived.

In response, the theatre created a dedicated sustainability governance structure, appointing a sustainability officer to oversee the implementation of the transformation. This officer was tasked with driving initiatives, ensuring policies aligned with sustainability goals, and establishing systems for monitoring progress. These actions set the foundation for sustainability to become a fundamental aspect of every decision, from the design of productions to the selection of suppliers.

To institutionalise sustainability, the theatre ensured that sustainability criteria were embedded in all decision-making processes. Whether it involved choosing suppliers, designing performances, or considering energy usage, every decision took into account its environmental, economic, and social implications. Moreover, the theatre introduced transparent reporting mechanisms that allowed for the consistent tracking of energy consumption, waste production, and resource utilisation. This data-driven approach ensured that progress could be regularly monitored, making it easier to adjust strategies and improve outcomes over time.

Stakeholder Involvement: Mapping, Engagement, and Co-creation

SNG Maribor understood that a successful sustainability transformation could not be achieved in isolation. For true change to take root, all stakeholders – staff, management, artists, contractors, and local communities – had to be engaged in both the design and implementation of

sustainability strategies. The theatre faced the challenge of ensuring that these diverse groups understood the importance of the transformation and contributed to its goals. Therefore, early in the process, the theatre focused on identifying and mapping all stakeholders with an interest in or influence over the theatre's operations.

The next step was to actively engage these stakeholders in co-creating sustainability strategies. This engagement was achieved through workshops, surveys, and focus groups, where stakeholders provided valuable input. Technical staff, for instance, helped identify the most cost-effective energy-saving measures, while artists contributed ideas for sustainable set designs and costumes. This collaborative approach ensured that the measures implemented were practical and aligned with the needs of the theatre's different teams.

By involving stakeholders throughout the process, the theatre ensured that sustainability became a shared responsibility, leading to stronger commitment and greater buy-in. This collaborative approach also helped the theatre develop solutions that were both technically feasible and creatively inspiring. As a result, stakeholders not only supported the theatre's sustainability initiatives but were motivated to actively participate in their implementation, creating a culture of sustainability within the theatre community. The involvement of specific stakeholders resulted in the following progress towards sustainability at SNG Maribor.

Ministry of Culture

As a key funding partner, the Ministry of Culture supported the renovation of the theatre to improve energy efficiency.

Their financial backing enabled the theatre to implement energy-saving upgrades, including energy-efficient lighting, heating systems, and insulation, in line with national sustainability goals.

Municipality of Maribor

The local municipality played an essential role in improving sustainable mobility to the theatre. They helped develop cycling infrastructure, including bicycle sheds and parking for patrons, and adjusted public transport schedules to facilitate easier access for audiences. Additionally, they introduced cost-free bus fares for theatre-goers, promoting sustainable transport options.

Maribor Cycling Network

The Maribor Cycling Network offered valuable input on the cycling infrastructure around the theatre, helping design safer, more accessible routes for both staff and visitors, supporting a more sustainable form of transportation.

Institute for Spatial Policies

This institute contributed to the transformation by suggesting the creation of informational packages aimed at both employees and audience members. These materials helped raise awareness and catalyse behavioural changes toward sustainability within the theatre community.

Jožef Stefan Institute

The Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia's largest research institution, provided expert guidance through *ex ante* and *ex post* analyses, helping the theatre plan and assess its

sustainability initiatives. Their research-backed recommendations shaped the renovation plans, ensuring the strategies were based on solid data and aligned with best practices.

By engaging these stakeholders, SNG Maribor ensured that its sustainability strategies were well-informed, practical, and tailored to meet both environmental and community needs. This collaborative approach not only reinforced the theatre's commitment to sustainability but also created a shared sense of responsibility among all involved parties.

Organisational Change Management: Shifting the Culture Towards Sustainability

A critical element of the transformation was managing the organisational change that was necessary to foster a culture of sustainability. The theatre identified several key "shifting points" in its operations – moments when sustainability could be most effectively introduced. These included policy changes, staff training sessions, and the introduction of sustainability initiatives. During these times, the staff was encouraged to adopt new behaviours and tools that contributed to the overall sustainability goals.

Training sessions became a cornerstone of the change management process. The theatre organised regular campaigns and training for staff members, educating them about energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable procurement. By equipping staff with the knowledge and resources to implement sustainable practices in their

daily work, the theatre ensured that everyone understood how their individual contributions could make a difference. Employees learned practical actions such as reducing paper waste, conserving water, and switching off equipment when not in use.

Leadership played an instrumental role in driving this cultural shift. Management consistently modelled sustainable behaviours, setting an example for the rest of the staff. Whether reducing energy consumption in their own departments or adopting sustainable practices in decision-making, the management team led by example. This leadership created an environment where sustainability was not just seen as an external initiative but as a core organisational value that guided every aspect of the theatre's operations.

Through effective organisational change management, the theatre created a culture where sustainability became second nature, empowering staff to take ownership of the institution's sustainability efforts.

Quick Wins: Demonstrating Impact

While the long-term sustainability goals were essential, SNG Maribor also recognised the need to demonstrate visible progress early in the process. Quick wins – simple, cost-effective actions that delivered immediate results – were key to maintaining momentum and reinforcing the theatre's commitment to sustainability. These early successes helped engage staff, stakeholders, and audiences in the transformation, ensuring that the theatre's efforts were not only effective but also practical and impactful.

Several quick wins were implemented, yielding immediate benefits:

- 1. Building Renovation:** Although not the cheapest option and not presenting quite an immediate impact, the comprehensive renovation of the theatre building itself is definitely one of the most important interventions on the path towards sustainability of SNG Maribor. This includes the installation of a new thermal envelope, energy-efficient windows and insulation, set to dramatically improve the building's energy efficiency. These upgrades will minimise heat loss and help to maintain a stable internal climate, contributing to substantial energy savings. Additionally, a modernised electric system and a new, energy-efficient heating and ventilation system were introduced. These changes significantly reduced energy consumption, improved comfort for both staff and audiences, and ensured that the building was aligned with the theatre's long-term sustainability goals. The renovated building not only serves as a lasting example of the theatre's commitment to sustainability but will also drive further environmentally friendly behaviour among employees and visitors.
- 2. Energy-Efficient Lighting:** As part of the broader effort to reduce energy consumption, the theatre replaced conventional incandescent and fluorescent lights with energy-efficient LED bulbs. This change resulted in a 50% reduction in electricity consumption for lighting and improved the quality of illumination in both performance and backstage areas.

This initiative helped make the theatre's operations more energy-efficient and showcased the immediate, tangible benefits of sustainability-focused decisions.

- 3. Waste Management Improvements:** The introduction of a more effective waste sorting system across the theatre's premises created designated bins for recyclables, organic waste, and general waste. This initiative not only helped reduce landfill waste but also encouraged both staff and visitors to engage in more sustainable waste management practices. The system fostered a culture of responsibility and sustainability, making it easier for everyone involved to contribute to the theatre's environmental goals.
- 4. Sustainable Digital Practices:** In line with efforts to reduce paper usage, the theatre transitioned from paper-based marketing, ticketing, and communication systems to fully digital platforms. Tickets were also designed to serve as a leaflet, inviting audiences to use alternative transportation such as public transport, cycling, or walking, to reduce their carbon footprint. This shift not only reduced paper waste but also streamlined administrative processes and contributed to greater operational efficiency. By going digital, the theatre demonstrated its commitment to reducing its environmental footprint while improving internal workflows.
- 5. Sustainable Mobility Infrastructure:** SNG Maribor also focused on improving sustainable mobility for staff and visitors. The theatre installed a bicycle shed for employees and bike parking for the audience, promoting cycling as an attractive alternative to car

transportation. The municipality of Maribor adjusted public transport schedules to connect better with the theatre's activities and offered cost-free bus fares for audience members, further encouraging sustainable transport options.

- 6. Improvements in Use of Materials:** A key aspect of the theatre's sustainability efforts was the improvement in the use of materials, particularly through the adoption of circular economy principles. The theatre began conducting a thorough inventory of materials used in its productions, aiming to reduce waste and optimise resource use. Materials such as wood, fabric, and metal, previously used in sets and costumes, were recycled and repurposed for future productions. The theatre also worked to source sustainable and recyclable materials for new productions, ensuring that waste was minimised and resources were used efficiently. The adoption of a circular approach helped not only reduce the theatre's environmental impact but also encouraged more sustainable production practices throughout the organisation.

