

Engaging Society in the Search for a Sustainable Future

A Case-Study on the Combination of Social and Ecological Sustainability Dimensions within Cultural Organizations

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Abstract:

During the past decades there is a growing interest to include a cultural dimension in the debate on sustainable development. In this thesis I explore how culture, and more specifically the Flemish cultural sector, contributes to the transition to a sustainable society. By means of case studies, I examine how cultural organizations perceive their role in the transition process and how they translate this into practice. I gathered data through in-depth interviews with eight cultural organizations and a focus group session in which all organizations were brought together. This helped me to develop a broader picture of how cultural organizations can work on ‘just sustainability’, a term used to stress both the social and ecological dimension of sustainability. The research shows that approaching sustainability from a cultural point of view opens up new perspectives on the search for a sustainable future; it can guide the debate on sustainable development towards a discussion on values, norms, ways thinking about, and acting in the world. Cultural organizations can play an important role in engaging ‘ordinary people’ in this ‘cultural transforming project’.

Key concepts: transition, just sustainability, social and ecological dimensions of sustainability, cultural sustainability, cultural sector

Preface

My friends and family describe me as an optimist. I always try to motivate people by emphasizing the positive things in life. This is based on my belief that if we want to engage people in changing society, we should focus on positive things that are happening now and things that we could make happen in the future. By studying a bachelor in socio-cultural work, I further developed this positive attitude as I learned to think and work from a solution-oriented approach. Entering the interdisciplinary human ecology program was a very challenging and interesting learning process for me. The program taught me to look through a critical lens at the broader connection between society and the environment, and coming from social work I want to apply this holistic human ecology perspective on exploring solutions to create a more sustainable society. This led to the choice of my thesis topic and approach. Transition theory caught my attention as it approaches the current socio-ecological crises as an opportunity to rethink our ways of perceiving and living in the world. The theory does not stop after analysing problems, instead its main focus lies on exploring solutions. Within this thesis I focus on active initiatives in the Flemish cultural sector that try to make our society more sustainable and explore what we can learn from these cases.

After my master studies, I hope to put into practice the knowledge I gained during the CPS program by getting active as a socio-cultural worker and empower people for changing society towards a more sustainable direction. Accordingly, I chose a solution and practice oriented focus for this thesis. Besides having had an inspirational learning process myself I see my thesis as a contribution to the cultural sector in their thrive for transition towards a more sustainable society. Because of that, it was important to me to perform my research based on a question and a need that arose from the field and to share my findings in a concrete and accessible way.

Writing this thesis was only possible with the help of several people who supported me in the research- and writing- process for which I would like to thank them. I thank my internship organization Pulse for helping me to find a relevant research question and enabling me to get in contact with the right people and organizations to conduct the research. Special thanks goes to Elke De Beukelaer, for guiding me throughout the whole research process, from designing the method, to collecting data, to writing the analysis. Her positive energy, critical feedback and knowledge about the cultural sector helped me a lot. I would also like to thank Pulse's

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Furthermore, I want to thank all the research participants and their respective organizations, for their time and interest in the research, and their enthusiasm to share their knowledge and expertise. I also thank my boyfriend for his patience and support throughout the entire writing process, and for pre-reading my drafts. Further I want to thank Klára Šimčíková for checking my thesis on English grammar and spelling. Nora, my friend, course mate and roommate, also owes a thank you for giving me a warm ‘home-feeling’ in Lund and for her critical advice regarding the academic content.

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1. Introduction

A summer afternoon in 2000. Olaf Eliasson was standing on a bridge in the centre of Stockholm with a bag full of red powder. He hesitated for a moment, before emptying the red powder into the river. The wind whipped out the powder and once it touched the water, all of the sudden the river turned green. In a few minutes he created a shockwave around the city. Cars were slowing down and the city went all quiet. Everybody was staring at the water. The next day the green cloud floating on the river was the headline of the Swedish newspapers (Obrist 2002:17). With this artistic intervention, Eliasson disrupted normality and challenged people's perception of their environment as something changeless and evident. He succeeded to make the river visible again to the people who no longer noticed this natural wonder. The colorants were absolutely harmless for the environment and people's reaction on the coloured river were part of the art work (*Ibid*). This is an inspiring example of how artistic interventions can raise awareness on environmental issues, let people reflect upon their surroundings, and disrupt our normal way of looking at things. It also triggered me to find out how not only art, but culture in general, can enable us to reflect upon our unsustainable values and lifestyles. And even more, how cultural organizations can explore more sustainable ways of thinking and acting.

Within the past two decades the concepts 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' received widespread attention all over the world as response to the perceived threats to human existence on earth. The interlinked social, economic and environmental crises in the world-system pose huge challenges. Many argue that these crises are signs that our present world-system in itself is in crisis (Jones & Demeyere 2009:27; Wallerstein 2000:251). In accordance to these arguments sustainable development signifies that we need to change our current societal model and make the transition towards a more sustainable and just society (Jones & Demeyere 2009:27). In this thesis I explore what role culture can play in this transition process.

Sustainable development is generally understood as a three-pillar model of economic well-being, social justice and environmental balance. There is, however, a growing attention to include a cultural dimension in the discourse on sustainability, since culture defines how we understand the world and act in it (COST 2010; Kagan 2011). Understanding sustainability

as a cultural phenomenon opens up new perspectives on the search for a sustainable future. A cultural dimension to sustainable development can break with the dominant one sided focus on technology and guide the debate towards a discussion on values, norms, ways of thinking, and lifestyles (Kagan 2012:10; Packalén 2010:119). From a cultural perspective, sustainability is about challenging our existing unsustainable values and worldview and developing alternative, sustainable values and related worldview. Accordingly the search for a sustainable society should not be left in the hands of experts. Instead it should become a ‘culture transforming project’ for the entire society (Kagan 2012:10; Packalén 2010:1, Peeters 2010). By means of case-studies I will explore what role the cultural sector can play in bringing about this ‘cultural paradigm shift’.

The following section continues with the aim of the research and an introduction to the research question. After this, a theoretical framework is presented. Here the main concepts are introduced and the role of culture in the transition process is examined. The theoretical framework is followed by a practical research that investigates how cultural organizations work on both social and ecological sustainability. First, I give an outline of the research methodology and research steps. Second, the analytical discussion presents the findings structured around the main themes brought up by the research participants. I end this thesis with a general conclusion and recommendations for further research. In appendix G, a practical tool is added to the thesis; a reflection framework developed around the main findings, that guides cultural organizations to reflect on their engagement to just sustainability.

2. Aim and Research Questions

The aim is to explore the role of the cultural sector, in the transition towards a sustainable society. Theoretical understandings of sustainable development, transition studies and cultural sustainability are linked to experiences of professionals that are active in the cultural field as well as engaged in the process of sustainability transition.

Experiences in the Flemish cultural field show that despite the growing link between social and environmental problems, cultural organizations tend to focus on *either* the social or the ecological dimension of sustainability. Like the main discourse in society, the cultural sector mainly links sustainability to ecological issues. Sustainable cultural organizations are often

understood as organizations that reduce the sector's environmental impact, which is reflected into technological innovations and efficiency measures. The social dimensions of sustainability; issues of power, redistribution and social justice are usually not part of the agenda. On the other hand, some cultural organizations give a central concern to social justice. Organizations in the sector of social-cultural work, for example, are strongly engaged with social sustainability, but the link with environmental problems is usually not made and therefore ecological sustainability remains in the background (Peeters 2010). Accordingly, I will explore how cultural organizations can work on 'just sustainability', a term emphasizing that sustainable development should respect the ecosystems planetary boundaries and at the same time include issues of power and social justice (Jones & Demeyere 2009:324; Peeters 2010:30). I explore eight cultural organizations as case studies in order to answer the following research questions and sub questions:

- a) *How do cultural organizations in Flanders contribute to the transition to a sustainable society?*
 - a.1) How do the cultural organizations perceive their role in the transition process?
- b) *How do cultural organizations in Flanders combine the social and ecological sustainability dimension in their functioning? And what can we learn from this in order to develop a reflection framework to guide sustainability transition in cultural organizations?*
 - b.1) How do the cultural organizations understand the 'the social dimension'? Which activities/projects/actions/etc. are considered as part of the social dimension?
 - b.2) How do the cultural organizations understand 'the ecological dimension'? Which activities/projects/actions/etc. are considered as part of the ecological dimension?
 - b.3) What difficulties, barriers and tensions do the organizations experience when working on both social and ecological sustainability?
 - b.4) What circumstances and conditions are regarded by the organizations as necessary to successfully work on both social and ecological sustainability?

Cultural organizations are understood as organizations active in the cultural sector. In Flanders¹, where the research was made, the cultural sector is divided into the subsectors arts, cultural heritage and socio-cultural work (Atelier Eco-Cultuur 2010:11). Examples of cultural

¹ Flanders is Belgium's Dutch-speaking northern region.

organizations are art centres, libraries, heritage associations, socio-cultural organizations, etc. I focus on two of the three dimensions of sustainability namely the social and ecological, but the economic dimension is not ignored. In the theoretical framework all three dimensions are discussed, and in the analysis examples of economic sustainability are mentioned below the social dimension.

