

Report

Results of the Consolidated  
Sustainability Auto-Analysis

# TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE THEATRE:

# MAPPING THE IMPACT OF STAGES THEATRES

20  
25



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# INTRODUCTION. STATE OF PLAY

With the growing impact of the ecological crisis and the strengthening of regulatory frameworks, the green transition is entering the world of performing arts as a natural step of change. At the same time, the world of arts is questioning not only about the creation of socially inclusive art, but also about

the social good in the lives and organisations of artists, or how the art is made. These challenges require re-evaluation of the existing practices, changing not only individual habits but also patterns of action in different sectors. This also implies changes in the principles of performing arts production.

## STAGES

Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a  
Green Environmental Shift

is an international project dedicated to strengthening the understanding of sustainability and practical actions undertaken by different theatres.



Co-funded by  
the European Union





## **The project has three strands:**

### **1 sustainable performances**

Restaging as a co-production system to tour new performances about the climate crisis, without moving people or objects, and recreating them with the use of local resources, as well as production of a local performance on sustainability issues and/or eco-designed/eco-produced shows.

### **2 sustainable transformation**

An auto-analysis process to identify the key areas for sustainable change in organizations.

### **3 sustainable future**

An annual series of participatory forum events and workshops.

This report outlines the state of play at twelve theatres – participants of the STAGES project – across Europe and afield in Taiwan in terms of sustainability, reflecting on environmental, societal, governance and community aspects:

- Théâtre de Liège in Liège, Belgium
- NTGent in Gent, Belgium
- Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, Croatia
- MC93, House of Culture of Seine-Saint-Denis in Bobigny, France
- Trafó House of Contemporary Arts in Budapest, Hungary
- Piccolo Teatro di Milano - Teatro d'Europa in Milan, Italy
- Lithuanian National Drama Theatre in Vilnius, Lithuania
- Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in Lisboa, Portugal
- Slovene National Theatre Maribor in Maribor, Slovenia
- Royal Dramatic Theatre Dramaten in Stockholm, Sweden
- Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne in Lausanne, Switzerland
- National Theater & Concert Hall in Taipei, Taiwan

Theatres are different and diverse in terms of their geographical location, the style and size of the theatre building, the size of the theatre team, the diversity of the repertoire, the sources of funding and budgets, the principles of governance and national operation, and the existing geopolitical contexts.

However, all the theatres use a new approach of auto-analysis, developed by the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the Competence Centre in Sustainability of University of Lausanne, as a guide to identify key areas for sustainable change in their organizations. Auto-analysis brings the concept of Doughnut Economics, first published in 2012 and developed in 2017 by British environmentalist and economist Kate Raworth, into theatres, as

*‘a compass for human prosperity in the 21st century, with the aim of meeting needs of all people within the means of the living planet’.*

The auto-analysis is based on a transposition of Doughnut Economics, adapted to the functioning and impact of the performing arts.



The auto-analysis has collected results on the state of sustainability and future actions in social and environmental directions from twelve theatres located in ten countries across Europe, including Belgium, Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and one Asian theatre located afield, in Taiwan. The speed of implementing the auto-analysis varies from one theatre to another, from one month up to one year, depending on the implementation approach chosen.

The results of the auto-analysis provide an opportunity to look at the current situation in different theatres simultaneously, to identify the first steps taken to promote sustainability through organisational routines and to highlight short-, medium- and long-term goals and action plans for the future.

The report is based on the auto-analysis carried out independently by STAGES theatres and is methodologically rooted in inductive descriptive qualitative analysis.



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# METHOD. DOUGHNUT APPROACH FOR PLANET AND PEOPLE



# In search of just and safe space

*‘The most powerful stories throughout history have been the ones told with pictures,’*

states environmentalist and economist Kate Raworth, emphasizing the power of pictures and images at the heart of human storytelling which also allows us to draw close parallels with the nature of the performing arts. A firm believer in a different narrative of a shared economic future, Raworth playfully suggested using the doughnut as a core concept embedded in the Doughnut Economics, confident that *‘being untutored [in economics] can be an intellectual asset’*.

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 twelve dimensions grown out of the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as minimum social 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-shape area between those two lines –social and planetary boundaries. In other words, this is an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive. Sustainability is perceived as an interdependence of social objectives and the preservation of the planetary boundaries. The doughnut image is used to visualize the need to meet the basic needs of humanity, while avoiding falling into the hole in the middle, without doing harm to nature and the biosphere beyond the edge of the doughnut.

# STAGES Doughnut Protocol

As the Doughnut principle focuses on social and environmental sustainability, this is particularly relevant for theatres in Europe in line with the Opole Recommendations (2023) developed by the European Theatre Convention, identifying democracy and green transition as two of the three main challenges for the next century.