These quick wins provided immediate, visible results, demonstrating that sustainability measures could be practical, cost-effective, and impactful in the short term. They helped build momentum for larger, more ambitious sustainability initiatives and showcased the theatre's broader commitment to a greener future. The renovation, as the cornerstone of these efforts, will continue to serve as a powerful catalyst for further sustainable practices within the institution.

These early successes were essential in engaging both staff and stakeholders in the sustainability transformation, ensuring that everyone felt involved in the journey. By proving that tangible, immediate results were achievable, SNG Maribor solidified its commitment to sustainability and laid the foundation for continued environmental responsibility across all aspects of its operations.

Making Difficult Choices: Balancing Sustainability with Operational Realities

Throughout the sustainability transformation, SNG Maribor faced a series of difficult decisions. These challenges arose from the need to balance the long-term goals of sustainability with the immediate realities of financial constraints, artistic considerations and operational limitations. Some of the most sustainable solutions came with high upfront costs (e.g., building renovation or a bicycle shed) or posed challenges in balancing creative vision with environmental responsibility (reorganisation of productions during the renovation process).

One major challenge was navigating the procurement process. Public procurement regulations often prioritised cost-efficiency over sustainability, which sometimes made it difficult to choose environmentally friendly suppliers or materials. The theatre overcame this by advocating for policy changes that emphasised sustainability criteria while still ensuring that the theatre could meet its budgetary constraints. By gradually introducing more sustainable

suppliers and materials, the theatre was able to align its procurement processes with its sustainability goals without significantly increasing costs.

Another challenge was finding ways to balance sustainability with the creative demands of the theatre. Sustainable set designs and costumes were not necessarily more expensive but definitely more labour-intensive, requiring careful consideration of the costs and benefits. The theatre worked closely with its artistic team to explore innovative, cost-effective ways to create sustainable designs without compromising the creative vision of the productions.

Upgrading the building's infrastructure, such as improving insulation or modernising the ventilation systems, was another area where difficult choices had to be made. While these improvements would result in long-term energy savings, the upfront costs were significant. To manage this, the theatre sought external funding and partnerships to cover costs.

These difficult choices required careful planning and strategic decision-making. The theatre prioritised sustainability within its broader mission, ensuring that both environmental and operational goals were met, and finding solutions that balanced idealism with practicality.

Conclusion: The Path Forward

SNG Maribor's transformation toward sustainability has been a comprehensive success. Through a combination of technical upgrades, organisational change, and active stakeholder involvement, the theatre has successfully institutionalised sustainability as a core value. Sustainability is

now embedded in the theatre's decision-making processes, with clear governance structures and reporting systems ensuring ongoing progress and accountability.

Stakeholders have been actively engaged in the co-creation of sustainability strategies, ensuring that the solutions implemented are practical and reflective of the diverse needs of the theatre community. Organisational change management has fostered a culture where sustainability is embraced at every level, with staff members empowered to take action. Quick wins have delivered visible results that reinforce the theatre's commitment to sustainability and provide a strong foundation for continued progress.

An essential element in ensuring the success of the sustainability transformation was the creation of a culture that supports and drives sustainability. The board and senior management played a critical role in championing the transformation, providing consistent messaging and appointing sustainability sponsors to ensure alignment. The involvement of staff was also paramount, as they are the ones who would be driving the change on the ground. Recognising the importance of their expertise, the theatre established a green staff network to educate, understand challenges, and gather ideas. Environmental literacy training across the organisation was implemented to ensure that all employees, from front-line staff to senior leadership, were aligned with the sustainability goals and principles. Clear communication of set targets, milestones, and achievements became a cornerstone of the transformation, ensuring that progress was understood and celebrated at every level of the organisation.

Freelancers, performers, artists, funders, supporters,

and audiences also needed to be brought along in the journey toward sustainability. A well-coordinated communication plan was established to share sustainability goals and progress. This included providing regular updates on sustainability targets, achievements, and challenges through newsletters, social media, and dedicated sustainability sections in programmes. By creating consistent and clear communications, the theatre ensured that everyone – staff, stakeholders, and audiences – was informed, involved, and motivated to support the sustainability transformation. The role of the audience was especially important, as they were given the opportunity to engage with the theatre's sustainability efforts through clear messaging about travel options, sustainable initiatives, and environmental responsibilities. In particular, front-of-house staff played a key role in educating visitors and promoting sustainable practices, such as encouraging the use of public transport, bicycles, and walking.

In addition to engaging audiences in environmental practices, the theatre's outreach programmes aligned with educational efforts, partnering with schools, sustainability awareness events, and national observances to amplify the message. The theatre also found value in using various platforms – social media, websites, tickets, and emails – to continue sharing sustainability messages and celebrating achievements. This ensured that the sustainability commitment wasn't just a message for the staff but was extended to the community, making sustainability an integral part of the theatre's identity.

One of the key challenges faced during the transformation was overcoming the fear of change, particularly

concerns about job security among staff. These anxieties were addressed through clear, transparent communication and a focus on how the transformation could lead to new opportunities and stronger job roles. The theatre emphasised that sustainability was not only about environmental benefits but also about enhancing the institution's resilience and creating new roles in the long term. By involving employees in the process and showing how the transformation could create a more sustainable and inclusive workplace, the theatre helped to ease these concerns and fostered a sense of ownership and pride among staff.

Despite facing difficult decisions along the way, such as balancing sustainability goals with operational constraints, SNG Maribor managed to navigate these challenges effectively. By prioritising sustainability within the broader mission of the theatre, it found a way to balance environmental and operational goals, emerging as a model for other cultural institutions seeking to embrace sustainability.

As SNG Maribor continues on its path toward a greener future, it will serve as a beacon for other institutions, demonstrating that sustainability and creativity can thrive together in the cultural sector. The transformation is not just a one-time project but a commitment to long-term environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and operational efficiency.



Itinerary – geology of a homecoming
by Rogério Nuno Costa, promotional image
© Alípio Padilha



III

Sustainable Future

L'invisible n'est pas inexistant (The Invisible is Not Nonexistent)
at Théâtre de Liège (Belgium) © Alice Piemme

SECTION 3

UTOPIA: Imagining the Future of Sustainable Theatre Practices

Interview with Venedig Meer: Reinventing Theatre Lighting with Gravity

BY

EMMANUELLE LEJEUNE

Sustainable Advisor and STAGES Coordinator,
Théâtre de Liège (Belgium)

The Belgian theatre company Venedig Meer has made a significant leap in exploring more eco-friendly theatre practices with their show *The Invisible Is Not Nonexistent*, by reinventing stage lighting. Instead of traditional spotlights connected to the theatre's electrical system, they designed and prototyped a gravity-powered generator to produce light. This bold project, initiated in 2022, brought together artists, technicians, and engineers in a long-term effort that culminated in the premiere of the show on September 19, 2024.

A Spark to Rethink Light

The idea for this project stemmed from a small lamp, the Gravity Light by Deciwatt, capable of producing light through gravity. As Julien Jaillot, one of the three co-directors of Venedig Meer, explains:

"You place a 12 kg weight 1.5 meters high, and it produces twenty minutes of light. This simple concept fascinated us, and we wanted to adapt it to theatre."

However, the apparent simplicity concealed significant technical challenges. The low light output, ranging from 15 to 40 watts instead of the 650 to 5000 watts of traditional incandescent spotlights, necessitated a complete overhaul of stage practices. Light became a precious resource, requiring meticulous management.

This shift influenced every stage of the creative process, as Florence Minder, author, director, actress, and co-director of Venedig Meer, emphasises:

"We had to adjust the script to match the limited duration of the light. It pushed us to invent a new way of working,

transforming our approach to technical direction, resources, and even storytelling.”

Mutual Learning Between Artists and Engineers

This project sparked a unique dialogue between the artistic and scientific worlds. Engineers, notably Baptiste Herregods and Laurent Staudt, collaborated closely with the company to create the generators. While the collaboration was sometimes challenging, it proved to be enriching.