In order to answer the research question, I have combined a theoretical literature review with practical research, thereby generating knowledge that bring about insights and understandings needed to develop a reflection framework that can be used in practice (Kwakman & Schilder 2005:20). Depending on the context, the concepts ‘sustainability’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘transition’ and ‘culture’ receive a different interpretation. Therefore they are explained in the theoretical framework. After this discussion, I describe how professionals understand these theoretical concepts and how they translate them into practice, by means of a practical research. Further I explore what difficulties, tensions, challenges and successes professionals experience when working on them.

I will not compare the cultural organizations with each other, neither rank them. Instead I will attempt to present a more complete picture of how cultural organizations can work on social and ecological sustainability while encountering challenges, difficulties and opportunities.

In appendix G, based on the knowledge and understandings gained from the different practices, I have developed a reflection framework that guides sustainability transition in the cultural sector. The choice of developing a reflection framework instead of an action framework is based on the logic of transition thinking. The transition to a sustainable society is an on-going learning process for the entire society; it is about learning, experimenting and reflecting (Van Poeck 2010). There are no readymade solutions or steps to follow in such a process. Therefore, I will not offer cultural organizations a framework that tells them how to work on just, righteous sustainability, but rather offer a framework which guides organizations to critically reflect upon the challenges and opportunities encountered in the research regarding social and ecological sustainability.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Current Situation and Need for Change

Climate change, peak oil, aging population, high unemployment rates, poverty, inequality, etc., we read about these problems every day in the newspapers as they have become part of our everyday lives. Today we are not only facing several crises, many argue that they are all interconnected; the economic-, environmental, social-, climate-, energy- crises, etc., are all influencing and reinforcing each other (Jones and Demeyere 2009:27; Wallerstein 2000:251). Climate change for example, is not only an environmental problem. It is also an ethical and social issue, since there is a very unequal distribution of access to and use of natural resources, and while the richest people on the planet are causing climate change, the effects are felt by the poorest people of the world (Debruyne & Peeters 2010:197; Jones & Demeyere 2009:28; Peeters 2010:22).

The interlinkage of the several crises does not predict a promising future; extreme weather events, further degradation of the environment, decline in agricultural output, energy shortages, increasing gap between the rich and the poor, increasing military efforts around natural resources such as energy, water, food, etc. (Kenis & Lievens 2012:39). For many these interlinked events point out that our capitalist world-system² in itself is in crisis and therefore they argue for making a change towards a more sustainable system (Jones & Demeyere 2009:27; Wallerstein 2000:251). In literature, the transformation from an old to a new system is called ‘a transition’. From a transition perspective, crises are an opportunity for change as the current societal systems are under pressure and characterized by a chaotic situation. This opens possibilities for creating a new, stable system (Grin et al 2010:1; Wallerstein 2011). Wallerstein is rather pessimistic about the possibilities of creating a sustainable capitalistic society, but he believes that in fifty years the transition towards a new kind of system will be completed (Wallerstein 2007:385). He starts from the positive premise that we can all together, through political activism, decide how this new system should look like (*Ibid.*).

² Based on critical system analysis I do not merely refer to capitalism as an economic system, but as a way of living, and thinking and relating to people and the environment on different scales (Kenis & Lievens 2012: 88).

3.2 Sustainable Development and Sustainability

‘Sustainable development’ and ‘sustainability’ are concepts that have gained widespread attention, but they are interpreted and implemented in different ways. Initially ‘sustainable development’ was merely understood as ecological sustainability. With the appearance of Brundtland’s report ‘Our Common Future’, the concept was broadened with social and economic dimensions and the critical relationship between human development and the environment came on the agenda (Paredis 2010:4). The Brundtland definition describes sustainable development as follows:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (WCED, 1987).

Sustainable development is based on three pillars: social sustainability, economic sustainability, and ecological sustainability. The ecological dimension is understood as “the conservation, preservation and sustainable use of ecological systems” (Soini et al. 2012:8). The economic dimension refers to achieving economic viability and material prosperity and the social dimension refers to social justice, equality and welfare (Hawkes 2001:25; Soini et al. 2012:8).

‘Sustainable development’ and ‘sustainability’ are often used as synonyms, but it is important to make a distinction between both concepts (Soini et al. 2012:3). Several authors prefer to use the term ‘sustainability’ above ‘sustainable development’ reflecting “a concern, on the part of NGO and academic environmentalists, that development is seen as synonymous with growth, and therefore that sustainable development means ameliorating, but not challenging, continued economic growth” (Robinson 2004:370), while continued economic growth is not compatible with environmental protection (Jones & Jacobs 2006:151). The concept ‘sustainability’, instead, “refers to the possibility that human and other life will flourish on the planet forever: Rather than a goal, sustainability is an outcome of the way we choose to live our lives” (Soini et al. 2012:4). I will use the term ‘sustainability’ in the practical research, and more specifically the concept of ‘just sustainability’ in order to stress both the social and

the ecological dimension, as in the dominant discourse on sustainability issues of social justice and power are often not included in the agenda (Peeters 2012:2; Peeters 2010:30).

3.3 How to get there?

3.3.1 Transition Theory

Within this section I explore how we could get to a new sustainable society. I introduce the new research domain of transition studies. This research field tries to understand how structural societal changes occur and how an understanding of these dynamics can help to guide and influence transitions in a desired direction. Scholars from this field define transitions as follows;

Transitions are long-term processes that change structures, practices and culture that are deeply anchored in a society. During a transition a system changes in multiple dimensions: technology, actors, rules, infrastructures, power relations, patterns of thinking, problem definitions and solutions, cultural meanings (Paredis 2013:2).

Although ‘transition’ seems to be an ubiquitous term these days, societal system changes are from all times. Examples in history are the transition from a nomadic to an agrarian culture and the start of the industrial era (Kenis 2010:103). Nowadays the term ‘transition’ usually refers to the necessary structural change towards a sustainable and just society (*Ibid*). From a transition perspective, the search for sustainable development is a plea for transforming societal systems that are until today subject to complex, persistent and structural sustainability problems (Jones & Demeyere 2010:110). Consequently, sustainability transition has to aim to search for a new societal system (Grin et al. 2010:1).

According to transition theorists, the search for a new sustainable society requires a holistic approach wherein all aspects are discussed in relation to one another. The transition to a sustainable society should therefore be based on ‘system thinking’ and ‘complexity theory’ (Grinn et al. 2010:105). One of the most crucial understandings of system thinking is that it is impossible to control a complex system (*Ibid*). From a transition perspective, a better understanding of the dynamics of a complex system leads to a better understanding of how to influence such a system. System thinking moves beyond disciplinary boundaries and focuses on relationships and connections instead of a segregated traditional understanding of logic and

causality (Kagan 2011:96). A single issue or problem is always understood as a part of a larger system and connected to other systems and issues (Kagan 2011:99). An introduction to system thinking will deviate too far from the subject of this thesis. For a more extended exploration of the topic I refer to Rotmans and Loorbach (in Grinn et al. 2010) and the basics of system thinking in (Kagan 2011).

Researchers Rotmans, Loorbach and Kemp translated the transition theories into policy guidelines which they call ‘transition management’, a long-term governance approach towards sustainable development (Paredis 2013:35). Firstly, transition management follows a *multi-level perspective*; i.e. in order to disturb the dominant system, an interaction between the landscape (overarching meta-factors like climate change, peak oil, cultural paradigms, worldviews, etc.), the regime (food-system, mobility-system, energy-system, etc.) and niches (individual actors, technologies, and local practices that experiment with new ways to organize society) is needed (Geels 2011; Jones & Demeyere 2009; Paredis 2010;). Landscape factors and radical innovations developed in the niche, can exert pressure on, and destabilize the regime, after which a transition to a new regime can occur (*Ibid*).

A second character of transition management is its *multi-actor approach*. All relevant actors (politicians, industry, labour unions, scientists, environmental groups, consumers, etc.) are involved in the process of change through participatory decision making (Jones & Demeyere 2009:97). The transition process is initiated by a transition arena, in which a group of innovative pioneers and people with influence are gathered to discuss a certain topic (Jones & Demeyere 2009:100; Kenis 2010:105). This group develops a ‘Leitbild’, an enthusing future vision. Subsequently a variety of transition paths are developed to outline the steps needed to get to the ‘Leitbild’ (Jones & Demeyere 2009:106). Next, experiments are set up that could become innovating new niches which, when they are able to break through, can initiate a transition (Kenis 2010:106).

3.3.2 Shortcomings of Transition Theory and related Initiatives

Although transition theory seems hopeful in guiding our unsustainable system into a sustainable direction, several authors have however, encountered shortcomings within the implementation of the theory in the field.