The sustainable theatre tool, expanded as a STAGES Doughnut Protocol, is based on the Creating City Portraits method developed by Kate Raworth herself. This approach applies the doughnut theory not to the whole planet but rather to the smaller scale model of a city, with the aim of identifying and assessing its environmental and social performance, both locally and globally.

The STAGES Doughnut Protocol method used by STAGES 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 organization and organizing concrete actions accordingly.

The methodological guide Getting into the Doughnut has been designed to extend throughout two to three months and to encompass ten to twelve workshops, engaging four multidisciplinary teams. It has three main steps:

- 1) **the “current picture of the institution”**, where participants have to describe a 'photo' of the theatre at the present time;
- 2) **“activities – analysis, prospecting and actions”**, a design of intentions for the future;
- 3) **“commitments – selection, sharing and testing”**, signalling of a set of actions to be implemented in the short and medium term, these mainly emanating from the work at different departments of the theatre.

As a practical task, the participants have to select a set of five concrete actions to be implemented, ranging from immediate, annual and long-term actions.



The [STAGES Doughnut Protocol](#), developed by STAGES partner - Theatre Vidy-Lausanne, in collaboration with the University of Lausanne's Competence Centre for Sustainability, is available as a free self-investigating and self-analysing tool for other theatres.

The tool can be downloaded and used via the [STAGES Doughnut Protocol](#) microsite, providing all the necessary theoretical perspectives and practical tools via the online methodological guide *Getting into the Doughnut*.



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# RESULTS OF AUTO-ANALYSIS. WALK THE TALK

During the auto-analysis process, carried out in 2022 and 2023, the theatres set themselves both micro- and macro-actions in different areas, both internally, within the theatres, and externally, at the community level. The auto-analysis was used as a tool to change the way of thinking and modes of operations, as well as fostering horizontal communication within the organisation. The majority of sustainability actions, ranging from 8 to 44, address cross-cutting areas such as teams, buildings, performances and community.

An additional survey was conducted in December 2024 to understand the conclusions drawn by the theatre representatives from the auto-analysis. In the survey, theatres identified key challenges, first practical steps to be taken, main barriers to action, good practices and areas where theatre teams lacked knowledge.

The results of the auto-analysis and the supplementary survey are presented in this report in four sections, covering

- 1. environmental aspects;**
- 2. social aspects;**
- 3. governance aspects;**
- 4. community aspects.**



# ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS. BEYOND LOW HANGING FRUIT

Theatre has a variety of environmental impacts, resulting from the operation of theatre buildings, the production and 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. For instance, heating in all spaces of Théâtre de Liège is limited to 19 degrees Celsius.

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. For example, the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne facilitates carpooling among spectators attending performances in locations with limited transportation access and poor transportation connections. The Slovenian National Theatre Maribor

plans to implement a sustainable mobility strategy for both employees and visitors, offering the use of environmentally neutral vehicles for travel to and from the theatre.

Many concrete steps focus on changing everyday habits, such as replacing plastic bottles with water fountains and reusable containers, or shifting from printed tickets and apps to digital alternatives. In addition to these, the Royal Dramatic Theatre Dramaten has developed a practical guide for professionals in theatre and performing arts 'Chemical Risks in Hair and Makeup' for safe cosmetic and makeup choices to minimize harmful impacts on team health.

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, minimizing waste while maintaining quality.

## Circular approach

The introduction of circularity into the daily operations of theatres and the production of plays is increasingly on the agenda. However, this shift towards circular practices is hindered not only by a lack of technical knowledge about the environmental impact of various materials but also by the realization that many materials currently in use have little or no recyclability. Théâtre de Liège highlights the 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"). As NTGent points out, scenography must often be finalized much earlier to accommodate sustainability concerns, which can restrict artistic

freedom and creative processes. Meanwhile, the Croatian National Theatre has already implemented a production exchange model, whereby the theatre sells entire productions to other theatres and buys productions from other theatres in order to reduce costs and minimise waste.

Theatres also apply recycling principles beyond their own walls raising public awareness. For instance, Piccolo Teatro di Milano is developing themed workshops for children, coordinated by costume department and educational office and collaborating with NGOs or associations 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.

# Knowledge gaps and contradictions

Theatres recognize 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 their 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. For example, in the case of the STAGES restaging project, a key question arises: *is it more sustainable in terms of carbon emissions to ship reusable props around the world or to recreate props at each touring location?*

## 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

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. For example, trees felled on the site will be returned to nature - left

in the nearby forest so that different organisms will continue to live in them, rebuilding the wood in the soil. 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. 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. Similarly, 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 their 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 that are protected as heritage sites. This status makes it challenging to enhance renewable energy solutions and energy efficiency of the buildings.