“The engineers wanted precise answers about how their machines would be used, but the script was evolving simultaneously, which created tension,” Florence explains. “At times, the technology overwhelmed us, and we needed to focus solely on the performance. However, this dynamic between technology and creation gave rise to a unique approach and even led to the creation of a new practice: gravity-based technical direction!”

Towards a Collective Ecological Transition

While the show does not claim to be an ecological manifesto, sustainability permeated the entire process. Approximately two-thirds of the lighting came from gravity generators, drastically reducing consumption compared to traditional incandescent lamps and even LEDs, whose electronics consume much more than the little energy produced by the generators.

Nevertheless, Manon Faure, co-director of Venedig Meer, remains realistic about the project’s limitations:

“We knew it was impossible to produce a zero-carbon show with our resources. The generators require a lot of electronic components, and sourcing everything locally would have demanded additional time and money.”

The company is keen not to impose its working approach on others, as Julien emphasises:

“This project is an example of ecological constraints transformed into creative opportunities, but it is not a universal model. Each company must find solutions suited to its own context.”

Ultimately, The Invisible Is Not Nonexistent represents more than just a show. It is a departure that demonstrates that the ecological transition is rooted in human relationships above all, not solely in technological advances or impact reduction.

“This project required intense cooperation among artists, engineers, technicians, and technical directors, and that is what made it strong. Ecological transition demands transforming practices, as well as mindsets and ways of working,” concludes Florence. “This project taught us that we could reinvent how we work. It gives us confidence in our ability to tackle today’s challenges.”



SECTION 3

OPEN REHEARSAL¹

10 (foot)notes for a text- as-performance, or a performance-as-text

BY

ROGÉRIO NUNO COSTA

Performance Artist, Researcher, Writer and Curator,
in collaboration with

**AIDA ESTELA CASTRO
& MANUEL BOGALHEIRO**

“La Terre elle-même, loin d’être un espace « naturel », destiné, à l’origine, à accueillir la vie, est un artefact du vivant, pas moins artificiel qu’une chaise ou un smartphone. La seule différence est que si ces derniers sont des objets produits par une seule espèce, la Terre est un artefact produit par des millions d’espèces. Il n’y a rien de naturel sur notre planète, tout est artificiel.”

Coccia, Emanuele. “Une vie à la frontière”, interview by Octave Larmagnac-Matheron, Philosophie Magazine, Hors-Série nr. 53, (Spring/Summer 2022): p. 97

(1)

This *pre-text* is the beginning of a more ambitious endeavour that we plan to conclude and eventually make public somewhere over the course of 2025, the final step in our three-year adventure within the project STAGES. This *pre-text* has therefore its roots in a trajectory initiated in January 2023, when Rogério, Aida and Manuel, following a common interest in areas of action that co-exist in the intersections between art, science and technology, but also governance and participation, climate activism and radical pedagogies, met for the first time over *Zoom*. The encounter (and its spatial circumstances) has immediately suggested an ironic loophole that the three participants were somehow forced to get into and, while doing so, to problematise: the fallacy of the digital as a “green” alternative.

1 In the Portuguese language, the word for “rehearsal” (*ensaio*) is the same for “essay”. This linguistic entanglement is at the core of our collaborative text and, extensively, of the research we have initiated together back in 2023. Within the limitations of this experimental essay, we hope to rehearse ways to reach the moment in time where *ensaio* and *ensaio* are indistinguishable.

(2)

“Condominium” is the umbrella-title of a broad context-oriented theatre project directed by Rogério Nuno Costa in close collaboration with the audience and the team that works daily in the hosting theatres/venues where the project is going to take place. The performances will be structured in the form of a participatory forum for a collective inquiry on the expanded notion of *home* to happen, thus brainstorming and speculating on radical politics for co-inhabiting, belonging and existing, while also investing, investigating and testing sustainable and inclusive ways for moving, staying, transferring and transmitting. Designed as a series of encounters performed with minimum technicalities and the use of the stage as a *meeting space* (both formally and conceptually), the project aims to experiment and elaborate further on the relational/spatial operations and methods that ground a performance *in situ*, thus deepening its dialogue with the local, the domestic and the cooperative. In this context, the project resumes the research initiated in 2023 (and further developed in 2024) around Rogério Nuno Costa’s work *Vou a Tua Casa [I’m coming to your home]* (2003-2006), a series of performances for unusual/private places which had already anticipated ecologically sustainable operations for the production, creation, presentation, communication and circulation of live performances, while proposing a critical reflection on the relations between theatre, place and ubiquity. As a conclusion to this laboratorial experience, the utopian notion of *condominium* as a common (or commonly owned) space will be used as a strategy for imagining and experimenting new modes of conviviality – the theatre/stage as a temporary buffer

zone where new possibilities for togetherness, otherness and collective care can be horizontally engineered, and a more equitable future can be anticipated and prepared. A final performance, titled *Itinerary – geology of a homecoming*, is meant to be scripted within a mobile/nomadic writing process inspired by the Greek concept of *nostos*, linking the cities of Helsinki, where the artist lives, and Lisbon, where the artist is willing to return, by means of transportation that are the least harmful for the environment: ferry boats, buses, trains, bikes and foot; a hard and long trans-European trip will eventually coincide, both in duration and intentionality, with the time needed for the preparation of the piece. A performance “on the way” to its destination, devised as an accumulation of smaller *condominia* left behind in each stopover, ultimately weaving together notions of territoriality, hospitality, identity, place, exoticness/remoteness, possession, nomadism, isolation/exile and custody.

(3)

“If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all.” (John Cage)

(4)

Over the course of the last two years, Rogério Nuno Costa, Aida Estela Castro and Manuel Bogalheiro have shared and discussed various references, processes and case studies (coming from both artistic, scientific and philosophical fields) in order to find a common space for investigative and speculative work that could respond to the challenges proposed by STAGES. The sessions were prepared and

carried out in a horizontal/non-hierarchical way, following the common interest of the participants in areas of action that co-exist in the intersections between art, science and technology, but also governance and participation, climate activism and radical pedagogies. The ecological impact of digital culture, in its relation with theatre making and other live practices, continues to be the main challenge within the research, provoking a very stimulating but complex discussion. How can we imagine a prototype performance piece that can be produced, performed and disseminated through eco-conscious working models? Is that even possible when we have to take into account the presence and the use of the *theatre* (building) in its solid immanence, maintenance and social-economic impact?

(5)

Condominium is an invented Latin word formed by adding the prefix *con-* ('together') to the word *dominium* ('dominion', 'ownership'). Its meaning is, therefore, 'joint dominion' or 'co-ownership'. In international law, condominium is a political territory over which multiple sovereign powers formally agree to share equal dominium (or sovereignty) and exercise their rights jointly, without dividing it into "national" zones.

(6)

A first and very rough attempt to answer some of these interrogations has forced us to reconsider the motto "(re) claiming the stage," ultimately leading to a deep, radical and uncompromising reformulation of the stage's function. In that regard, we want our performance prototype to

envison the possibility of *theatre* (the art form) without a *theatre* (building), or else *the theatre* transmutating into a laboratory for the trying out of new living/livable experiences: a science of the experience. Based on the concept of *condominium* taken as a legal framework where two or more different legal regimes co-exist in the same space, the performance investigates how *Theatre* (now a combination of both the *artform* and the *building*) can reveal, dissect and intensify the relational dynamics that brings together audiences, artists, producers, programmers, among other agencies, around a common goal and will for social change — a well-functioning, sustainable and stable system that can mirror the ideal of a single, indivisible, intangible and dynamic planet, or "a common home of humanity". It is not possible to keep a stable understanding of the *building-theatre* without a stable planet (and a stable climate) that belongs to all, understood as a common heritage, and performed as a *condominium*.

(7)

A second structural question raised during the residency would now follow: how to govern this common home? By legally defining the different agencies and their responsibilities, the *condominium* transforms the overlap of the private and common interests into a symbiosis. This assumption has led us to the idea of *Theatre* as a participatory forum, a durational social laboratory where we can test different elaborations of the concept of *meeting*, both as a daily professional practice, a creative tool, a working methodology, a metaphoric trope, or the ethical path towards an imaginary world. What relational, personal and intimate

dynamics can a meeting unfold? What are the forces and power structures at stake? And how can those structures be revealed, dissected, reorganised, re-distributed and re-written? Moreover: how to meet in the face of global catastrophe? And how to ultimately turn the meetings' theoretical outcomes into action?