Paredis (2013) criticizes the transition theory for not defining what they mean with a ‘sustainable society’ and therefore it is not certain if the process will lead to radical change. Transition theory approaches sustainability as a result of an interaction between different societal actors (Paredis 2013:8). Accordingly it is not clear to what kind of interpretation of sustainability this participatory transition process will lead. Will it lead to a steady state economy or a redistribution strategy, an eco-efficiency approach or a combination of eco-efficiency and eco-sufficiency³? And consequently, will transition management really bring forward radical changes (*Ibid*)?

Debruyne & De Bisschop (2013), and also Kenis (2010) criticize transition management for not being radical enough in its concrete implementations in the field. Transition theories might be radical in its analysis and objectives, but the concrete initiatives in the field lack a socio-political dimension. Transition management keeps following the ‘business-as-usual scenario’ and more in depth issues of redistribution and power, which are interfering with ecological challenges, remain on the background (Debruyne & De Bisschop 2013). Due to its consensus approach, transition practices become ‘de-politicized’ (Debruyne & De Bisschop 2013:48). During the past two decades a debate on the process of ‘de-politization’ or ‘post-politization’ has taken an important place in political theory (Mathijs & Kenis 2014), it implies “that predominant representations of society tend to be consensual or technocratic and thus make power, conflict and exclusion invisible” (Mathijs & Kenis 2014:148). Debruyne & De Bisschop (2013:48) observe that this ‘post-political’ tendency is also occurring in transition initiatives, since ideological motivations and conflicting interest are neglected in the debate. The transition arena’s, which are set up under the guise of a ‘bottom-up approach’, strengthen existing power structures and are based on the assumption that these actors will set aside their own interests and think in terms of ‘societies common interest’ (Debruyne & De Bisschop 2013:50). In this manner sustainability-transition is seen as ‘un-ideological’; as natural, a result of rational considerations, which is problematic according to the authors. Since ignoring every possible conflict or struggle between different positions, has the consequence that structural power relations are untouched. Consequently they fail to break with our unsustainable societal structures and lifestyles (Kenis 2010:115).

³ ‘Eco-efficiency’ refers to structural technological changes; creating the same amount of output with a much smaller input of raw materials and energy. While ‘Eco-sufficiency’ refers to cultural behaviour changes; producing and consuming less and different (Jones & Demeyere 2009:117).

3.3.3 Re-politicizing Transition Initiatives

Many authors argue that we need to ‘re-politicize’ society in order to make the transition to a sustainable society (Holemans 2013:2; Jones & Demeyere 2009; Mathijs & Kenis 2014; Peeters 2010; Welzer 2013). In political theory, re-politization is understood as making issues of power, conflict and exclusion visible and matter of debate (Mathijs & Kenis 2014:148). According to Holemans (2013:2), re-politicizing the public sphere means creating space for imagining and developing another and better future, instead of continuing to manage the current system. Therefore ‘ordinary people’ should become active citizens that participate in public debates, learn to think and work together and discover new perspectives (*Ibid*). Holemans, describes this kind of active citizenship as ‘ecological citizenship’, which refers to the earth’s carrying capacity and a sense of solidarity, and implies that citizens are able and willing to actively participate in creating a just and ecological sustainable society (Holemans 2010:211; Van Poeck 2010:45).

According to Van Poeck (2010) education can help to give people the chance to develop themselves into ‘ecological citizens’ and become part of the public debate on sustainability. Education should therefore be oriented towards the people who are ignored in the current discourse on sustainability. Van Poeck (2010) believes that learning should not be limited to awareness campaigns that engage people in the already designed transition path (*Ibid*). In this limited perspective pioneers (the elite, innovative entrepreneurs, policy makers, etc.) present ready-made solutions to ‘ordinary’ people, which on their turn only need to implement these solutions (Van Poeck 2013:43). Van Poeck offers an alternative view that approaches societal change as a “reflexive process of searching, learning and experimenting” for the entire society (Van Poeck 2010:41). The whole transition process, from developing a ‘leitbilt’ for the future and strategies to get to its implementation, is seen as a learning process in which all societal actors should be engaged (*Ibid*). This means that people should not only learn to properly adapt themselves to the society that was designed for them, but that they should rather be actively engaged in designing this society. We should collectively think about how we can enable and encourage sustainable choices and how we can engage all groups of society in the transition process. Further, we should together critically examine government’s exemplary role and point at inconsistent policies (Van Poeck 2010:46).

3.4 Culture and Sustainability

"Culture is precisely what enables sustainability – as a source of strength, of values and social cohesion, self-esteem and participation. Culture is our most powerful force for creativity and renewal" (Irina Bokova , Director-General of UNESCO 2013).

The previous sections explain the need for a transition towards a sustainable society and explored how this transition can be guided. Throughout the following sections I examine how culture, and more specific how the cultural sector, can contribute to this transition process. First I introduce a definition of culture, where-after I explain how the cultural sector is organized in Flanders. After this introduction I explore the link between culture and sustainable development through the concept ‘cultural sustainability’.

3.4.1 Culture

3.4.1.1 A Definition

Culture is an all-embracing and complex term. The many definitions of culture show that it can be interpreted and understood in different ways. For the purpose of my thesis, I have chosen to use the following definition;

Culture covers both the values upon which a society is based and the embodiments and expressions of these values in the day-to-day world of that society [...] It is through cultural action that we: make sense of our existence and the environment we inhabit; find common expressions of our values and needs; meet the challenges presented by our continued stewardship of the planet (Hawkes 2001:3-4).

This definition shows that culture has an anthropological element; culture as a way of life, inherent values and norms of society, and an artistic element; the way in which these values are developed and expressed in cultural actions like art-expression and heritage of a society. In order to avoid confusion, I refer in this thesis to the first element of culture as ‘culture’ and the second element of culture, as ‘the cultural sector’ or ‘cultural practices’.

3.3.1.2 The Cultural Sector

The second element of culture, the way in which values are embodied and expressed in cultural actions, makes up cultural policy (Packalén 2010:119). This is the main focus area of my practical research. Since the research is performed in Flanders, where the cultural sector is subdivided into arts, cultural heritage *and* social-cultural work, I extend the understanding of the second element of culture; art expression and heritage, by including socio-cultural practices.

According to the Flemish Cultural decree, the subsector of arts contains all artists and organizations (cultural centres, art centres, libraries, etc.) active in one of the different forms of art (performing arts, music, visual and audio-visual arts, literature, architecture, design and new media) (CJSM 2014). Within the subsector of cultural heritage there is a division between tangible and intangible heritage. Stories, songs, traditions, social rituals, skills, etc. belong to the intangible heritage and can only be passed on by keeping them into practice. Tangible heritage is on its turn subdivided into movable and immovable heritage. To the former belong objects that are preserved in musea, archives and libraries. While monuments, archaeological sites, landscapes, etc., are part of the immovable tangible heritage (FARO 2014). The subsector socio-cultural work is a working field of social work and exists of associations, movements (specialized around one or more themes with the aim to bring social change) adult education centres and rural training institutions (Atelier Eco-Cultuur:11; Socius 2014).

3.4.2 The Link between Culture and Sustainability

3.4.2.1 Cultural Sustainability

“Sustainability is only attainable if we regard it as a culture-transforming, creative project for the entire society” (Packalén 2010:1).

During the past decade there is a growing interest in the connection between ‘culture’ and ‘sustainability’ from the politic and academic field (Kagan 2011; Packalén 2010; Soini & Brikeland 2014). Since culture defines the way in which we see the world and act in it, many argue for including a cultural dimension into the three-pillar model of sustainable

development (*Ibid*). In the policy field, several conferences, initiatives and reports deal with the interdependence of culture and sustainable development (*Ibid*). UNESCO's Summit on Culture and Sustainable Development 'The Power of Culture' (1998), the launch of Agenda 21 for Culture⁴ (2004) and UCLG's (2010) policy statement on 'Culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development' are some examples. Among scholars, 'cultural sustainability' is an emerging concept that explores the meaning and role of culture in sustainable development (Soini & Brikeland 2014:221).

Despite many conferences and reports on the topic, the cultural dimension of sustainability remains vague, under-emphasized and under-theorized (COST 2010:9; Soini & Birkeland 2014: 214). There is no clear theoretical interpretation of the concept and there exist different approaches on the relation between culture and sustainability (COST 2010:14). However, today two main approaches are generally used to link culture and sustainable development; culture as a fourth pillar of sustainability alongside the ecological, social and economic pillar, and culture as an underlying, transversal dimension of sustainability (COST 2010:4; Soini et al. 2012:4).