As part of a major refurbishment of the building, in an effort to become more energy efficient, 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. For instance, 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 Slovenian National Theatre in Maribor is developing a Green Procurement Book, which includes comprehensive sustainability criteria for the procurement of new materials for theatre productions. 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.

In conclusion, from an environmental point of view, these aspects are essential to reduce the ecological footprint of theatres:

- ▶ Collective understanding of the environmental impact of the theatre
- ▶ Implementation of circular economy principles in practice
- ▶ In addition to the overall sustainability action plan, thematic guidelines should be developed, e.g., mobility policy, catering guidelines, digital greening plan, etc.
- ▶ Professional approaches to monitoring and tracking progress

# SOCIAL ASPECTS. BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

The results of the auto-analysis show that 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 wider public, including theatre-goers.

## Internal perspective

The 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, external 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 burnout 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 to play in this segment and foster change management. As practical solution to actively changing habits, some theatres are proposing the introduction of a reward system among staff, hoping that a gamification approach will make the change process easier and more exciting. In order to keep sustainability issues in 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. The actions aimed at the organisation's employees are varied,

often concrete and clearly targeted, with a commitment to work on their implementation in the near future. At the same time, the implementation of particular actions requires mutual internal agreement in order to turn the intentions into daily practice.

## External perspective

By outlining their 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. For instance, the Royal Dramatic Theatre Dramaten and Teatro Nacional D. Maria II include also relaxed performances into their repertoire that provide a more welcoming and tolerant atmosphere when it comes to movement and noise in the audience. Some of the theatres have taken steps to promote access to the theatre for social groups that are financially excluded.

Most theatres are planning to introduce or are already 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 appropri-

ate 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, adapting websites for different user groups. Piccolo Teatro di Milano offers for blind or visually impaired audiences also poetic audio descriptions played through headphones that provide an account of the performance without neglecting the aspect of emotion 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 have also contributed to strengthening the image of an open theatre in the wider Portuguese society, even 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.

impacts, which can be measured in concrete numbers. This points to the need to identify tools for monitoring social aspects and related change processes.

When developing action plans, theatres find that social improvements are more difficult to be monitored and measured than environmental

In summary, the following factors are important in promoting social sustainability:

- ▶ Inner sustainability as wellbeing of employees, both materially and spiritually
- ▶ Open, solution-oriented organisational culture
- ▶ Culture of active participation in the organisation
- ▶ Theoretical and practical training in sustainability areas and solutions are essential for change
- ▶ Accessibility for different social groups
- ▶ Identification of the needs of specific social groups and responding to them
- ▶ Systematic and holistic actions

# 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 and approach of the theatre. Practical sustainability management is needed at different levels, both in 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. Piccolo Teatro di Milano sees the use of the Doughnut Protocol as 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 a 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.

# Collaboration 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 a

esthetic 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. On the one hand, 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. On the other hand, 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, such as the cost of installing LED lights. 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 an additional budget. The Croatian National Theatre puts the following question: 'How to translate findings and results of the self-evaluation into internal organisational planning and realistic measures which don't require additional resources?' 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.

To sum up, the following factors are important from a governance perspective:

- ▶ Understanding the complexity of governance
- ▶ Management commitment and clear coordination structure
- ▶ Collaborative governance and horizontal decision making
- ▶ Strong networks with like-minded partners outside the organisation
- ▶ Collaboration in between artists-scientists-technicians
- ▶ Diverse sources of funding to implement actions
- ▶ Sustainability objectives embedded in the theatre's binding documents, including contracts
- ▶ Advocacy at national level and lobbying for changes in legislation



# COMMUNITY ASPECTS. NEW 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. The Slovene National Theatre Maribor believes 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

Referring to the experience of STAGES in restaging performances, the Croatian National Theatre recognises that such techniques encourage a broader discussion and awareness of sustainability issues among the audience, allowing them to see the issues at hand on stage in both content and form.

In contrast, NTGent sees in the practice of restaging performances the problem of what the long-term effects of such techniques are and how to talk about them with the audience, not giving the impression that sustainable theatre is a specific form of theatre. Addressing the issue of artistic freedom and corporate social responsibility,

Piccolo Teatro di Milano is committed to include at least one sustainability-themed work in its repertoire each season, integrating sustainable practices, as they believe that 'theatre can act as a megaphone for certain topics'. Also, Teatro Nacional D. Maria II commits to offer audiences at least one sustainably 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 with sustainability in mind.

## Change of habits

Through targeted activities, theatres encourage a change in habits, both within themselves and in the wider community outside the theatre. By developing and strengthening partnerships with local authorities, theatres offer new behavioural models for audiences, for example by addressing mobility issues, improving cycle parking facilities, co-operating 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. For example, MC93 House of Culture of Seine-Saint-Denis has contributed to this change by providing its chef with hands-on training in the preparation of such dishes, and vegetarian and vegan dishes are cheaper to buy in the theatre than others - the theatre subsidises these meals by one euro, thus encouraging a change in the habits of café-goers.

