
The Big Green

Project 101100079 – CREA-CULT-2022-COOP

Work Package 10: Research

Deliverable 10.1

Literature report: Sustainable development with the cultural and creative sectors

Version 2023-12-07

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Introduction

This report presents an early snapshot of the ongoing literature collection and review lead by The Big Green's Research team (WP 10). The main intended audience of this report is the project participants. With them in mind, we hope to communicate three things here: the *research interests* that guide the work of the Research team, a preliminary *assessment of the literature*, and what to expect from the *literature database* we are creating. Each of the following main sections is dedicated to one of these topics.

In other words, the point of this report is not the conclusions but the beginnings. We expect that our research interests will serve as a stable structuring device for our work throughout the project, but their phrasing and framing have and may continue to evolve. The literature database will continue to grow as we both foray intentionally into specific literatures and pick up relevant references while doing other work. This collection process will hopefully include contributions from other project participants. As for the literature overview, we intend to offer updated and expanded versions over the course of the project via our online, work-in-progress *Research Compendium*.¹

Our current assessment of the literature is necessarily spotty, and any generalisations about its shape and contents tentative. However, the individual publications we highlight regarding each research question are valuable in their own right. For one, they could make fine material for discussion and exchange among the project participants. Beyond such finds, this report may be most interesting in its suggestions of what remains to be discovered.

Research interests

The research interests that guide the work of the Research team are based both on The Big Green's project conception and on the questions, concerns, and aspirations voiced informally by its participants. In sum, we think that the research interests reflect the desire of members of the cultural and creative sectors *to contribute effectively to the development of an ecologically sustainable civilisation*.

¹ <https://thebiggreen.seri.de>

We assume that this contribution can take three major forms: (1) reducing the ecological harm caused by the cultural and creative sectors themselves, (2) motivating other people to do the same in their respective situations, and (3) translating experiences from cultural and creative work into methods that can help societies at large master the cultural and creative challenge of social-ecological transformation. Accordingly, we ask three research questions:

- (1) How can the cultural and creative (CC) sectors be more ecologically sustainable?
- (2) How can artists and others in the CC sectors catalyse social transformation?
- (3) What can society learn from CC practices to achieve a transformation to sustainability?

Research questions (1) and (2) concur with many ongoing practice-oriented efforts in the sector, including the prospective ‘greening’ of the Creative Europe Programme.² We expect that most of our work on research question (1) and to a lesser extent research question (2) will consist in collating existing or yet to be published sources and evaluating case studies.³ Research question (3) has the greatest potential to lead to original research contributions in an academic context.

This triplet of research questions provides the basic template for the way we focus our research, assess the literature, and organise the literature database.

Preliminary assessment of the literature

Our current collection of more than 200 references consists, for the most part, of results from non-systematic, exploratory searches using general Internet search engines, Google Scholar, and the WorldCat-based catalogue of Radboud University Library.⁴ To a smaller extent, we added works that were

² T. Feifs, T. Kruger, A. Rodriguez, B.-J. Buischool, V. Muller, and A. Mohamedaly, *Greening the Creative Europe Programme – Final report*, 2023.

³ Cf. the case study we contributed to J. Baltà Portolés and I. Van de Gejuchte, *Climate Justice: Through the Creative Lens of the Performing Arts*, IETM, 2023.

⁴ <https://ru.on.worldcat.org>

recommended by colleagues⁵ as well as items that we discovered in the references of other works. We focus on English-language publications because they are accessible to all project participants, while recognising that this tends to foreground voices from places where publishing in English is common. At this point, the database also includes a few publications in German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Dutch. Again, there is a bias in that the compiling researcher is familiar with Romance and Germanic languages, but not Slavic, Baltic, or Celtic languages, or Finnish, Hungarian, Greek, or Maltese (to cover only the official EU languages).

The three sections of the following discussion are based on our three research questions (see above) and relate to the three main collections within our literature database (see below). Each section opens by elaborating briefly on the respective research question, continues with a snapshot appraisal of the relevant literature, and closes by discussing a few noteworthy examples. Given that the literature database allows anyone to browse and search all collected references, we keep citations to a minimum.