Although both approaches put culture on a different place in the sustainability discourse, they both agree that the debate on sustainability should be a debate about values and therefore a cultural debate (Hawkes 2001; Kagan 2011). Culture can break with the one-sided technical focus in the sustainable development debate (Kagan 2012; Packalén 2010). The mainstream search for sustainable development focused too much on 'ecological modernization', where technical innovations, economic incentives, new regulations and policies are the guiding principle. In transition literature this focus on technological changes is referred to as 'eco-efficiency' (Jones & Demeyere 2009). Instead, many argue that sustainability should be seen as a process of 'cultural transformations' (Kagan 2010; Packalén 2010; Peeters 2010), or called 'eco-sufficiency' in transition literature (Jones & Demeyere 2009). They state that our current (Western) value system is unsustainable; it promotes increasing consumption and it contains an individualistic and atomistic worldview that perceives nature as a machine, separated from and subjected to human (Hawkes 2001; Kagan 2011). Cultural sustainability is about transforming these worldviews and paradigms into more sustainable understandings of

⁴ The 'Agenda 21 for Culture' is an agreement between "cities and local governments from all over the world to enshrine their commitment to human rights, cultural diversity, sustainability, participatory democracy and creating conditions for peace" (UCLG 2008:3).

ourselves and the environment and the relation between them (Kagan 2011). It is about giving meaning to our life and the future. This implies that it should be understood as a project for the entire society (Packalén 2010). ‘Ordinary people’ should be engaged in the debate as actors for change. Herein, the cultural sector can play an important role (Packalén 2010:120; UNESCO 2012:5).

3.4.2.2 The Role of the Cultural Sector in the Transition to a Sustainable Society

Lately, sustainability issues became integrated into cultural policies across the world⁵ (Kagan 2011:15). In Flanders, during the cultural forum of 2010, the policy ‘Atelier Eco-Cultuur’ (‘Workshop Eco-Culture’) was founded. Minister Schauvliege, both responsible for the policy domains culture and environment, included in her policy document 2009-2014 the strategic objective to treat environment as a ‘green thread’ in her cultural policy (Flemish Government 2009).

The Atelier Eco-Cultuur, in which representatives of various sub-sectors and disciplines of the cultural sector are participating, discussed for the first time a possible policy approach on culture and ecology. In its vision-statement the atelier discussed the role that culture and the cultural sector can and should play in the transition towards a socially just and ecological sustainable society and argues for a cultural policy that reinforces, promotes and develops this role (Atelier Eco-Cultuur 2010). The atelier Eco-Cultuur defines three roles for the cultural sector to contribute to the transition towards a sustainable society; creating a space for dialogue, creating a space for learning and experience and creating a space for imagination (Atelier Eco-Cultuur 2010:4). In 2013 the atelier developed into Pulse, ‘The Cultural Transition Network’. This network continuous to stimulate and inspire the cultural sector to engage in the transition to a sustainable society (Pulse 2013).

Transport (e.g. international flights), preservation of buildings and monuments (e.g. heating, ventilation, air-conditioning) and printed promotion material are some examples of how the cultural sector is contributing to increasing CO2 emissions. Accordingly one of the first roles

⁵ E.g. ‘Culture/Futures’; a continuing expanding collaboration of cultural actors around the world “who are moved to engage their work and creativity to sustain human and all life” and support the transition towards an Ecological Age by 2050 (Culture/Futures 2013), ‘Julie’s Bicycle’ (2014); a non-profit organization in Britain founded to make sustainability an integral part of the art industry.

that literature brings up regarding all subsectors is the reduction of the sectors own environmental impact (Cassar 2011; COST 2010; Jonge Sla 2014; Kagan 2008). Specific roles ascribed to each subsector individually are presented in the following sections.

The Arts

Many refer to art's imaginative power in relation to the transition to a sustainable society (Peeters 2010b; Huige 2012; Rasmussen 2012). According to Huige (2012:89), technology and science in itself will change nothing, creativity is needed in order to imagine a new vision for the future, create new images and a new narrative for a sustainable society. Several authors refer to arts subversive power towards the dominant capitalist system (De Cauter 2011; Marcuse 1977; Peeters 2010b). Artists can critically question our society and rigid belief systems and try out alternatives paths and ideas (Huige 2012; Peeters 2010b).

Further can artists take away people's blinders and fears and give them the strength and hope to deal with change (Peeters 2010b). Finally, Kagan (2011:231) argues that art should emphasize our interconnectedness and the feeling of belonging to a larger whole; "In the past, we have had much of the idea of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something to hang on the walls); and we have had art as a search for the self. There is another kind of art, which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationship" (Gablik cited in Kagan 2011:310). In the context of sustainability, this means that art can emphasize our interconnectedness and feeling of belonging to the natural environment (Kagan 2011:231).

Cultural Heritage

Several authors emphasize the positive role of cultural heritage in stimulating and fostering sustainable development (Barthel-Bouchier 2013; Murzyn-Kupisz 2013; Roders 2011; UNESCO 2013b). The cultural heritage community does not simply claim for preserving 'old stuff' and live back 'the old way', but aims to explore how this living history can be relevant today in creating more sustainable societies (Barthel-Bouchier 2013:9). A further role described to the sector is building and enhancing social capital (Murzyn-Kupisz 2013). Besides the promotion of social cohesion, conservation of tangible and intangible cultural

heritage is also essential in promoting cultural diversity for present and future generations (COST 2010:7; Roders 2011:7).

The Hangzhou Declaration (2013:1-2) recognizes that there is not ‘one culture’ which leads to ‘development’, but there are different cultural perspectives which results in different paths of development and each of them should be recognized and respected. Openness to different cultures and promoting mutual understandings and exchange between people of different cultural backgrounds should be promoted to create inclusive and resilient societies (Ibid). According to UNESCO (2013b), intangible heritage is about practices, knowledge and skills concerning nature and the universe, therefore it contributes to attentive stewardship for nature’s resources and entails relevant insights to answer and deal with the environmental problems we encounter today.

Socio-Cultural Work

There is no specific literature on the role of socio-cultural work in the transition to a sustainable society, but several authors discuss the role of social work in general (Norton 2011; Peeters 2010; Schmitz et al. 2012). First of all can social work’s knowledge and expertise in participatory and emancipatory processes help to improve the quality of sustainability processes (Norton 2014; Peeters 2010). Furthermore, can social work help to deepen and further develop the social dimension of sustainability, namely social justice and redistribution. Also, it can broaden the narrow view on ‘needs’ to new visions on ‘the good life’ (Peeters 2010).

Schmitz et al. (2012) believe that social workers can contribute to a sustainable society by operating as collaborators and team builders, since sustainability should be addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective. Social workers are well positioned to act as bridge-builders between different disciplines because of their expertise in collaboration, networking, advocacy, community development and capacity building (Schmitz et al. 2012). When looking specifically at socio-cultural work’s main functions, it shows that this subsector can play an important role in the transition to a sustainable society as it focuses on community-building, emancipation and the creation of critical citizens who engage in society (Cockx 2010). Socio-cultural work empowers people to keep up with societies’ expectations and simultaneously aspires to bring about societal change (Cockx 2010:84). Furthermore can

socio-cultural work take up a critical role in questioning dominant power- and dependency-structures (Cockx 2010:87).

4 Research Methodology

In this section I explain the research methodology used to answer the research questions. First I clarify my choice for a participatory research, after which, I outline the different research steps; the exploration of the field, the number of cases, the use of in-depth interviews, and finally the use of a focus group.

4.1 Participatory Research based on Case-Studies

In order to explore how professionals in the cultural field experience working on both social and ecological sustainability I took a qualitative approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting. Since the transition process to a sustainable society is an open learning process for the entire society, I chose a method that starts from a similar view on learning and knowledge development: participatory research. This type of research approaches everyone as an expert in his or her work and is described as a knowledge development process in which academic researchers and practitioners work together (Greenwood and Levin 2007:1; Raymaekers 2010:152). Instead of separating them, this method understands knowledge development as a learning process for both the researchers and the people studied (Greenwood & Levin 2007:102; Kwakman & Schilder 2005:3).

More than its vision on knowledge development, the aim and basic principles of participatory research also correspond to the aim of this thesis, and to transition thinking. More specifically, it aims to increase the participants ability to control their own destiny within the direction of a more sustainable and just environment. Also, it aims to gain theoretical and methodological insights regarding social change (Greenwood & Levin 2007:5). Participatory research is not just a method. It requires an open attitude of the researcher towards a number of values that go beyond data collection and analysis; change and social justice are fundamental, there is attention for the context in which the research takes place, the research subjects are directly involved in the research process, the research has a participatory and

emancipatory character, and it is understood as an open and reflexive process (Greenwood & Levin 2007; Raymaekers 2010).

The research is based on case-studies. Each case represents a cultural organization. Together with professionals active in the respective cases I aimed to answer the research questions. The research process has an emancipatory character, as through the interviews the organizations were encouraged to reflect upon their understanding of socio-ecological sustainability and translation into practice, and the focus-group facilitated a unique inter-sectorial discussion which enabled them to discuss common challenges with organizations from the different cultural subsectors. Also the results have an emancipatory character. These are developed into a reflection tool that guides cultural organizations in its engagement in the transition to a sustainable society.