(8)

“Condominium” aims to intensify the relationship between a *performance-as-encounter* and the various agencies that co-inhabit and/or visit a cultural building (in this case, the National Theatre), taken as a place of intensification, disruption and deconstruction of the ideas of bureaucracy, convention, history and hegemony. In this regard, the *building-theatre* is “just” the meeting point for a broader endeavour to be initiated collectively: a governance system capable of restoring and maintaining a stable environment, enabling spatialities and temporalities built on multiplicity and inclusiveness, promoting decision-making policies that are participatory, resilient and empowering. There is: how can art be a means for the creation of new approaches to relationality, cooperation and democracy, also making visible what is otherwise marginal and misrepresented? “Condominium” represents our will to reinforce and make visible a community that, in a more or less wandering and serendipitous way, has been built around a common goal of mutual care and social-political change.

(9)

Whereas critical, our approach to this project is playful, as it projects the building of a safe interactive playground for

a collective reflection to happen within, around and/or in relation to the *building-theatre*. While doing so, we want to avoid falling in the “aboutness trap”: the performance, in its artistic and para-artistic entirety, is sustainable, not *about* sustainability or about it *being sustainable*... This erratic process of “questioning the question,” or to keep asking without expecting a comforting answer, led us to an inevitable constellation of impasses and dead ends, an ever-growing list of theories that can only be *proven theoretically*. Notwithstanding, we are willing to insist on confronting and multiplying that rhetoric exercise, thus ambitioning the creation of a common grammar for a *condominial theatre*, or a *slow theatre*, sustained by three axis: the politics of velocity, the aesthetics of waiting and the economy of hope².

(10)

More than the post-modernist cliché that states that *theatre can be everything*, the ubiquitous and de-accelerated assumption that theatre can be (*or is going*) everywhere.

2 Translation of the title: “Estética da espera, política da velocidade, economia da esperança: considerações sobre o *throbber*”, Manuel Bogalheiro’s article published in *Interact* (art, culture and technology online magazine), ICNOVA, FCSH (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), n° 34, June 2021.

SECTION 3

A Narrative of the Ground: A Dialogue Between Theatre and Soil Science



BY

DAVIDE CARNEVALI

Playwright, Director and Theatre Scholar & Associate
Artist, Piccolo Teatro Di Milano - Teatro D'europa (Italy)

in conversation with

EUGENIO MORELLO

& PAOLO PILERI

Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

This is an extract from a conversation between Davide Carnevali, Associate Artist at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Paolo Pileri and Eugenio Morello - professors from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at the Politecnico di Milano -, which took place at the end of the third and final workshop *Earth/Soil/Land...: with the Feet (and the Hands) on the Ground 2022-2024*, a series of multidisciplinary events coordinated by Davide Carnevali in which artists and scholars came together to reflect on matters related to the ground [soil, land, earth..., Ed.]. These encounters brought forth the themes on which the show *Viaggio fantastico nel sottosuolo*, a feature of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano 2024/2025 season, was based, forming part of the “Il teatro tiene banco” project and directed mainly at elementary school children.

Morello: During the STAGES project, sustainability was often considered as a source of impetus for the stage, possessing the power to lend theatre a new mission, a cause deserving of political and social action. As scholars and people from the world of science, we also ponder on the question of how to embrace theatre. At the Stockholm Forum [the second Forum in the STAGES project organised by the Dramaten Theatre on 7-8 October 2024, Ed.], one of the speakers said: “I would like the theatre to speak on certain concepts that science puts forth, but that fail to come across”. However, we need to accept that theatre cannot be a mere vehicle for promoting sustainability with the general public. I believe that what is needed is a conversation “among peers,” as was the idea for the Terra Workshop. Science telling theatre that it “has to pass this

message on to society” is nothing more than propaganda.

Carnevali: As someone working from within a public theatre, I believe that theatre is more than simply a centre for the production of entertainment; it is a place for cultural output that belongs to society, in which theatricality also serves disciplines that are not strictly theatrical. Our aim is to render theatre a tool to “energise” social debate, a role that it does not, currently, have. Even in terms of communication, theatre is by no means the most effective, and an article written on a blog has much more impact. However, theatre does have one advantage, enjoying the privilege of bringing different people together, offering them an “alternative” time and space, separate from their daily lives, in which messages can take on a certain depth, and be accompanied by critical discourse.

Morello: Theatre also strikes chords in a manner that a scientific article is unable to achieve...

Carnevali: This is because it offers you an experience, in which you not only receive an account of something, but also experience the subject of the account itself. We create our shows for children on the basis that they are not willing to simply watch something; they need “action”, “accomplishment”. They are always moving, curious, asking questions and demanding dialogue. This aspect is also interesting in terms of an adult audience. If we limit ourselves to telling stories; to communicating messages with no depth, we run the risk of continuing to promote the very thing we are criticising: the fact that there is no space for reflection.

Spectators often leave the theatre happy, because they have heard a message that they already agreed with before taking their seats, and this gives them the sensation of being better people, thinking that they have taken part in a “cultural initiative”. Yet that initiative is sterile; it has produced nothing. The matter here is to communicate messages while also creating the right conditions for these messages to lead to reflection.

Pileri: Or to ignite it. I believe that we are in a period in which certain questions need to be ignited. “Reflection” is a wonderful word, expressing the concept “I reflect myself”. The lights are dimmed, you enter the dark belly of the auditorium, and you see yourself reflected in something new. Something that leads you to reflect. I feel that the idea of the “best possible performance” has led to this reflection being lost. It is a little like the effect that competition, ranking, has had on the university world: one cannot linger too long on a question, truly reflecting on it, because this takes time, and if you stop, you are left behind. The beauty of the theatrical account is that it sets its own pace. The contemporary idea is that slowness is failure, and that fast people are the ones that get ahead. Speed has become a source of social prejudice. From this viewpoint, theatre can once again *take the time* needed for things to be communicated and, above all, understood. The same could be true for narratives of the ground, the forest, the tree: narratives that need time.

Morello: In approaching these more ecological and environmental themes, the realisation has often emerged that

theatre needs to overcome its classic and anthropocentric approach, lending a voice to the non-human. How can theatre be equipped to represent not only humankind, but others?

Carnevali: Undoubtedly, the challenge to centrality, not only from an anthropocentric viewpoint, but also of *vision* in itself, is an essential one; it entails, in some sense, a fight against our very tradition. The institutionalised tradition is that of a form of Western theatre that serves as a vehicle for knowledge through vision. However, it takes time to re-educate, to embrace an alternative system of thought, a different method of aesthetic understanding. This cannot be achieved in a single generation, or exclusively through theatre. In this period in time, theatre is having to face forms of visual enjoyment that are infinitely more embedded in society. In the course of their daily lives, people receive a heavy dose of information from much more rapid sources, above all via social media.

Pileri: We have the right to be slow. This does not entail a rejection of speed; what it means is that speed does not have to dominate, to be seen as the only possible rhythm. People are used to speed, and therefore they do not ask themselves whether it is “right”. Let us take, as an example, an investor looking to set up a ground-based photovoltaic plant. They are also talking about the ground, but in their own way, not in the way of the ground itself. When you point out that the proposed plant would cover agricultural land, the reply is often the same: “What does the loss or the exploitation of 2% of land matter?”. The language adopted

by those who “use the land” conforms to their own business, becoming fatally aggressive in ecological terms. And the general public agrees, confused by a narrative that skilfully uses speed to create a sturdy alibi that smothers the rights of the land. Theatre, instead, is (still) a place where language and time is safeguarded, and where we can be free of the flood of altered words and concepts that we are fed. Our decision to discuss the “ground” as soon as the curtain rises is consequently also a way to restate our loyalty to a proper form of language, one that is able to *reveal* the ground for what it is, and not for what it is used and exploited for the many interests at play.