(1) Being ecologically sustainable

In research question (1), we ask how the CC sectors can be more ecologically sustainable. Just like other sectors of society, cultural institutions, creative businesses, and individual artists impact the environment. They consume energy and materials and release waste and emissions as they create or preserve artworks and produce events as well as conduct related administration, marketing, networking, etc. Hence this research question could be expanded to read: How can the CC sectors reduce their environmental impact across the board, ultimately to a level that can be maintained indefinitely as part of a sustainably developing civilisation? Useful answers will likely offer specific alternative practices – e.g., with the goal of minimising waste in favour of reuse in stage design – and address the reform of institutional pressures and incentives – e.g., with the goal of reducing travel emissions related to short-term artistic career stations.

⁵ For recommendations, we would like to thank Alexander Roberts on activism, Jennifer Raum on speculative design and architecture, and Nina Liebhaber on education for sustainable development.

Most of the related publications we have collected were published within the last five to ten years and treat sustainability in the CC sectors as a rather new concern. They include several how-to articles from arts magazines/websites aimed at individual practitioners,⁶ some more or less comprehensive practice guides for musicians on tour,⁷ cultural heritage interpreters,⁸ or institutions such as theatres (see below) as well as a number of publications on best practices or sustainable cultural policies that are typically more academic.⁹ Basic documents – such as a first CO₂ accounting standard for cultural institutions in Germany,¹⁰ the environmental sustainability policy of the international network for performing arts, IETM,¹¹ or the recommendations on ‘greening’ the European Commissions’ Creative Europe programme¹² – were published as recently as 2023. This suggests that we are seeing only the beginnings of an emerging literature.

Among the practice guides in our current collection, the *Theatre Green Book* sets the most advanced example.¹³ Under active development by a consortium of mainly British organisations from the theatre and environmental sectors and translated into ten languages including Japanese and Korean, the *Theatre Green Book* strives to scrutinise all aspects of theatre work. Its three volumes focus on productions, buildings, and operations, respectively. Each volume follows the same structure, proceeding from *principles* of sustainable productions, buildings, or operations to *guidance* in the form of detailed standards to aim for, followed by a *toolkit* of concrete practice tips and resources. In addition, a collection of poster-type one-pagers at the front of each volume distil its contents into action flowcharts, other graphical overviews, and one-sentence guidelines. This format

⁶ E.g. S. Schlackman, ‘Want to Create Sustainable Art? Here is Your Comprehensive Guide’, <https://artpreneur.com/journal/sustainable-art-guide/>, 2023.

⁷ J. C. Polanía Giese, *Green Touring Guide*, 2015.

⁸ E.g. L. Finch, *Low Cost/No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage: Reduce Your Impact on the Planet*, 2022.

⁹ E.g. Ł. Wróblewski, A. Gaio, and E. Rosewall (eds.), *Sustainable Cultural Management*, MDPI, 2019.

¹⁰ S. Schunkert, G. Smolka, J. Bilabel, and M. Weidenmüller, *CO₂-Kulturstandard: CO₂-Bilanzierungsstandard für Kultureinrichtungen in Deutschland*, 2023.

¹¹ IETM Green Team, ‘IETM Environmental Sustainability Policy’, 2023.

¹² Feifs, Kruger, Rodriguez, Buiskool, Muller, and Mohamedaly, *Greening the Creative Europe Programme – Final report*.

¹³ Buro Happold, ‘Theatre Green Book’, <https://theatregreenbook.com>.