4.2 Research Steps

4.2.1 Exploration of the Field

The first step of the research was to get an overview of what is going on in the cultural field, regarding sustainability transition. An internship at Pulse (the Cultural Transition Network), was the ideal situation for me to explore which organizations in the Flemish fields of art, cultural heritage and social cultural work are engaged with sustainability issues. In order to come to a selection of cultural organizations that work on both social and ecological sustainability, I used *purposive sampling*. This is a sampling method that offers rich cases for in-depth studies (Patton 2002:230). Cases are not chosen because of their representativeness, but because of their relevance regarding the research question, as they increase the chance for developing new theories and insights (Bloor & Woods 2006:154). Furthermore, preference is given to this method when the target group is difficult to access, as is the case in this research (*Ibid*). A database of cultural organizations that combine social and ecological sustainability dimensions does not exist, and therefore it is not possible to make a random representative selection of practices.

I started from the knowledge and network of Pulse' steering committee, as they are all engaged in sustainability issues, as well as active in the cultural sector or in one of the sector's

support pillars. I put out a voluntary call for practices towards the steering committee in which I asked the members to recommend cultural organizations that are engaged in both social and ecological sustainability issues. Next I visited these practices, during two months, and conducted semi-structured interviews in order to find out if and how they work on both dimensions. Once I started interviewing, I used a ‘snowball method’, i.e. the organizations referred me to other organizations. After an exploratory research period of two months, I had interviewed twenty cultural organizations (Appendix A). The interviews were organized around two main areas of interest; how they understand the social and ecological dimension of sustainability, and how they bring this into practice. In each organization I interviewed the person that is mostly engaged with, or informed about the organizations’ sustainable policy. After the interviews, I listed how each organization works on both dimensions (example in Appendix B). The interviews were merely a field orientation, and were therefore not recorded.

4.2.2 Selection of eight Cases

After an initial field exploration, I selected eight cases to investigate more in-depth. This number of eight cases is due to the choice to conduct a focus group later in the research process, as focus groups are ideally held with a small group of participants (between six to twelve) (Steward et al 2007:58). This allows for a real discussion among them (*Ibid*). I chose the most suitable cases based on the following criteria:

Organizations that ...

- have at least one actor from the cultural sector (Arts, Heritage or social-cultural work),
- combine both social and ecological dimensions of sustainability (explained more in detail in Appendix C),
- are already engaged in the topic sustainability for some time (at least one year),
- organize activities and have direct contact with the public (no supportive services),
- are willing and open to learn from other cultural organizations,
- are professionally recognized within their sector⁶, and
- are available during November (2013), December (2013) and January (2014) and willing to participate in the research

⁶ During the interviews some professionals made me aware of the importance to select cases that are generally recognized within the sector. Other cultural organizations should be able to identify with the selected cases in order to perceive the findings as relevant for their own practice.

Furthermore, it was necessary to select at least one organization of each subsector; arts, cultural heritage and socio-cultural Work. Also, since there is a big variety of organizations within the sector regarding; location (city-countryside), size, level of independence, theme, working method, target group, etc., I purposively selected a variety of cases, to collect a broad range of insights and experiences.

4.2.3 In-depth Interviews

The selection of cases was followed by a second interview with the same professional from each of the eight cultural organizations⁷. These were *in-depth interviews* by means of a *mind map*. The aim of these interviews was to develop an understanding of how the concerned cultural organizations perceive their role in the transition process, how they define the social and ecological sustainability dimension, and how they bring these insights into practice. Besides identifying descriptive understandings, the interviews had an ensuing aim to reveal the experiences of the professionals regarding their work on both the social and ecological sustainability dimension; what are the difficulties, tensions, barriers and successes they encounter.

As in-depth interviews are a means to encourage participants to talk thoroughly about the topic (Cook 2008:422), they are most suited to answer the research questions. A disadvantage of in-depth interviews in this case could be that the participants want to give a positive impression of their organization and therefore present the organization in a better light (Boyce & Neale 2006:3). I aimed to minimize this bias by asking for concrete examples of sustainable practices, and by emphasizing that the goal of the research is not to evaluate nor compare the organizations with each other. Based on the basics of system thinking the interviews were guided by a mind map. This is a tool that visualizes data and allows seeing deeper perspectives and connections between different issues (Wheeldon & Faubert 2009:69). For each interview I prepared the basic structure of the mind map based on the information gathered during the exploratory interview, and the main areas that were most likely to be discussed in the second interview. In this manner, the mind map served as a tool to visualize

⁷ In Vooruit, I conducted the second interview with a different professional because the first professional was not available to participate during the defined period of time.

the collected data and to guide the in-depth interviews to a further level. Participants were free to elaborate more on the topics they perceived as most relevant in their specific context. Depending on the professional interviewed, the mind map sometimes was a very useful tool, but sometimes did not add much value to the interview (an example of a mind map developed during an interview can be found in Appendix D). If not, it was set aside and the interview continued based on the main areas of interest of the research.

An important note is that the interviews themselves are seen as an intervention that brings the theme of sustainability, with an emphasis on both the ecological and the social aspect, within cultural organizations. The interviews are a means to collect data, to recognize them for their engagement in the transition towards a sustainable society, and also an incentive to approach sustainability from a broader perspective.

All interviews were made during November and December 2013 and each one took between one and two hours. They were performed in Dutch, and I translated all quotes used in this thesis to English. They were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. After each interview a summary was made. I sent this summary to the participants so they could see if my interpretations of their experiences were correct and to allow them to give comments and add missing information. Based on these documents I analysed the data, looked for similarities and/or differences, and structured the data into a *summarizing mind map* (Appendix E).

The professionals that participated in the research and their function within the respective organization are presented in Figure 1. All participants gave me the permission to use their real names.

Cultural Organization	Exploratory interview	In-depth interview	Focusgroup
Vooruit (Art Center)	Barbara Raes (Artistic Director)	Johan Penson (Head of the Department of Infrastructure)	Johan Penson
4AD (Music Center)	Eline Adam (Staff member responsible for the project Gone West and the rehearsal rooms)	Eline Adam	Absent
De Veerman (Organization for Art-Education)	Barbara Bellinkx (Project employee of the Art-Eco project)	Barbara Bellinkx	Barbara Bellinkx
City Mine(d) (Collective of artists, architects and activists)	Jim Segers (co-founder and staff member)	Jim Segers	Jim Segers
30CC (Cultural Center)	Veerle Van Schoelant (Theater programmer)	Veerle Van Schoelant	Veerle Van Schoelant
K.ERF (Heritage Cell)	Janna Lefevere (staff member)	Janna Lefevere	Janna Lefevere
Vormingplus Kempen (Adult Education Center)	Martine Coppelters (Coordinator)	Martine Coppelters	Jef Van Eyck (educator)
Repair Café Leuven (Movement)	Magda Peeters (Coordinator)	Magda Peeters	Magda Peeters

Figure 1: Participating Professionals and their Function in the Organization

4.2.4 Focus Group

The main purpose of the focus group was to discuss and deepen common challenges, difficulties and factors of success that the professionals experience when working on social and ecological sustainability. A secondary objective is to share the knowledge and insights gained during the in-depth interviews. The latter objective has great relevance for stimulating exchange and cooperation between and within the sector of arts, cultural heritage and socio-cultural Work.

Focus groups are used “to gather qualitative data from individuals who have experienced some ‘particular concrete situation’, which serves as the focus of the interview” (Stewart et al. 2007:9). In this research, the particular concrete situation is ‘working on social and ecological sustainability in cultural organizations’. All of the professionals gathered in the focus group have their own experiences and understandings regarding this topic by working in a cultural organization. While conducting a focus group, I as a researcher could interact directly with the participants by asking follow-up questions, clarifications and participants’ opinions in relation to each other’s ideas and experiences. Another advantage of the focus group as a

research method is its interaction stimulating effect between the practitioners. They can build on each other's responses and agree or disagree with one another opinions, which brings along more information than individual interviews would provide (Stewart et al. 2007:10). The latter can also be a disadvantage, as group dynamics might bring about undesirable effects. Dominant members with strong opinions might take up too much space in the discussion, while quieter people are hesitant to talk (*Ibid*). In order to minimize this hazard, a well-thought focus group design is needed.

The design of the focus group was based on Colucci's (2007:124) idea of '*activity-oriented questions*'. These are questions that are used to stimulate participation and discussion in focus groups. I structured the focus group around six central 'foci', based on common challenges and success factors encountered during the in-depth interviews. I developed each question in relation to an 'exercise', by using example problem-areas on which organizations had to position themselves. In this manner, participants did not have to give an immediate verbal response, but had the time to reflect upon each question and to define a position for his or her organization. The detailed plan of the focus group is added in Appendix F.