Carnevali: The interesting thing about the Scatola Magica [an area of the Teatro Strehler in which *Viaggio fantastico* was staged, Ed.] is that the curtain serves a different purpose. Normally, a theatre curtain is an instrument that reveals and conceals a vision, but by being positioned at the entrance, the curtain of the Scatola Magica opens to allow you to enter an experience; it is interesting for children. It is not enough to *talk* about slowness; spectators need to *live the experience* of slowness, and be aware of what they are experiencing. If you can create that blend of story and experience, then it makes sense, and it makes sense that you do it in a theatre. There are many ways to tell a story, but theatre offers something more: the fact that you are there, in a protected moment in time, with other people, enjoying a common experience.

Pileri: Of course, one needs to understand to what extent people are willing, in that moment, to allow themselves

to be drawn in; to what extent all of this actually moves them... In the past, theatre was an important opportunity for discussion. I would like to see in what manner children and their teachers are motivated, how theatre leads them to doubt, and how they talk about it with each other.

Carnevali: In effect, the idea is that the show does not come to an end when the performance is over; it continues. Apart from the theatre programme that they take home, our work is “complemented” with the activities that the teachers create in class, using the material.

Morello: Ever since I was a child, I have had the idea that theatre is a way to experience memorable emotions. This is why I believe that, perhaps because of the way it immerses you in an “alternative” space and time, it leaves a stronger impression than a scientific conference.

Pileri: This is why we need to continue to foster dialogue between theatre and university, between art and science. We need to express how important multi-disciplinary dialogue is, and how this form of encounter can offer interpretations that would otherwise be lost. The problem is that in the university environment, we often see art as an accessory, rather than as an essential component.

Morello: The concept of *Gesamkunst*, of all-embracing knowledge, is regularly bandied about, but in the end, researchers – whatever their field, including architecture and urban planning – work mainly with other subjects that are purely scientific. We need to accept the fact that being

interdisciplinary also requires the involvement of the arts.

Pileri: In the case of STAGES, it was the theatre that sought us, not the other way round; this is another aspect that we need to consider.

Morello: There is no context within our society in which this dialogue between art and science emerges spontaneously. Theatre could therefore serve as a dedicated space, with its capacity to more easily reach a broader audience than the academic world, where any appeals or knowledge addressed to the general community always passes through the filter of publishing.

Pileri: We also need to accept that universities are increasingly focused on being seen as creators of “workers” rather than of “citizens,” and this is a problem. On the contrary, I believe that theatre continues to see itself as a breeding ground for citizenship. And while universities often end up teaching people not to stray from the beaten track, considering critical thought ever less the great prerogative of research (and increasingly as something that “disturbs” dominant ideas), an encounter with the theatre could offer an unimagined opportunity to salvage this way of thinking; an antidote to *pensée unique*.

Carnevali: Theatre has the advantage of being economically marginal, which is why it continues to escape transformation into a place that churns out workers. However, this form of marginality is fundamental, as it lends theatre a certain autonomy, a certain amount of room for manoeuvre. And a

certain degree of openness. If theatre is able to stimulate reflection on the relationship between content and form, and between the union of content/form and the vision of the world that it creates, it then becomes a universal form of interpretation that can be applied to any discipline, scientific or other. Theatre thus provides society with the tools it needs to understand itself. In this sense, theatre is political, and it also has the power to render science political.



Top:
Earth/Soil/Land...: with the Feet (and the Hands) on the Ground
workshop at Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa (Italy)

© Masiar Pasquali
Bottom: VajontS 23, Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa
© Marta Cervone

SECTION 3

Theatre as a Vehicle for Active Citizenship

BY

CLAUDIO LONGHI

Professor in the Field of Theatre Direction,
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Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa

Imagining and planning a future, in terms of a possible direction for development, requires ethics and responsibility, combining awareness of the past with ties to the present. These values are, by definition, the responsibility of any theatrical institution called on – above all in its civil role – to explore potential paths for allowing theatrical activity to combine, in a practical manner, with the reality that surrounds it and on which it feeds. It is an exercise that serves not only to avoid the risk – all too present in standard scheduling – of a programme focused predominantly on traditional repertory or, in a parallel manner, markedly directed towards commercial strategies, but also to continue to foster direct exchange with the public sphere, thus remaining true to the primary role of the theatre as a key to understanding the city, its target community and its possibilities for development.

European planning, where the guidelines and goals of a shared, transnational agenda serve as inspiration for artistic projects, can provide cues for understanding how to favour a biunique process that leads theatre and its expression not only to represent policies aimed at raising awareness among audiences, but also, conversely, to catalyse decisions in terms of governance.

In these terms, one useful point of reference is the experience of *VajontS 23*, a “choral act of civil theatre” that was staged at the Piccolo Teatro Strehler through STAGES in October 2023, and that, in a certain sense, indicated a potential practical model in which theatre, civil society and essential contemporary themes – in this case the topic of sustainability – can come together.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the tragedy

of Vajont – where human errors in judgement led to the collapse of a large-scale dam constructed to create a hydro-electric reservoir, with the consequential devastation of the valleys and towns below and the loss of around two hundred lives – Marco Paolini, one of the leading figures in Italian narrative theatre and author of a civil oration on the event (*Il racconto del Vajont*), which saw extraordinary success and participation in the nineties, chose to create a unique project entitled *VajontS 23*.

It was an “open and widespread” operation that saw the involvement of the Fabbrica del Mondo – a multi-disciplinary artistic project – and a network of theatrical (and non-theatrical) entities, led by the Piccolo Teatro. A choral representation that simultaneously involved more than 100 theatres in Italy and Europe, and in which “great actors and apprentices from theatre schools, repertory theatres, experimental theatre, music and dance companies, craft-people, theatre personnel and spectators enrolled as readers came together in the widest range of places, from the Strehler in Milan to small provincial theatres, as well as other venues such as schools and water plants, each staging their own version of *VajontS* on the basis of their particular local nature. And then, at 10.39 p.m. [on 9 October 2023], the time at which the mountain slid into the dam, everything stopped. The stated goal was that of civil theatrical action to examine the challenge posed by the climate crisis; water and the Vajont tragedy served as a springboard for “civil prevention practices.”

In other words, *VajontS 23* drew on a sacred moment of commemoration to bring together, with the involvement of the community, a lucid examination of the environmental

issued of our “society of risk”, in which the impact of human intervention on Earth’s resources, first and foremost its water, appear to be increasingly destabilising and harmful.

At the Teatro Strehler, Michele Dell’Utri, who was working on an artistic residency on the theme of sustainability, took on the role of artistic coordinator for the project on behalf of the Piccolo, and, reflecting on the development of the process, stressed: “*theatre [...] is capable of bending to the needs of the present and, in this specific case, the themes and the goals of the project served as a cue for every choice made. To overcome the idea of the spectacularisation of content, to explore the unknown meanderings of the remodelling of theatrical organisation and tradition, driven by the demands of content. To lay bare forms of theatrical expression without ever abandoning them; removing the frills and going straight to the target*”. However, allowing a project to “overcome the ‘limitations’ of theatrical space and time requires the efforts of everyone [...]” in creating a direct account, a moment of awareness and acceptance of shared responsibility. This led to the plan of creating a large-scale choir to read the text of the work: a multitude composed of 20 narrators, joined by around 200 people, including representatives of civil society and local organisations, leading figures from public institutions – from the mayor of Milan to the executive councillors of the Lombardy Region –, deans of universities, secondary school teachers and students, journalists, theatrical personnel, volunteer workers for Civil Protection and the Italian Red Cross, representatives of the world of art and culture, as well as from climate and political activism organisations, from C40 to Fridays for Future.

An extensive list for an experience of “practical” participation, in which the choir became a tangible “speaking mirror” for the audience seated in the stalls, so much so that the overall effect was of continuity between stage and auditorium, in particular at the exact moment of the collapse, when the audience and choir found themselves all standing, facing each other, with the lights on, in a moment of shared recognition and commemoration.

In both the process and the result, it is interesting to see how theatre set in motion a form of active citizenship, bringing forth and underscoring the urgency and awareness of the risks and challenges of the present, as well as generating a form of taking on responsibility by the participants of the declarations and actions made on stage. Not only in purely symbolic or fictional terms, considering that the overtly hybrid nature of the operation, above all in a delicate moment of national climate and water crisis – it was in this period that Italy and its policy makers were called on to deal with the dramatic consequences of serious flooding – led the participants to take a stand in some manner. The direct involvement of so-called civil society, and in particular the ruling classes, can, of course, prove to be a double-edged sword in many senses (with ethical implications, accusations of exploitation, an excess of rhetoric and so on), leading to the need for further and more specific preparation. And yet, public exposure and direct participation processes involving the theatre remain among the most effective means for maintaining open dialogue with institutions, resulting in direct and both short- and medium-term consequences for the community in terms of sustainability.