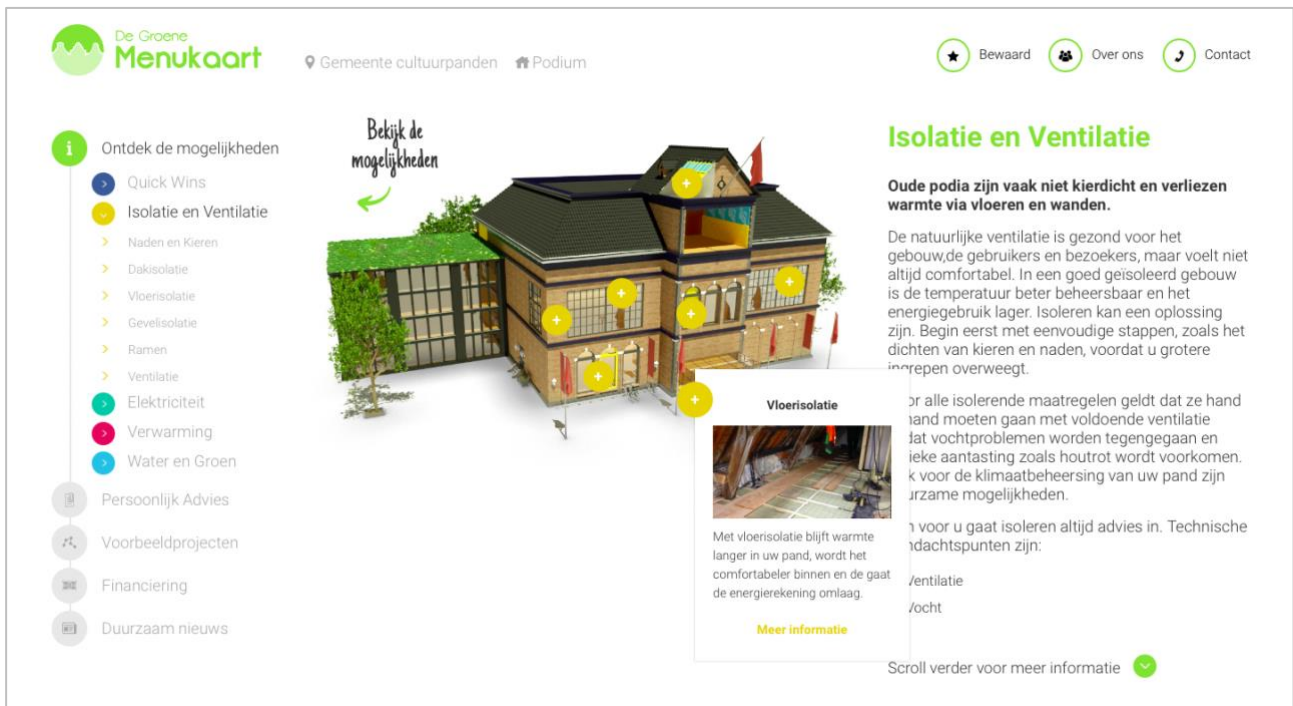


Figure 1. De Groene Menukaart (The Green Menu) for stage buildings, subchapter on insulation and ventilation. Source: <https://www.degroenemenukaart.nl/nl/cultuurpanden/podia#isolatie>, 18.11.2023.

seems to appeal to users, given that a related consortium is developing an **Arts Green Book** along the same lines.¹⁴

The *Theatre Green Book* is freely available in digital form and various parts are currently offered as 'beta versions' for testing and feedback. Some parts, including some toolkits, are maintained on the website rather than within the downloadable documents. The same applies to the interactive Home Survey Tool that guides users through a series of questions to generate a sustainability plan for their building.¹⁵ In comparison, **De Groene Menukaart** (The Green Menu), an initiative by an Amsterdam-based sustainability consulting firm in collaboration with Dutch municipalities, shows how the green-book approach could be realised more fully as an interactive website instead of a book-type document with separate online resources. Being a tool for the 'sustainabling' (*verduurzamen*) of various kinds of buildings, the *Menukaart* offers a specific portal for cultural buildings (*cultuurpanden*) including museums, libraries, and stage buildings (see

¹⁴ Buro Happold, 'Arts Green Book', <https://artsgreenbook.com/>. Version 1 of the first volume, on sustainable buildings, is already available.

¹⁵ Home survey tool: <https://theatregreenbook.com/%20homesurveytool/>

Figure 1).¹⁶ We imagine that a similar interface could not only cover other aspects of cultural institutions (e.g., theatre productions and operations) but also incorporate user-input-based analysis and decision tools seamlessly in the same medium.

Government policies can help the cultural and creative sectors transform to sustainability by defining and rewarding desirable action. The informative and visually attractive 70-page booklet *Towards Sustainable Arts: European Best Practices and Policies* from the Boekman Foundation (another Amsterdam-based institution) surveys the recent state of affairs in seven European countries and regions: the Czech Republic, Finland, Flanders, Germany, The Netherlands, Scotland, and Spain.¹⁷ Incidentally, the editors' underlying take on the topic resembles closely our own three-pronged research interest:

[1] By reducing its own ecological footprint, the cultural sector can set an inspiring example for the millions of people it reaches every year. [2] Art can turn climate change from something abstract and far away into something tangible and close by. [3] The creativity and innovation of artists are essential for the change and new ideas we need to design more sustainable ways of living.¹⁸

The individual contributions in the volume mostly reflect on initiatives for (1) making arts and culture more ecologically sustainable and (2) raising awareness and catalysing social change. They show that in all surveyed countries and regions the making of environmental policies for arts and culture is – or was at the time of writing – largely still in the incipient stages and being driven by the highly engaged arts and culture communities themselves.