The focus group session took three and a half hours and was divided into two parts; knowledge sharing and knowledge deepening. During the first part I presented the knowledge and insights gathered during the individual interviews by means of the summarizing mind map, after which the participants were free to ask questions and to give comments. During the second part of the session, challenges and opportunities structured around six central 'foci' or questions were more thoroughly discussed. After the last question there was some time reserved for questions and other important issues that were not discussed during the focus group.

I moderated the focus group while a colleague of mine took notes of the discussion. The focus group was also audiotaped. Only seven cultural organizations participated in the focus group, since music club 4AD could not be present. In order to also have 4AD's vision on the issues discussed, I asked them to position themselves on each of the questions by means of written communication. After the session I made a summarizing report structured around the six central focuses. Again, I sent it to the participants and asked them to give comments. I analysed the data of the focus group according to the central challenges and opportunities discussed, and based on the new information, I complemented the summarizing mind map.

5 Findings and Analysis

First I introduce the eight practices that participated in the research. I give a general introduction to the organizations, where after I summarize how they perceive their role in relation to sustainability. This information mainly derives from the interviews and is based on my analysis of the organizations self-perception. Next, I discuss which roles the organizations all together adopt in the transition process. This is followed by an overview of how they effectively work on the social and ecological dimension of sustainability. Throughout the latter discussion I introduce the main difficulties and barriers that the cultural organizations encounter. These results are mainly based on the individual in-depth interviews. Next, I explore how the main difficulties can be turned into challenges and opportunities. The focus group serves as the main source of data. I would like to recommend the reader to use the summarizing mind map (Appendix E) when reading the analysis. This map gives a visual overview of the topics discussed, which can be a useful support.

Although I made a distinction between the three subsectors in the theoretical framework, I do not present the findings according to this division. This decision is based on a first finding that the different subsectors have more things in common than things in which they differ. Moreover, I aim to avoid thinking in terms of boundaries and hope to stimulate cooperation between the subsectors regarding sustainability transition.

5.1 The eight Cultural Organizations

5.1.1 Vooruit

Vooruit ('Forward') is a critical art centre in Ghent. Originally, Vooruit was a socialistic cooperation founded in the second half of the 19th Century that wanted to improve the conditions of the working class. In 1982 Vooruit transformed into an independent socio-cultural centre, which grew into 'Art centre Vooruit' as it is known today (STAM 2013).

The art centre believes that the cultural sector should take up its critical role and aims to be the driving force behind the transition towards a sustainable society. Vooruit always played an important social role in society (STAM 2013) and these days they also try to raise awareness

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on ecological issues. Vooruit sees its strength in imagining and experimenting with a new sustainable future. The centre aims to engage people to critically think about our current society and thereafter encourage and enable them to imagine a different society. The festival ‘Possible Futures’ is an example of how Vooruit looks for, and experiments with, new alternatives. During this festival the art centre explored together with the public how a sustainable future could look like.

Vooruit has a wide network and aims to connect people who work on sustainable topics and inspire others to do the same. By implementing an internal sustainability policy and promoting sustainable values and behaviour, the Art Centre aims to take up a pioneering role towards the public, the city Gent, and the Cultural sector. Vooruit is also co-founder of ‘Green Track’, a network with other cultural actors from Gent to exchange knowledge and experiences on ecological management.

5.1.2 Music Club 4 AD

In 1988 a group of youngsters took the initiative to start up a music club in Diksmuide, a remote town in West Flanders. This small initiative grew into a well-known music club with an artistic focus on local, national and international bands that leave the commercial path. Americana, singer song, folk, world, rock, noise, electronics, jazz, etc. are given a place on stage.

From the early years 4AD committed itself to a sustainable management. The music club pays a lot of attention to making the building project (around a preserved barn) as ecological as possible. Also its daily functioning is guided by a sustainable philosophy; the club has a sustainable purchasing policy, they recycle, organize eco-days, reduce their energy use, etc. 4AD also signed, as only cultural organization, the charter ‘Corporate Social Responsibility of West Flanders’. The charter mainly has influence on their personnel management; following the charter the music club introduced the concept of ‘human friendly entrepreneurship’.

Because of their strong environmental policy 4AD was nominated in 2001 as the most environmental conscious music club of Flanders. Now, 4AD is in a process to become completely CO₂ neutral. The music club always had a sustainable vision; for the staff

sustainability is part of 4AD's identity. Recently, they would also like to start raising environmental awareness among their neighbourhood, their public and the cultural sector. 4AD regards the process of becoming completely CO2 neutral as a good statement to start taking up a sensitizing role. Besides the strong developed environmental policy, 4AD also has attention for aspects of social sustainability. This is expressed in collaborations with local partners, participation of volunteers, attention for working conditions, solidarity actions, etc.

5.1.3 Cultural Centre 30 CC

30CC is the cultural centre of the city Leuven. Together with the heritage cell, the library and the archive, they are part of Leuven's local cultural policy. Like the other cultural centres of Flanders, 30CC has a three folding task; spreading culture, increasing cultural participation and fostering community building.

The cultural centre aims to take sustainability initiatives out of the niche and make them known and accessible to a broad public. 30CC supports and strengthens groups from civil society that work on sustainable issues and connects them to other actors in the city. This resulted in the idea of organizing a 'Climate Week', a thematic week on ecology and sustainability. 30 CC started up this initiative and developed it together with other cultural and social organizations from Leuven. The Climate Week exists of a diverse range of activities; from practical workshops and visits to more philosophical debates and performances. In November 2013, the third edition of the Climate Week took place. During this latest edition, 30CC paid special attention to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Although the centre's internal environmental management is not well developed yet, they want to take on an exemplary role and encourage other cultural actors to do the same. Through organizing this thematic week they engage other cultural actors to participate in the process of sustainability transition. 30CC also started up a transversal eco-team throughout the different cultural city services (library, heritage cell and archive) and they collaborate with the city's cultural sector by participating in the local network 'Green Track'.

5.1.4 City Mine(d)

City Mine(d) is a collective of artists, architects and activists which provide a platform for participatory arts activities involved with city and local action. A group of art students started up the collective. By using empty buildings as a stage they attempted to re-appropriate the city. The local initiative became an international movement with initiatives in Brussels, London and Barcelona. By setting up (or supporting) artistic projects and actions on public spaces, City Mine(d) places current topics, from the neighbourhood to European level, on the public and political agenda (City Mine(d) 2014).

City Mine(d) Brussels is a small organization with only three staff members. The platform emerged from a squatter's movement with a strong ideological vision of social justice, which expresses itself into social and ecological goals and actions. City Mine(d) has a strong vision on sustainable urban development. They see its role in the transition process on a city level by investing in the cities' software, by which they mean; building the social structures along by which sustainability issues can be handled. These social structures give people a platform to meet, think about and have influence on the organization of a sustainable city. This platform is set up around a certain challenge and developed as a dynamic experiment. In this research I focus on the project 'Proper Water' ('Clean Water'); an experiment on water in the city. Here the challenge was to bypass or reduce the impact of big water treatment plants and purify their own water. Together with the neighbourhood they explored and tested alternatives, which resulted in the construction of a water pavilion to clean rainwater.

By developing experiments on public spaces, City Mine(d) gets access to 'grassroots' knowledge and insights. In order to share these with new initiatives, policymakers, universities, etc., City Mine(d) Lab was created. In the lab knowledge is generated and shared through meetings, lectures, presentations, workshops, etc. on different locations.

5.1.5 De Veerman

De Veerman is an organization for art education situated in Antwerp with projects and activities across the Flemish region. The organization aims to stimulate creativity, experience, knowledge and insights in the arts, in relation to the world surrounding us. De Veerman

develops, implements, and spreads across art-educative projects. The art process of dance, theatre, media, sculpture, literature, etc. is approached as a methodology to see, understand and order the world. De Veerman aims to contribute to a society where ideas, beliefs and emotions are shared and confronted with each-other in a respectful way (De Veerman 2014).

During the research I focussed on one specific project; Art-Eco, which De Veerman developed in collaboration with Djapo, an organization for education on sustainable development. The project runs for two years and is developed for ten Flemish primary schools, ten schools from a country of ‘the global South’ and ten artists from ‘the global South’. Art-Eco aims to implement a sustainable policy in the respecting Flemish schools by influencing the structure and ways of thinking of the school in a sustainable direction. The project supports teachers to work on the development of social and ecological skills and attitudes with their students by means of art. The triangular relationship between the two schools and the artists is central. Together they immerse themselves in a different culture, reflect on sustainability and discover themselves as creative change makers (Djapo 2014).

5.1.6 Heritage Cell K.ERF

K.ERF is the heritage cell of the Kempish region (includes seven towns) and has the objective to make the tangible and intangible heritage from the region accessible to the broad public. Together with the heritage carriers of the region (archives, museums, collectors, heme groups) KERF helps to preserve, map and disclose the Kempish heritage. K.ERF does not manage the heritage itself, but it functions as a cross-pollinator or mediator in the region for everything that is related to heritage (K.ERF 2014).