Faced with the extremely delicate balance between nature and our species, and with the fragility of an “urbanised” and often savagely exploited territory laid before us, the shifting and evolving nature of theatre can guide us in promoting models for sustainable development. For those of us living in the restricted space of the “here and now”, and for generations to come.



SECTION 3

Working with Children in the Performance A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction

BY

ANICA TOMIĆ

Theatre Director, Full Professor of Acting at the Academy
of the Arts and Culture in Osijek (Croatia)
Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb (Croatia)

After viewing the original production of *A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction* by Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, which was developed in partnership with the Competence Centre in Sustainability, I decided to cast girls in the leading roles. The first person that popped into my head was Greta Thunberg, a girl who passionately addressed the United Nations and said: “How dare you? How dare you?” The words resonated with me because these two young girls will deal with the aftermath of an environmental disaster in their adult lives, making it essential for them to have a say in the future that is coming.

The audition represented more than the conventional search for girls who are naturally gifted in drama. We were looking for young individuals who can handle complex texts while also having an intuitive awareness of environmental sustainability and the dangers of species extinction. Then, 12-year-old Naomi Temitope Okoli and Eva Markulin, who were selected during the audition, demonstrated a profound understanding and communicated clearly regarding the climate crisis. Anxiously but with a clear perspective, they articulated their thoughts on the planet’s situation, aware that it is their peers across the globe who are organising protests for climate action. Their ability to identify and connect global issues with their own experience was exceptional. I found myself particularly fascinated by what I would call “Brechtian alienation,” which arose from their profound commitment and sense of responsibility. Their words were not merely a formal representation of sentences, but they conveyed a genuine conviction of a child that something must be done for the planet.

The work process took place in several carefully designed stages. In the first stage, dramaturge Jelena Kovačić and I, in consultation with the author of the text Miranda Rose Hall, dealt with the content, composition and understanding of the discourse in which the text was written. We worked on articulation, pronunciation and internalisation of meaning so that Naomi and Eva could adopt the material as easily and naturally as possible. At the same time, drama pedagogue Grozdana Lajić guided the girls through the process of memorising the text, carefully harmonising the learning rhythm with their internal development of the subject matter. In the second phase, when they mastered the text, we started working on the *mise-en-scène*. That part of the process was gentle and open – I listened to their ideas to subtly incorporate them into the stage concept. In the third phase, all the elements – music, projections, *mise-en-scène* – were combined into a single, synchronised stage material. It was especially important to us that Naomi and Eva watched each other, supported each other and learned from each other. This created an atmosphere of trust. During the fourth stage, just before the premiere, other children joined in, i.e. the girls and boys who generated electricity by spinning bicycles throughout the performance. Since they were all involved in sports, taking on the challenge of public “pedalling” was a fun challenge for them.

In the ultimate phase, which is the fifth, the children’s choir joined the play, rehearsing the final musical section with the composer. At the same time, 50 children from schools and kindergartens drew extinct and endangered species, which were projected during the performance.

The process of working with children was both serious

and unburdened. The children strengthened their connections, encouraged one another, and found unity in a meaningful subject that became a hub for friendship and socialising.

A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction is one of my favourite projects. The echoes of the pandemic persisted throughout 2022, and the fear of touching, socialising, travelling and exchanging was very much present. We were looking for new ways to create fiction or theatre in the post-pandemic “new normal” that would reflect reality, but also try to establish a new system. For me, the idea that each invited theatre has adopted a similar framework, intertwining elements of science and creativity, symbolises a forward-looking perspective on the evolution of theatre. In the time to come, scientific and technological tools could become an inseparable part of artistic expression. In our version, they were enriched with the viewpoints and ideas of children, who represent the future.



SECTION 3

Tracings Around A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction

BY

DAVID GESELSON

Author and Stage Director

Excerpts from Traces autour d'une pièce pour les vivants en temps d'extinction (Tracings around A Play for the Living in Time of Extinction) published by the Lieux-Dits theatre company, texts by David Geselson.

We studied other versions of Katie Mitchell's staging.

We didn't think it worked. From an ecological point of view.

The specifications stipulated that in order to stage this text, we must be as carbon-neutral as possible, and not use electricity or generate it ourselves.

But the proposed solutions didn't work for us. Not at all.

Bicycles, treadmills, LED screens, electronic boxes, video projectors, and speakers – all that didn't work.

All of those things need oil to be manufactured. All of those things are manufactured 10,000 km away from Bobigny.

All of those things have travelled by plane to get here. The requirements were not being met.

But it was food for thought. So, we got to thinking.

And we told ourselves that the teams at the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne who launched this project were right to provoke us.

We quickly decided that we wouldn't buy anything. That we wouldn't build anything. Meh.

We'd light the stage with flames. With candles. But without oil.

Oil candles. That's dangerous. Is that possible? How? With oil?

But what kind of oil? Rapeseed? Organic? And the

wicks? Cotton? Where would the cotton come from?

Would we be putting on a show for posh people who have enough money to be eco-friendly by riding electric bikes to the theatre and lunching on organic avocados from Peru with Thai rice and organic cashews from Vietnam? For dessert, a lava cake with organic chocolate from Ghana.

Right. It's complicated. Eco-logy. Oeko-logos.

House Talk.

Talking together about our home. Our common ground.

Flames burned down theatres and opera houses in the 18th and 19th centuries. We're not going to do that again with oil lamps made in the 21st century. In the 21st century, we burn forests.

It's not right.

It's all greenwashing. We're just salving our consciences.

Last week, Juliette said, 'It's crazy, when you think about it, this system is huge.'

There are a LOT of parabolic reflectors, furniture, candles, and oil lamps.

I looked at our stage set-up. I thought she was right.

That we hadn't created a sustainable show at all.

So far, we had built:

- Ten parabolic reflectors (wood, glass mirror)
- Ten structures to support them (steel)

We bought:

- One hundred 'taper' candles (soy oil wax)
- One hundred glass candle holders (glass)
- One hundred wicks (cotton, soy wax)
- Fifteen oil lamps, old and modern (copper, iron)

- Ten litres of esterified rapeseed oil (rapeseed, methanol)

- Five lighters (plastic, gas)

We salvaged the following from the MC93:

- Pulleys and wires (plastic, cotton, iron)
- A table (wood, steel)

We would need to calculate how much damage all this causes.

We needed to understand what kind of mark we have left on our surroundings by doing all this.

What's worse?

The petrol used to deliver the purchases?

The electricity used for construction? The use of our smartphones and computers for our research?

The Zoom calls with Katie Mitchell and Miranda Rose Hall to discuss changes to the text?

The camera to document the work?

The text I was writing, which will be printed in three hundred copies to leave a trace?

What if we didn't leave any traces?

What would we have to do to build a memory without leaving a trace that would look like a scar in the middle of a forest?

We were getting lost.

What was this text about?

About the living who are disappearing.

Asian elephants, golden toads, butterflies, Amur leopards, orangutans.

And what traces will they have left behind? How will we remember orangutans when we have destroyed all their forests? Do orangutans leave traces?

Biographies

Kitija Balcare (PhD) is a researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of University of Latvia and theatre critic. Her research interests include environmental humanities, posthumanism, and ecocriticism. She has a particular focus on ecotheatre, as well as on aspects of sustainability and environmental activism in the performing arts. She trusts in the transformative power of theatre to change patterns of life and relationships, including those with the more-than-human world.

Beata Barda studied English and History at the University in Budapest, then Dramaturgy at the Academy of Film and Theatre, also in Budapest. After working as a freelancer, she arrived at the Trafó House of Contemporary Arts in 2006. During the 18 years she spent there, she was a programmer, then the artistic director and finally the executive director for seven years. She retired in 2025.