As an entryway into the academic literature on 'sustainabling' the cultural and creative sectors, we would like to highlight the edited anthology *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy*.¹⁹ It collects

¹⁶ De Groene Grachten, 'De Groene Menukaart: cultuurpanden', <https://www.degroenemenukaart.nl/nl/cultuurpanden>.

¹⁷ J. J. Knol, J. Pigaht, and B. Schrijen (eds.), *Towards sustainable arts: European best practices and policies*, Boekman Foundation, 2022.

¹⁸ J. J. Knol, J. Pigaht, and B. Schrijen, 'Introduction', *Towards sustainable arts: European best practices and policies*, Boekman Foundation, 2022, pp. 5–8.

¹⁹ K. Oakley and M. Banks (eds.), *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy*, Springer, 2020.

twelve²⁰ highly readable contributions on topics as diverse as the environmental impact of the music industries, green accounting, online retailer Amazon's sustainability innovation, urban development, extractivism, informal creative labour, creative degrowth, and the key notion of human/environmental exhaustion. There are two caveats. First, the contributions strive for synoptic conclusions on the level of cultural policy (as promised by the book title) which may not be immediately relevant for individual workers and institutions. However, the authors cite and discuss a wealth of apposite research and policy sources that draw the reader into the literature. Second caveat: These references end in 2020, the year the book was published, and so do not cover the most recent, potentially important development of the literature. However, this gap should be easy to fill by following up on the continuing work of cited authors and searching for newer publications related to keywords from the book.

(2) Catalysing social change

In research question (2), we ask how artists and others in the CC sectors can catalyse social transformation. Many forms of art, design, cultural heritage, etc., share a special potential to touch and influence the emotions and imagination of their audience. This results from the media and styles they use, e.g., emotionally stirring stories or music, as well as from creatives' personal powers of expression, but also from the social spaces associated with arts and culture. People often enter such spaces with an openness to being affected and a readiness to suspend judgement that is rarely found in other areas of life. Artists and culture workers often use these opportunities to confront their audiences with social and political questions and to promote ideas of the good. However, we ask for ways to 'catalyse social transformation' rather than (just) to 'raise environmental awareness' because we challenge facile environmental messaging. At this point, it should be clear that influencing the values and lifestyles of audiences is not enough. We are more interested to learn how artists and others in the CC sectors can help their audiences imagine and embrace alternative, sustainable ways to

²⁰ Including a contribution which was added later as an online amendment and is available separately in the literature database: E. Munro, "'Exhaustion" as a Driver of Change in the Creative Economy', in K. Oakley, M. Banks (eds.), *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy*, Springer, 2020, pp. 153–66.

organise society and the deep social-ecological transformation required to realise them.

In this context, our engagement with the literature so far has focused on two topics: *environmental activism* and arts-based *environmental education*. They can be taken to represent two broad kinds of stakeholders and approaches in this field. On the one hand, there are environmentally engaged creatives (or artistically creative environmentalists) who use terms like (environmental or eco-) ‘artivism’ to describe their work.²¹ Publications on artivism tend to reflect on artistic interventions created spontaneously and idiosyncratically, as it were, by activist individuals or groups. On the other hand, there are educational and environmental institutions as well as individual educators working on the basis of institutionalised conceptions, guidelines, and qualifications in overlapping traditions that include ‘environmental education’, ‘education for sustainable development’, and ‘nature pedagogy’.²² For such educational actors, artworks and creative methods can be welcome additions to their established repertoire of materials and tools. This has, in fact, been a growing trend of recent years, along with an increased recognition of the broader role of culture in sustainable development.²³ The related literature includes policy and planning documents, manuals and sourcebooks, as well as empirical evaluations feeding back into educational design and management. We take the distance between the approaches of artivism and environmental education as an indication that the possibilities of catalysing social change through art are quite diverse and sometimes not primarily artistic.

On artivism, we would like to highlight two sources that speak to its conception and practice from the point of view of artists/activists. In the contributed book chapter [Artivism: Injecting Imagination into Degrowth](#), the long-time, self-professed practitioner of artivism, John Jordan, sets out his approach

²¹ For an overview of such terms, see R. R. Raaber, *Environmental activism: A vital contribution to a sustainable transition: With case studies from the Pacific Islands*, 2022, p. 14ff.