To summarise the actions envisaged for the community, we conclude that:

- ▶ Theatres can contribute to sustainability not only through their activities but also through their performances
- ▶ Theatres play an important role in promoting behaviour change
- ▶ Theatres can contribute to the understanding of sustainability in the community by strengthening cooperation with the municipality



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# **DOUGHNUT APPROACH. IN BETWEEN MAGIC WAND AND BURDEN**



The strength of the Doughnut Protocol is its ability to bring together multiple dimensions of sustainability in a single model, allowing us to see the manifestations and interactions within an organisation. Theatres see the Doughnut Protocol approach as practically useful and beneficial for organisations due to several reasons. Firstly, it broadens horizons and offers different perspectives and ways 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 themselves are strongly involved in the process increases the likelihood that they will become committed to become 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, following

an auto-analysis, allows for a practical action plan to be developed, tailored to the specific needs of theatre.

The 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 and the organisations' reflections on the process and its results, summarised in a survey, raise a number of key questions for further action in the field of sustainability. These are dilemma-type questions to which there is no single answer, but they are also obstacles to targeted action in implementing sustainable organisational performance:

○ 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 and those who are sceptical about climate change or inclusion?



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**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 short term and long term.
- Governance complexities has to be taken into account requiring commitment from TOP management (Board, General Manager, Heads of departments, Green Manager).
- Responsibility for implementing actions and sustainability initiatives differs among theatres – responsibility of green team, human resources department, 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 are 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 efficiency of the action plans.
- Theatres are planning to take a holistic approach by adopting strategic planning and practical tools such as Theatre Green Book and monitoring systems.



還有一些小碎料

進了焚化爐

被製偶師處理  
準備再

製造了戴奧辛等空氣污染

減短了焚化爐的壽命



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**RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**SHIFT BEGINS WITH US**

Auto-analysis is the beginning of a conversation about sustainability in theatre. To keep the conversation going, theatre has to be prepared not only for the time and commitment of the whole team, but also for intrinsic motivation, willingness to learn and readiness to do things differently. The diverse experience of the twelve STAGES theatres in undertaking auto-analysis and taking practical steps in the field of sustainability gives the

opportunity to highlight practical suggestions to other theatres that are striving to integrate sustainability aspects into their work or to deepen their implementation in practice. The recommendations are based on the diverse experience of the STAGES partners' organisations and extend that into practical recommendations, firstly, for other theatres and, secondly, for the cultural sector.

## Recommendations to theatres

### **Auto-analysis.**

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

### **Strategy.**

Incorporate sustainability considerations into the theatre's 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, if necessary, as a support.

### **Education.**

Promote opportunities for staff training on sustainability issues, including circular economy, inclusion and diversity, energy efficiency, narrower

and more targeted themes aimed at changing concrete actions. 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 or audit. 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, not only with employees but also with suppliers and business 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, etc.

**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.**

As part of the process of integrating sustainability principles into the work of the theatre in a context of budget constraints, 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 of the theatre not only to staff, but also to partners and audiences.

# Reccomendations 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 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 implementing a shift rooted in sustainability aspects, both supporting green shift and ensuring 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 integrate sustainability aspects into national curricula for future performing arts professionals.

## **Practical information.**

Collect and promote various practical tools useful for the sector, such as planning templates, impact calculators, monitoring solutions, localising them in the local language where appropriate.

## **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.





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**CONCLUSION.**

**STARTING WITH THE**

**FIRST STEP**



In summary, the STAGES auto-analysis report provides an overview of the current status quo at various theatres across Europe and also in Taiwan. This report not only provides the reader with 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.

In other words, as Piccolo Teatro di Milano puts it, sustainability is a never-ending process, it means going step by step. Auto-analysis, based on the Doughnut Protocol, can be the first and very important step towards sustainability not only in the theatre, but also beyond it. Theatre that speaks the language of art can itself become an agent of change in society.



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**READ MORE**

- *Doughnut Economics*. Available: <https://doughnuteconomics.org>
  
- *Opole Recommendations* (2023). European Theatre Convention. Available: <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/page/resources/online-library#94>
  
- *Planetary Boundaries*. Stockholm Resilience Centre. Available: <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html>
  
- Raworth, Kate (2022). *Doughnut Economics. Seven Ways to Think Like the 21st-Century Economist*. London: Penguin Books.
  
- Taxopoulou, Iphigenia (2023). *Sustainable Theatre. Theory, Context, Practice*. London: Methuen Drama.
  
- *Theatre Green Book*. Available: <https://theatregreenbook.com>





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**SCIENTIFIC**

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