Natasja Börjeson holds a PhD in Environmental Science and works as a researcher and lecturer at Stockholm University. Her research focuses on environmental governance, examining the structures, processes, rules and norms that shape society, and how actors participate and influence decision-making. In particular, her work aims to understand the opportunities and challenges of managing chemical risks through regulation and policy and how societal actors assume responsibility for hazardous chemicals in materials and everyday products. Specific attention is paid to the complexity of supply chains and to the trade-offs and synergies that arise in the green transition. Natasja has extensive experience working in transdisciplinary contexts.

Davide Carnevali is currently Artist in Residence at Piccolo Teatro di Milano and tutor for the programme “Authors under 40” of the Biennale di Venezia Teatro College. His texts, translated into some 15 languages, have been awarded and presented in seasons and festivals in several countries. In recent years, his interest has turned towards rebuilding the relationship between theatre and society. He is one of the artists involved in European projects like STAGES and UNLOCK THE CITY!, paying particular attention to the question of public spaces, ecological urbanism and environmental sustainability.

Kaatje De Geest is a dramaturg and translator who has worked with directors such as Miet Warlop, Thom Luz, Milo Rau, Yves Degryse and Tiago Rodrigues. She has a Master's degree in Art History, Theatre Studies & Musicology from Ghent University (Belgium) and has studied Scandinavian Studies in Ghent and Uppsala (Sweden). Together with Milo Rau, she published the books *Why Theatre?* and *Grundsätzlich unvorbereitet*. In 2021, she received an incentive grant for emerging literary translators.

Özgül Demiralp is digital communication officer for the European Theatre Convention (ETC), and co-founder of Reclaim – Ecofeminist Alliance. She holds a BA in International Relations from the University of Geneva and University of Aberdeen, and a Master's degree in Journalism & Global Communication from Freie Universität Berlin. She started her career as a TV news reporter in Switzerland, and has since then worked as a journalist and editor for various print, online and broadcast media, including an international video news agency. She joined ETC in February 2023.

David Geselson wrote, directed, and performed in *Doreen* (2016), awarded the Best Creation in French Language in 2017 by the Syndicat de la Critique, based on *Letter to D.* by André Gorz. He also created *En Route-Kaddish* (2014), *Lettres non-écrites* (2017), and *Neandertal* (2023). In 2020, he wrote and directed *Le silence et la peur*. In March 2024, as part of the European project STAGES and at the invitation of MC93, he directed *Une pièce pour les vivant-e-x en temps d'extinction*. In the 2025/26 season, he will direct his first opera, *La Bohème*, at the invitation of the Opéra de Nancy. His novel *Lettres non-écrites*, published by Le Tripode in March 2021, won the 2022 Revelation of the First Novel award from the Société des Gens de Lettres.

Guilherme Gomes is an actor, director, playwright and theatre producer. He is a graduate of ESTC (Lisbon, 2014) and ISCTE-IUL (Lisbon, 2019). In 2016, he co-founded the company Teatro da Cidade. He has collaborated with the Calouste Gulbenkian and the Centro Cultural de Belém Foundation on audience mediation projects. He is the artistic director of the CRETA - theatre lab project since 2019, and the artistic director of the Teatro-Cine de Torres Vedras since 2023.

Vedran Horvat is the managing director of the Institute for Political Ecology in Zagreb. From 2005 to 2015, he was the country director of the Zagreb office of Heinrich Böll Stiftung, a German green political foundation. Since 2019, Vedran is a member of the board of directors of the Green European

Foundation. In 2023, Vedran became a guest fellow at the DFG Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies "Futures of Sustainability" in Hamburg and became an associate at the Transnational Institute based in Amsterdam.

Dr. Davor Kontić is a researcher at the Department of Environmental Sciences. He has extensive experience in risk assessment and policy making in relation to air pollution and climate forcing from industrial and transport-related activities. He has gained experience through domestic and EU-funded large-scale research projects, where he was engaged in evaluation and monitoring activities concerning the implementation of air pollution reduction measures.

Emmanuelle Lejeune develops and implements ecological and social strategies in the performing arts. She began her sustainability journey at the Paris Opera, later expanding her work across Europe in the fields of culture and education. Today, she leads the Sustainability Strategy at the Théâtre de Liège (Belgium), coordinates EU-funded projects on sustainable production, and facilitates dialogue between artists and experts to advance the ecological transition in the arts.

Špela Lešnik holds a bachelor's degree in economics and began her professional career at the Slovene National Theatre (SNG) Maribor while still a student at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor. After graduating in 2011, she initially worked in marketing before joining the Maribor Theatre Festival as a producer. Since 2014, she has been a producer with the Maribor Drama, where she has coordinated numerous Slovenian and international co-productions, gaining extensive experience in theatre production and cultural project management.

Claudio Longhi, full professor of History and Theory of Direction at the University of Bologna, has a career that combines academic and theatrical work. Since 1999, he has directed numerous productions for major institutions, with a firm commitment to audience education and participatory theatre. From 2017 to 2020, he served as Director of Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione. Since 2020, as Director of Piccolo Teatro, he promotes contemporary dramaturgy, supports rising artists, and fosters international and European networks.

Eugenio Morello is an architect and associate professor in urban planning at Politecnico di Milano, where he coordinates the Fausto Curti Urban Simulation Laboratory and the Climate Change, Risk and Resilience Laboratory. His

research focuses on the relationship between urban design, environmental quality, resilience, and climate action, with particular attention to adaptation, energy transition, and local circularity. He leads several European and national research projects.

Rogério Nuno Costa is a performance artist, writer, researcher and curator based in Helsinki. He has been presenting performative, documental and pedagogical work of a hybrid and cross-disciplinary nature since 1999, exploring and problematising the fields of performing arts and literature at their intersections with philosophy, art theory and pop culture. His practice builds on a critical friction between artistic and para-artistic narratives, with a special interest in the politics of intimacy, relationality and domesticity.

Tristan Pannatier is a theatre producer and performer. He trained in law, acting and dramaturgy. At Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, he has supported the development of new works, notably by Stefan Kaegi, Christoph Marthaler, Rabih Mroué and Lina Majdalanie. Sustainability has been central to his producing practice, notably through the projects *Sustainable Theatre?* with Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel, and *Showing Without Going* with Ant Hampton. He also lectures in environmental law.

Matjaž Partlič earned his bachelor's degree in economics and has been employed at the Slovene National Theatre Maribor since 2010, where he has worked in a variety of roles and responsibilities. For the past three years, he has served as a producer with the Maribor Drama, specialising in the organisation of tours and guest performances in Slovenia and abroad (the Balkans, Europe, Latin America). Fluent in English with working German, he previously worked in marketing (2006–2010), specialising in online and catalogue sales.

Paolo Pileri is a professor of Urban Planning and Design at Politecnico di Milano. He works on soil and soil conservation. He is the author of more than 500 scientific and popular publications and several books, including *Dalla parte del suolo* (Laterza 2024); *L'intelligenza del suolo* (Altreconomia 2022), *Progettare la Lentezza* (People 2020). He maintains the Piano Terra column in Altreconomia magazine.

Aušra Pociūtė is the public relations manager at Lithuanian National Drama Theatre. She has been working there since 2013.

Anica Tomić is a Croatian theatre director. She studied literature and directing in Zagreb and is a full professor of acting at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek. She directs in Croatia and German-speaking countries and co-founded the #SPASIME initiative. Her work focuses on marginalised groups and social issues. She has received many national and international awards, including the Croatian Theatre Award and the Yellow Frame Award.

Benjamin Virč is Opera and Ballet Manager at the SNT Maribor and a PhD candidate in musicology at the University of Ljubljana. His doctoral research examines intersemiosis in multimodal art, focusing on the entanglement of literature and music in musical theatre translation. He has translated librettos from German, Italian, English, and French into Slovene and produced sung translations, including Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.

Heidi Wiley has been Executive Director of the European Theatre Convention (ETC) since 2009. Under her leadership, ETC has become an established European cultural network. She led ETC to become a strategic partner of the European Commission and the recipient of several prestigious prizes, including the 2022 Art Explora – Académie des Beaux-Arts European Award for innovation in access to culture; and European prizes for outstanding achievement in the fields of audience development and cultural heritage. A studied cultural manager with degrees from La Sorbonne and Leuphana University, Heidi started her career as an international producer and touring manager for artists Victoria Chaplin and the Tiger Lillies, touring around Europe and Asia at major festivals and theatre venues.