²² Cf. UNEP Environmental Education and Training, *UNEP Environmental Education and Training Strategy: A Strategy and Action Planning for the Decade 2005–2014*, UNEP, 2005; UNESCO, *Education for sustainable development: a roadmap*, UNESCO, 2020; J. Cree and M. Robb, *The essential guide to forest school and nature pedagogy*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

²³ Cf. J. Hosagrahar, ‘Culture: at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals’, *The UNESCO Courier*, April–June 2017, 2017; British Council, *The Missing Pillar*, British Council, 2020; Arbeitsgruppe Kulturelle Bildung und Kulturpolitik (ed.), *Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung im Spiegel von Kunst, Kultur und kultureller Bildung*, Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, 2014.

as he explains its relevance for the degrowth movement.²⁴ He describes activism as ‘an attitude, a practice which exists on the fertile edges between art and activism’, in the overlap of ‘the useful and the beautiful’, and which ‘treats social movements as a material’ (pp. 60f.). As *art*, activism breaks out of the capitalist art institutions; as *activism*, it helps social movements reimagine forms of action and keep an open space for dreaming. When both art and activism are ‘no longer separate from everyday life’, they can contribute to a broader ‘culture of resistance’ (p. 68) that supports transformational movements such as degrowth.

Where Jordan’s contribution eloquently expresses one practitioner’s personal philosophy, the 65-page study *Assessing the Impact of Artistic Activism* from the Center for Artistic Activism, New York, develops an understanding of how artistic activism works that draws from theories of both social change and art as well as from interviews with 57 experienced artistic activists, mostly from the United States, conducted over the course of eight years.²⁵ The leading question is, ‘How can you know when what you’ve done works?’ (p. 1), and it is framed with warnings against ‘magical thinking’ that contents itself with just assuming that creating art with an activist intention will change something, somehow (p. 3). The study suggests that artistic activism works when it is *effective* – i.e. powerful in terms of both practical-political effect and emotional affect. The authors offer a set of questions to help practitioners and funding bodies define what this means for a given project.

On arts-based environmental education (in a wide sense), the ‘education brief’ *Education, Arts and Sustainability: Emerging Practice for a Changing World*, edited by a team based in Tasmania, New Zealand, and the United States, brings together many voices, examples, and references from the context of working in schools and with young people.²⁶ Perhaps appropriately, it strikes an ever hopeful, constructive, even cheerful tone, its gaze firmly set on the ‘transformational possibilities of integrating arts and sustainability pedagogies

²⁴ J. Jordan, ‘Artivism: injecting imagination into degrowth’, in Burkhart, Corinna, Schmelzer, Matthias, Treu, Nina (eds.), *Degrowth in movement(s): exploring pathways for transformation*, Winchester, UK Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2020, pp. 59–72; Also see the recorded talk *Fossil Free Culture* (dir.), *John Jordan on Creative Activism*, 2016.

²⁵ S. Duncombe, G. Perlov, S. Lambert, and S. J. Halford, *Assessing the impact of artistic activism*, 2018.

²⁶ M. A. Hunter, A. Aprill, A. Hill, and S. Emery, *Education, Arts and Sustainability: Emerging Practice for a Changing World*, Springer Singapore, 2018.

for initiating change that matters' (p. 1). For a balancing *noir* approach, we suggest [Dark Pedagogy: Education, Horror and the Anthropocene](#) by a team of Scandinavian authors.²⁷ The book draws on the philosophical movement of speculative realism to consider three Lovecraftian modes in which humans respond to horror, i.e., denial, insanity, and death, and their potential for contemporary environmental education. Unfortunately, the authors rarely spell out what this might mean in practice. Two concrete examples of dark pedagogy include a school excursion to a slaughterhouse and a case in which a young giraffe at Copenhagen Zoo was publicly dissected and then fed to the lions in front of school children.

The single most remarkable publication we found in the educational context is Jan van Boeckel's 426-page book [At the Heart of Art and Earth: An Exploration of Practices in Arts-Based Environmental Education](#). At once highly personal and deeply reflected, it lays out a learning journey from social anthropology through recognising the potential of art for activism, to teaching art and developing this practice into a form of environmental education. Boeckel asks how learners can connect to nature in new ways through the practice of artmaking, what happens to them in the process, and what part he (Boeckel) plays as a facilitator (pp. 21, 170). Through a series of detailed case studies of his own work, he arrives at a tentative pedagogy of arts-based environmental education (Chapter 10). It guides learners through processes of *defamiliarisation*, *imagination*, and *ecovation* using a set of principles and virtues such as alternating foreground and background, indirectness, inviting emergent properties, or the ability to inhabit uncertainty.