Founded in 2011, K.ERF is still a young organisation. Therefore they still have to orientate themselves and develop a vision and strategy to integrate sustainability in its functioning. After a first brainstorm they see their role in the transition process in communicating about values and in telling the cultural story.

K.ERF believes in the strength of traditions, as they bring people together and they strengthen the feeling of belonging to a community. Accordingly K.ERF focuses on fostering traditions and helps to pass them on to future generations. Furthermore the heritage cell tells the cultural and mythical stories behind the landscape in order to reconnect people with nature and they

support traditional sustainable crafts such as beekeeping, milling, ecological landscape management, etc. Instead of romanticizing the past, KERF searches how old stories and traditions can serve as inspiration for today and the future. Furthermore, the heritage cell aims to connect people from the region who work on sustainable topics with each-other and highlight sustainable heritage practices.

5.1.7 Vormingplus Kempen

Vormingplus Kempen is one of the thirteen adult education centres spread across Flanders and Brussels. Vormingplus Kempen offers a broad and accessible variety of educational initiatives based on societal themes and developments that emerge in the region. The centre teaches adults (with special attention for disadvantaged groups), personal, social and cultural competences in order to enforce their resilience and engagement in society (Vormingplus Kempen 2014).

Vormingplus Kempen aims to stay informed about what goes on in society and bases its educational offer on societies' dedicated needs and questions. Sustainability is one of the themes that rises up in society to which Vormingplus tries to respond. In this context, the centre creates an accessible learning environment where people have the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills needed to cope with socio-environmental challenges. Depending on the question, Vormingplus takes up a leading role in the development of this learning process, acts as a bridge builder, or fulfils an advisory function.

The knowledge and expertise of Vormingplus Kempen lays primarily in its methodology; creating participatory learning processes and promoting social cohesion. For specific knowledge regarding sustainability themes, they call upon other organizations from the region or elsewhere. In contrast to the other Vormingpluscentra in Flanders, Vormingplus Kempen offers long term projects besides the classical one day trainings. They have a broad range of trainings focussed on sustainable themes such as sustainable living, poverty alleviation, integration and diversity, etc. Further, Vormingplus develops long term projects in relation to sustainability. The project 'Green front gardens' is an example. Here community building was coupled to education on sustainable gardening. Another example is the project 'Eco-cyclo'.

The education centre listed all the sustainable initiatives of the region and developed it into a low threshold educative concept; a bike trail along the different initiatives.

5.1.8 Repair Café Leuven

In 2012 the socio-cultural movement ‘Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken’ (‘Network for conscious consumption’) introduced the Dutch concept ‘Repair café’ in Flanders. This movement promotes sustainable consumption. Consuming less and consuming differently are the central principles (NBV, 2014). One of their ways to do this is by enthusing and supporting local groups to start up a Repair Café. A Repair Café is a ‘café/bar’ where a group of volunteers helps *its* neighbours to fix broken stuff (clothes, books, electronics, furniture, bikes, etc.). Visitors bring along broken or damaged things and learn to repair them together with the volunteers. All of the needed tools and materials are available in the café. Repair cafés are a very successful concept. There are starting up more and more of them all across Flanders, and in 2013 the word ‘repair café’ was even incorporated in the Dutch dictionary (Repair Café 2014).

In the research I focus on the Repair Café of the city Leuven. Here, the café is managed by ‘Wonen en Werken’ (‘Living and Working’), a social employment placement. Unique to the Repair Café of Leuven is that they work in cooperation with different organizations like, art-centres, social welfare organizations, nursing homes, schools, etc. in order to organize the café every month at a different location. In this manner, the Repair Café reaches a broad public; from disadvantaged groups to elderly people to students.

Repair Café Leuven sees its role in the transition to a sustainable society in making ‘sustainability’ concrete and accessible. Through organizing Repair Cafés people get in contact with the idea of repairing, re-using and sharing. The café is a place where people from the neighbourhood meet and repair things together, it is a place where people can reflect upon our consumer society and develop skills to follow an alternative path. Each Repair Café is coupled to another activity related to the ‘share economy’ such as a give-away market, information on car-sharing, up-cycling (creative re-use of waste materials), etc. The Repair Café of Leuven exists of a group of ten volunteers, among which also vulnerable persons who cannot work in the formal economy.

5.2 The Role that the Cultural Organizations take on in the Transition Process

During the interviews I encountered what Verhagen (2011:139) calls ‘pioneers’ and ‘colonizers’, which are two types of forerunners in the transition to a sustainable society. ‘Pioneers’, are organizations that create, dream, explore and invent sustainable alternatives and futures. According to Verhagen (2011) it are mostly small niche players that play this role. Within the cultural organizations the ‘*pioneer*’ function is fulfilled by adopting an exemplary role. The organizations implement a sustainable policy within their organization and in this manner they send the right signals to the public and local government. Further they act as a pioneer by raising awareness on socio-ecological issues towards the public, artists, the cultural sector, other sectors of society and the neighbourhood. They do this by visualising their own efforts and by including sustainable themes in their cultural offer. Moreover, they experiment with sustainable alternatives and imagine a different future. This pioneering role is in line with the role of culture as ‘*a driver*’ for sustainable development as mentioned by Unesco (2012), since the cultural sector nourishes new ideas and alternatives.

Verhagen (2011) calls the second type of forerunners ‘*colonizers*’, these are bigger organizations that make the connection to society by creating a large support base for change. While the pioneers initiate and create change, colonizers give weight and scale to these changes. Or like Verhagen (2011:147) metaphorically states; pioneers grow the seeds for a ‘sustainability revolution’, where after colonizers spread the seeds, water the plants and scale up the revolution. The cultural organizations also take on this ‘colonizing’ role. City Mine(d) calls themselves ‘plumbers’, because they lay the pipes from disadvantaged groups to city authorities. Vormingplus Kempen, Vooruit, De Veerman, 30CC and Repair Café Leuven refer to themselves as ‘bridge-builders’, while K.ERF sees itself as ‘mediator’ and ‘cross-pollinator’. It all comes down to the fact that they aim to broaden the transition process to all levels of society. They mediate when different interests occur, they aim to connect different groups that work on sustainable issues and they inspire people and organizations to engage in the transition process. In this manner they aspire to create a large support base for change. This role as ‘colonizer’ is in accordance with Unesco’s (2012) idea of culture as ‘*an enabler*’ for sustainable development. By acting as a colonizer, the cultural organizations enable innovative and sustainable ideas to be known and implemented. In contrast to Verhagens’ observation, it is not only the bigger organizations or organizations with a wide network and field of action that are ‘colonizers’. All the eight cultural organizations, from a small initiative

like City Mine(d) to a well-known organization like Vooruit, contribute to broaden the scope of innovative transition ideas, each on their respective level (the neighbourhood, city, region, province, etc.).

Verhagen (2011:147) argues that pioneers and colonizers need, as well as reinforce each-other, and therefore they have to work together to make the transition to a sustainable society possible. Remarkably, the cultural organizations take up both roles in one and the same practice. They experiment with sustainable alternatives and future visions and simultaneously they aim to broaden the sustainability narrative to a wide public in order to create a large support base on which the innovative changes can become reality. These two roles are by transition theorists described as two core functions of the niche-level (Geels 2011:28).