Partner Institutions

Théâtre de Liège is a major European venue for contemporary theatre and dance. Based in Belgium, it presents over 40 shows per season, supports emerging artists, and is strongly committed to ecological transition. It leads the STAGES project and develops initiatives like Révons Liège 2030 with the University of Liège. The theatre is also a member of networks such as Arviva, ETC and TMNLab. www.theatredeliège.be

NTGent is a dynamic city theatre that challenges, inspires and moves a diverse audience. With provocative productions and theatre as a driver of social debate, NTGent connects the local Ghent perspective with an international outlook. Its three artistic pillars form the basis of a versatile house where generations of artists collaborate on new forms and major themes. www.ntgent.be

The Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb (HNK) is the country's oldest and central theatre institution, with Opera, Drama, and Ballet ensembles. It presents works by Croatian authors and international classics, staging over 220 performances annually. Recognised across Europe and beyond, HNK hosts and tours international productions. It plays a key role in Zagreb's cultural life and collaborates on EU-funded projects with leading global institutions and artists. www.hnk.hr

MC93 - Maison de la Culture de Seine-Saint-Denis is a public, multicultural venue with an international outlook, serving as both a venue and producer of performing arts. The institution is part of the ambitious Maison de la culture network founded by the French state in 1961, which has evolved into a group of national theatres. Director since 2015, Hortense Archambault leads MC93's project to take theatre to the people of Seine-Saint-Denis and beyond, focusing on the issue of the commons, our shared cultural resources. www.mc93.com

European Theatre Convention (ETC) is the largest network of public theatres in Europe, with over 75 members in more than 30 countries. It is an arts organisation that promotes European theatre as a vital platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies. ETC is supported by the Creative

Europe Programme of the European Union. www.europeantheatre.eu

Trafó House of Contemporary Arts in Budapest is a unique venue in Hungary, embedded in the international contemporary scene. With its performances, concerts, exhibitions, community and audience-building programmes, it aims to address all viewers who are open to new things. It is a media venue with a special focus on young people and committed to social issues, a platform for creating value and context, and a generator of new ideas and productions. www.trafo.hu

Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa, founded as Italy's first public repertory theatre, was created as a theatre of public service. Its programme spans theatre, dance and music, with works marked by interdisciplinarity and international outlook, staged in three venues in Milan. Piccolo supports playwrighting, promotes theatre as a tool for sustainability, welcomes new audiences, and explores links between performance, city and communities. It is led by Director Claudio Longhi and General Director Lanfranco Li Cauti. www.piccoloteatro.org

Riga Technical University (RTU) – University of Latvia

RTU is a modern, internationally recognised and prestigious multidisciplinary technical university. RTU is purposefully evolving to become the fourth-generation university that offers not only high-quality education, but also provides for excellent research and sustainable valorisation, as well as smart digitalisation. The mission of RTU is to ensure internationally competitive, high-quality scientific research, tertiary education, technology transfer and innovation for the Latvian national economy and society. www.rtu.lv

The Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia is the flagship humanities research institution in Latvia that promotes the development of high-quality, responsible and open science. The Institute strives for excellence in high-level cultural and comparative research in the Baltic region, focusing on literature, folklore, music and performing arts, culture, gender studies, digital humanities, and environmental humanities. www.lulfmi.lv

Lithuanian National Drama Theatre (LNDR) strives to provide an opportunity to create for various theatre creators: experienced, well-known, as well young and promising directors, artists and composers. LNDR's story began on the 6 October, 1940, when the play Hope by Dutch playwright Herman Heijermans was performed. www.teatras.lt

Teatro Nacional D. Maria II is one of Portugal's leading theatres. Located in Rossio, in the heart of Lisbon, it became a state-owned enterprise in 2007 and was designated a National Monument in 2012. Its governance includes an Administration Board and an Artistic Director, a role held by Pedro Penim since 2021. As a National Theatre, its mission is to promote Portuguese dramaturgy, ensure public access to international artistic works, and engage the community by attracting and developing new audiences. Committed to social and environmental responsibility, equality, and ethical governance, D. Maria II undertook building interventions in 2021 to preserve its infrastructure while adopting more environmentally efficient solutions. www.tndm.pt

Slovene National Theatre Maribor (SNG Maribor), Slovenia's largest professional theatre institution with a tradition of more than a century, encompasses Drama, Opera, Ballet, and the Maribor Theatre Festival. Celebrated for artistic excellence and innovative productions, it plays a central role in the nation's cultural life. Through its rich legacy and international collaborations, SNT Maribor has become a leading performing arts hub in Southern Central Europe. www.sng-mb.si

The Royal Dramatic Theatre, commonly known as **Dramaten**, is Sweden's national theatre. It was founded in 1788 and has since 1908 been housed in its iconic theatre building in central Stockholm. At Dramaten, audiences can experience classic plays – often in new interpretations – as well as entirely new works, experiments, and stage art that explore the boundaries of the theatrical form. The theatre also presents performances for children and young audiences. Through The Ingmar Bergman International Theatre Festival, Dramaten also offers world-class international guest performances. Dramaten has a large permanent ensemble, its own workshops, and in-house costume production. www.dramaten.se

Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne is a space open to all and dedicated to contemporary creation. Its programming combines strong artistic loyalty with renowned artists and an attention to younger generations of artists, ensuring Vidy's role as a trailblazing institution and a place of discovery. Each season, Vidy produces, coproduces and hosts theatre and dance performances by Swiss and international artists, and manages the distribution and touring of its productions. www.vidy.ch

National Theater and Concert Hall (NTCH), founded in 1987, is Taiwan's first major venue for professional performing arts. It champions artistic freedom and diversity, presenting works from indigenous to global, traditional to contemporary. NTCH supports artists and audiences alike, fostering creativity, international exchange, sustainability, and innovation. Reflecting Taiwan's democratic values, it aims to be a global cultural icon and a hub for open artistic dialogue. www.npac-ntch.org



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NACIONAL
D. MARIA II



DRAMATEN

VIDY THÉÂTRE
LAUSANNE

國家兩廳院
NATIONAL THEATER & CONCERT HALL

About STAGES

STAGES (Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift) is an ambitious theatre experiment to challenge how the cultural sector interacts with the concept of sustainability.

Fourteen influential theatre organisations, including a leading European theatre network, a theatre partner from Asia and partners in academia, have joined together with director Katie Mitchell and choreographer Jérôme Bel — two artists who are renowned for embedding sustainability in their work — to test radical solutions to the biggest challenges posed by the climate crisis.

STAGES is supported with co-funding from the European Union.

About ETC

Founded in 1988, the European Theatre Convention (ETC) is the largest network of public theatres in Europe. It is an arts organisation that promotes European theatre as a vital platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies.

ETC's current four-year programme of activities, European Theatre: **BREAK THE MOULD**, is co-funded by the European Union and supports networking, professional development and artistic collaborations for theatre staff across Europe — championing theatre as a key European art form for the 21st century.

ETC has more than 75 members from 33 countries and is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

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Casebooks

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Digital Theatre – *A Casebook (2018)*

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Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre – *A Casebook (2025)*

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European Drama

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How can theatre respond to the climate crisis? This question lies at the heart of the large-scale project, STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift, a green theatre experiment to reimagine the relationship between culture and sustainability.

Fourteen influential theatre organisations have joined forces to test radical solutions to the biggest challenges posed by the climate crisis. In *STAGES: Sustainable Theatre – A Casebook*, they connect art, science, and society in new and transformative ways, and showcase the wide-reaching power of culture.

From innovative coproduction systems to tour urgent new performances on the climate crisis across Europe and as far afield as Taiwan – without moving any people or sets –, to an auto-analysis process inspired by Doughnut Economics, as well as participatory events and workshops bringing scientists and local audiences into the creative process, STAGES demonstrates how theatre can act as both a mirror and a catalyst for change.

Edited and published by the European Theatre Convention (ETC), this casebook documents practical strategies and sparks critical reflection, encouraging theatre-makers, audiences, and cultural institutions to rethink their role in shaping a sustainable future.