(3) Creative know-how for social transformation

This area of interest is most closely aligned with the Research team's academic work in environmental philosophy, social ecology, and utopian studies. We are interested in understanding and improving the ways that human communities conceive of both their relationship to the rest of the biosphere and the possibilities to develop it. Hence, research question (3) considers the CC sectors as potential sources of concepts, methods, and practices that can help society at large master the creative challenge of a transformation to sustainability. For example, what

²⁷ J. A. Lysgaard, S. Bengtsson, and M. H.-L. Laugesen, *Dark Pedagogy: Education, Horror and the Anthropocene*, Springer, 2019.

can we learn from artists who embark time and again on long creative processes with uncertain outcomes – such as we are facing as a civilisation?

Some of the literature around activism (see above) may intersect with this research question where it deals with theories of social change or the idea to treat social movements, and by extension society, as artistic material. In addition, our exploration is radiating outward from utopian methodology to related discourses under the headings of ‘social innovation’, ‘design thinking’ or ‘speculative design’.²⁸ This broad field has seen some major publications within the last 20 years and is under active development. We are also aware of a rich literature on the creative process and, even more generally, creativity as a human phenomenon on the levels of cultures, institutions, or individual brains.²⁹

In this initial report, we hope to guard against misconceptions about our starting point, utopianism, by highlighting two cornerstones of the recent literature.³⁰ Importantly, contemporary utopian theory departs from the idea of utopia as a perfect – and hence impossible – society, shifting the focus from the ‘end-state model of utopia’ to a ‘process model’ of utopian thinking.³¹ It treats utopias as plural alternatives and tentative, fallible drafts rather than final blueprints.

Perhaps the most influential author to champion a processual and pluralistic utopianism is British sociologist Ruth Levitas. The phrase that constitutes the title of her book *Utopia as Method* has become synonymous with this approach.³² Levitas herself speaks of the ‘Imaginary Reconstitution of Society’. It operates in three modes: archaeological, ontological, and architectural. The *architectural* mode is the one most readily associated with utopian thinking, in the sense of

²⁸ E.g. B. Pel, A. Haxeltine, F. Avelino, A. Dumitru, R. Kemp, T. Bauler, I. Kunze, J. Dorland, J. Wittmayer, and M. S. Jørgensen, ‘Towards a theory of transformative social innovation: A relational framework and 12 propositions’, *Research Policy*, 49/8, 2020, p. 104080; Design for Change, ‘Design Thinking for Social Change Guide’, <https://socialchange.how/design-thinking-for-social-change-guide/>; L. Barendregt and N. S. Vaage, ‘Speculative Design as Thought Experiment’, *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 7/3, 2021, pp. 374–402.

²⁹ E.g. T. Lubart (ed.), *The Creative Process: Perspectives from Multiple Domains*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018.

³⁰ Adapted from P. P. Thapa, ‘Ecotopianism: Towards a philosophical conception’, in A. Kallhoff, E. Liedauer (eds.), *Greentopia: Utopian thought in the anthropocene*, Springer, forthcoming.

³¹ E. McKenna, *The task of utopia: a feminist and pragmatist perspective*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, p. 3.

³² R. Levitas, *Utopia as method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

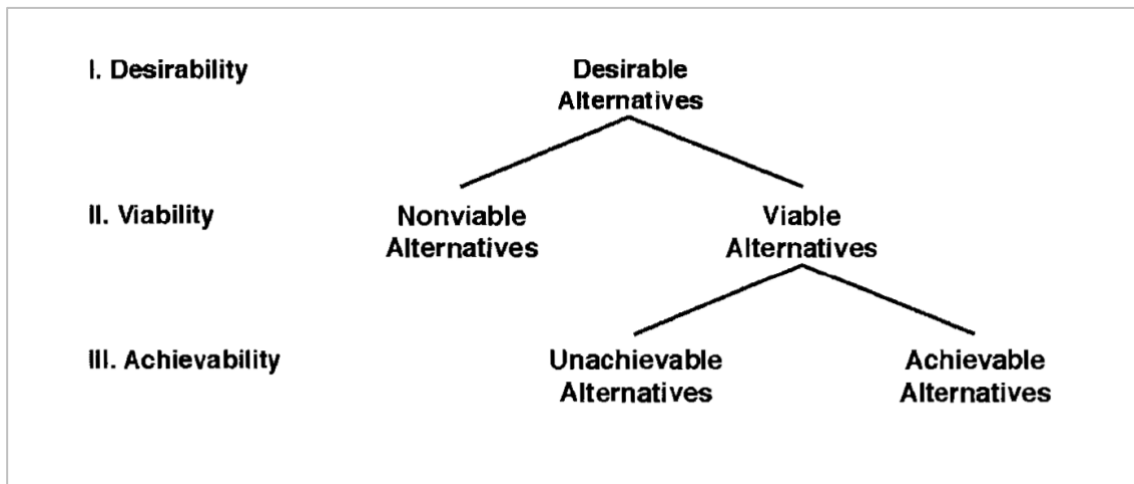


Figure 2. Erik Olin Wright's three criteria for evaluating social alternatives. (Source: Wright 2010, p. 20)

constructing and envisioning alternative social worlds. The other two modes capture aspects that are less often recognised. The *ontological* mode 'addresses the question of what kind of people particular societies develop and encourage', or who and what it is possible to *be* in a given society (p. 153). Closely related but more expansive in scope is the *archaeological* mode, which focuses on 'piecing together the images of the good society that are embedded in political programmes and social and economic policies' and also 'filling in, where possible, what is missing, or simply making evident the blank spaces' that can be found even in 'relatively developed utopias' (pp. 153f.).

The architectural mode of utopian thinking is predominantly creative, while the ontological and archaeological modes are predominantly analytic. The interrelations of the three modes imply relations between different disciplines and pursuits in research, art, design, politics, etc., which have the potential to contribute to or benefit from utopian thinking. For example, the questions asked in the ontological mode – e.g. What kinds of persons are people likely to become in this society? What kinds of life are accessible to them? – can be read as ethical questions that link the utopian imagination with ethics and moral philosophy. If we take arts and culture to work centrally on and with our imagination, the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society provides a context that already links them to social development independently of any activist intention.

A useful framework for vetting utopian proposals and for understanding the process of social transformation is offered by Erik Olin Wright, another

sociologist, in his book *Envisioning Real Utopias*.³³ Wright argues that we should consider for realisation only those utopian proposals that are desirable, viable, and achievable, narrowing the field of possibilities as we apply the three criteria in this order. Utopian proposals that are *desirable* conform to given ethical and political standards (which in Wright's view should be 'radical democratic egalitarian emancipatory ideals'; p. 150f.). Utopian proposals that are *viable* offer alternative institutional arrangements that 'are consistent with what we know about how institutions work and, if implemented, would not generate perverse unintended consequences which would either negate the desirable properties of the institution or make it unsustainable'. Finally, the utopian proposals we consider for realisation must be *achievable*, i.e. it must be possible to realise them in the world today or in the course of a sufficiently probable process of social transformation. Strategies of social transformation can be *ruptural*, as in revolutionary communism; *interstitial*, as in social movements that build alternatives outside the state, e.g. anarchist networks and communities; or *symbiotic*, as in social democratic parties that try to change the state from within. While Wright develops his framework to rebuild a 'sense of possibility' especially for socialist alternatives to capitalism (p. 1), we believe it can be of analytical and practical use independent of political orientation.

Literature database

Having been asked to provide a literature review within the first months of the project, we realised that it could reflect only a small part of the references that we would eventually collect in four years of research. Creating an online database would enable us to share our growing reference collection throughout the project duration and beyond. The reference management software we were already running allowed us to share collections using its group library function. Maintaining a Zotero group library, in turn, would make it easy not just to broadcast our literature collection but to collaborate on it with the partners.

³³ E. O. Wright, *Envisioning real utopias*, 1 ed. Verso, 2010.

Technical setup

The Big Green's literature database is available online as a dedicated Zotero group library.³⁴ Hosting our literature database with Zotero is a good choice for several reasons. Zotero is a widely used, user-friendly, cross-platform, open-source reference management software that enables collaboration in online group libraries. Zotero apps are available for all three major desktop operating systems (Windows, MacOS, and Linux) as well as for mobile devices running iOS. In addition, the web application can be accessed via any Internet browser. Zotero has been under active open-source development since 2006 and is supported by a strong development community led by the non-profit Corporation for Digital Scholarship.³⁵ So, in terms of technical infrastructure, there is a good chance that our literature database could be kept available as an online Zotero library for years even after the end of the project. In addition, the database remains software-agnostic, i.e., not tied to Zotero or any specific software. It can be exported as a file in one of several widely used formats (e.g., BibTeX, RIS, Endnote), to be archived or transferred into other applications for continued use.

Access

The online library is *public* in the sense that anyone on the Internet can browse the list of references. It is *closed* in the sense that only group members can view or download any files attached to reference items. These files would typically be copies of the publication. By using *public closed* access settings, we strike a compromise between sharing knowledge as openly as possible and respecting copyright, where applicable. Membership in the Zotero group is open to participants and collaborators of The Big Green. Administrator rights could be conferred on a limited number of additional users to enable them to add and edit references autonomously. Everyone is invited to contribute references (via the administrators).

³⁴ https://www.zotero.org/groups/5080246/the_big_green/

³⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zotero>, accessed 30 Oct 2023

Types of media

While the terms ‘literature database’ and ‘library’ may foreground written publications, we aim to include various types of media, as long as they contain useful information. These media may well turn out to be primarily writings such as specialist books, research papers, or practice manuals. But we expect that the database will also feature audio and video references such as documentaries, how-to clips, recorded discussions, or relevant artistic pieces. All these media may, of course, be found on websites, which can also be included as references. Rather than collecting only research publications, we hope to create a useful resource for diverse users from The Big Green consortium and beyond.

Library structure

We aim to organise The Big Green’s online library in a way that responds to users asking ‘How can I ...?’. The main collections correspond to our three research questions. The subcollections may focus both on a specific sub-theme (e.g., education for sustainable development, design thinking) or on the type of reference (e.g., analysis, practice guide), whatever is needed and practical. This

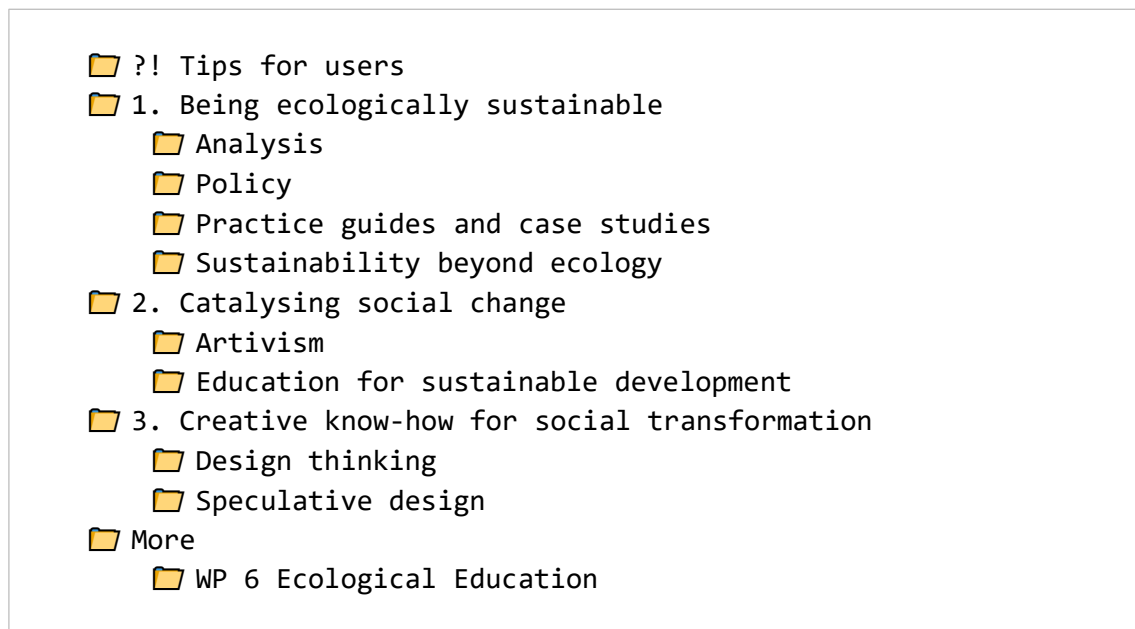


Figure 3. The Big Green online library structure at the time of writing (idealised)

approach is facilitated by the fact that, unlike files in folders, reference items in a Zotero library may be listed in multiple collections without being, in fact, duplicated. Rather, all listings point to the same data record. For example, a comprehensive book that addresses all three research questions may be listed in all three main collections including various subcollections, and any changes made to its reference details will be reflected everywhere it appears. This makes it easy to create various purpose-fit collections of references while maintaining a compact underlying dataset.

Figure 3 loosely represents the structure of the literature database at the time of writing. Beside the three main collections, there is one to hold the user guide (top) and one for miscellaneous purposes (More). The latter currently contains a team-specific subcollection for Work Package 6.

References

This list only includes works cited in the text. The full Big Green literature database can be found here:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/5080246/the_big_green/

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