5.3 The Cultural Organizations Working on the Social and Ecological Dimension of Sustainability

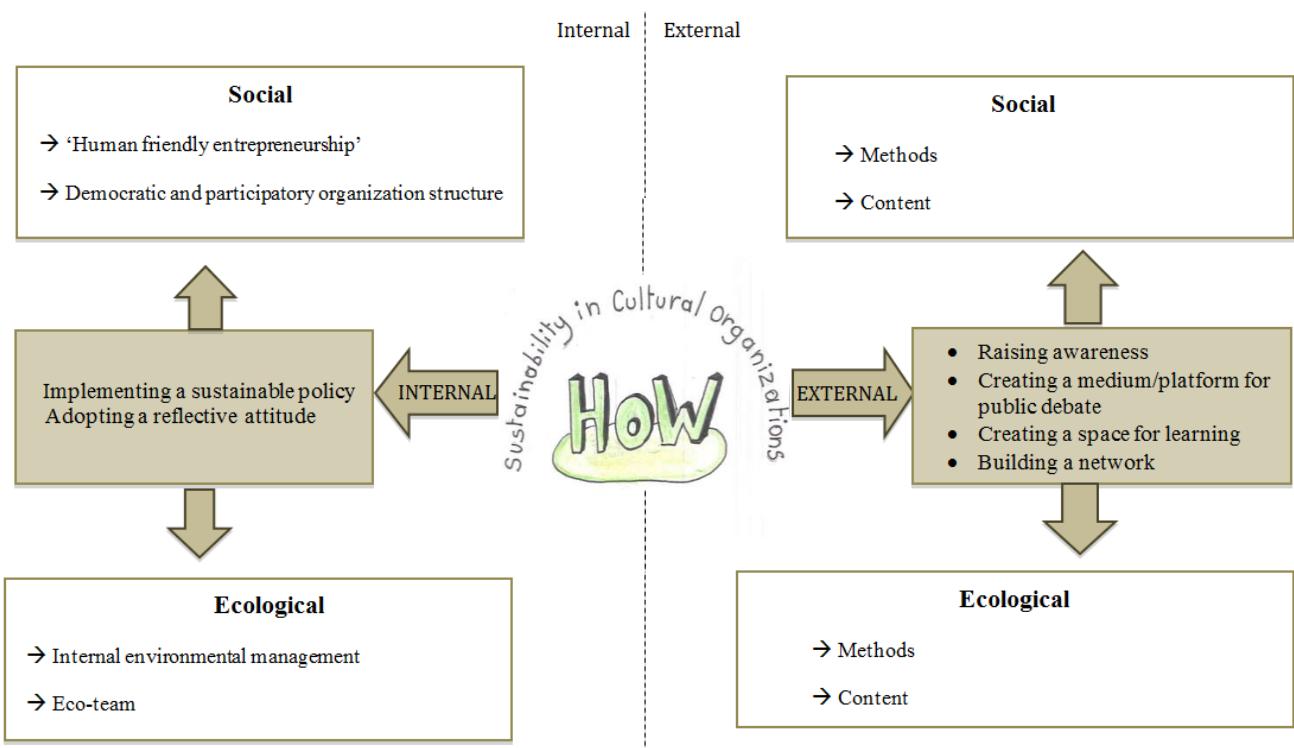


Figure 2: Overview of how Cultural Organizations can work on the Social and Ecological Dimension of Sustainability (By the author)

Analysing the exploratory- and in-depth interviews enabled me to develop Figure 2, which shows how the cultural organizations translate their perceived role into practice. I divided the way in which the cultural organizations work on just sustainability in their internal and external functioning. *Internally*, the practices implement a sustainable policy and undergo a continuous process of learning and reflecting, which is expressed in social and ecological measures. *Externally*, they adopt *four main functions*; raising awareness, creating a medium/platform for public debate, creating a space for learning, and developing a supportive network. These four functions can be divided into actions regarding *social and ecological sustainability*. The way the practices work on social and ecological sustainability towards the outside, is through its *methods* and *content*. All of these different aspects are explained in the following sections and further clarified by means of examples.

Making a distinction between social and ecological actions might seem to contradict the theoretical framework, where social and ecological issues were introduced as closely connected and mutually influencing each other. I chose however to deal with them separately in the discussion, as my aim is to explore how both dimension are understood and translated into practice. This enables cultural organizations that merely focus on one of the sustainability dimensions to become inspired by examples of the other one. I would like to emphasize however, that I do not want to polarize both dimensions. At times I experienced a difficulty in deciding to which dimension a certain worldview, practice or activity belongs, since they cannot be placed objectively in one or the other category as they are highly interrelated.

5.3.1 Internal

5.3.1.1 Implementing a Socially Sustainable Policy

All the organizations believe that they should first of all adopt an exemplary role by internally conducting a consistent, sustainable policy. By which they refer to a socially *and* ecologically sustainable policy. I start with the former.

Professionals active in the cultural sector do not always work under ideal circumstances; they often have irregular hours, evening and weekend work and peak periods. Therefore several cultural organizations emphasized the importance of taking care of the working conditions and work load of the staff. Adam of 4 AD refers to this aspect of sustainability as '*human*

friendly entrepreneurship'. Through performance appraisals, 4 AD aims to know how their employee's experience working in their organization. When problems occur, or certain employees do not feel good about their job, they explore possible solutions together. Also Vormingplus states that a sustainable organizational policy should include a policy regarding the working conditions of the staff. In order to prevent a work overload, Vormingplus carefully selects a few projects to develop or engage in. In this manner they can make achievable task packages and support staff members with coaching and advice, and allow the personnel to engage thoroughly into the specific sustainability theme. Also Vooruit emphasizes the importance of making choices in order to prevent a work overload.

Vooruit adds the importance of leaving aside a top-down approach and allowing *interaction between different organizational levels*. Vooruit implements this through the interaction between 'Green Track' (on a city level) and 'The Green Vooruit' (which mainly consists of board members and personnel). In this manner, ideas to make Vooruit more sustainable do not get stuck on a certain organization level. The installed structures stimulate interaction and ensure that ideas from one level are discussed at other levels too.

Also City Mine(d) considers *participative and democratic organization structures* as a main condition for a sustainable policy. Thanks to its small size they can go very far in this aspect. City Mine(d) questions the existing position and power structures within its own organization. In order to prevent power imbalances, they regularly change positions with each other. 4 AD also mentioned the importance of having a participative organization structure. There are many volunteers engaged in the music club, and 4AD finds it important to give them a say in managing the organization.

Another issue that I noticed during the interviews is that most of the cultural organizations are '*learning organizations*'. They have an inquiring and reflective attitude. They are open to deepen their knowledge regarding sustainability and to try out new things. Furthermore they constantly question their own organization, their role, objectives and their activities' effects. This attitude is one of the reasons why the cultural organizations were eager to participate in the research. This learning attitude is an example of how organizations can integrate 'system thinking' in their functioning. One activity has systematic consequences and might generate unintended and wrong side-effects (Kagan 2011:99-100). Therefore organizations should continuously reflect upon the (long term) effects of their activities.

5.3.1.2 Implementing an Ecologically Sustainable Policy

All of the organizations agree that an *environmentally conscious management* is necessary, as raising awareness on sustainability is not credible when not implementing it yourself. This concern expresses itself in the infrastructure of the building and the daily operation. Here the organizations combine strategies of ‘eco-efficiency’ with ‘eco-sufficiency’, which is according to Jones and Demeyere (2009:117) an essential combination in order to make the transition to a sustainable society. The organizations introduce technical measures to reduce their environmental impact, examples are good insulation, recycling, double glazing, LED lightning, etc. Music club 4AD even produces its own energy with solar panels placed on the rooftop. But the organizations also aim to make ‘cultural behaviour changes’ by consuming less and differently; e.g. a well thought infrastructure, recovery of old materials, purchase of organic, local, second hand, and fair-trade products, etc. Other examples are reducing and rethinking⁸ printed promotion material and exploring ideas of up-cycling and sharing.

Not all of the cultural organizations are equally far in terms of ecological sustainability. Outer circumstances; such as infrastructural conditions; financial resources, ownership or tenancy, whether they are a city service or independent organization; as well the staffs commitment towards an ecologically sustainable ideology, are all factors that influence the success of the organization’s environmental management. Music Club 4 AD, e.g. is a pioneer regarding this aspect. From the very beginning they invested in an environmentally friendly policy and now they are in a process of becoming entirely CO2 neutral, while the cultural centre 30CC e.g. lacks behind in this aspect. They do acknowledge however that they should do much more to reduce their environmental impact.

Most of the cultural organizations have an *eco-team*, which is a transversal group of personnel that specifically engages in environmental management. The eco-team thinks environmentally critical towards the organization, formulates recommendations for environmental measures and sets up awareness campaigns for the personnel. The latter is in order to create a support base for change within the own organization. Hence these kinds of actions are related to the organization’s social policy. Within the other -mostly smaller- organizations, these tasks are taken on by the entire team.

⁸ K.ERF made e.g. a walking map as flyer, in this manner it would not just be thrown away as it is also a use-object

Together, these examples show that the cultural organizations aim to develop democratic and participatory organizational structures that allow employees to be engaged in the process of becoming more sustainable. Employees are not only involved in the implementation of social and environmental measures, but also into the development of the organizations' vision and strategy towards sustainability. The cultural organizations aim to gather the employees around the common goal to become more sustainable.

5.3.1.3 Barriers and Difficulties

Cultural centre 30CC experiences some barriers regarding environmental management. 30CC is a city service which makes it difficult to take environmental measures because they do not own the building where they are situated. Furthermore, 30CC experiences difficulties in creating an internal support base for environmental measures. Being a city service, the personnel see themselves as representing society. Accordingly, not all of the staff members have a 'sustainable mind-set', what makes the internal support base not as strong as in other cultural organizations that specifically attract personnel with a 'sustainable mind-set'. By being a city service, 30CC also notices that they have to be careful not to become 'a political pawn'. Their initiative 'The Climate Week' could become a marketing tool to greener the image of some political parties that are actually not implementing a sustainable policy, thus Van Schoelant.

Another obstacle to make infrastructural environmental improvements occurs when a building is declared as cultural heritage, as it is the case with Vooruit. Cultural heritage buildings are bound to strict rules, which do not allow the organization to make autonomous decisions. Measures such as double glazing and insulation should be discussed with all heritage stakeholders, these people need to respect their own regulations and do not always share Vooruit's sustainable vision. Penson (Vooruit's head of infrastructure) however remarks that a positive trend is on its way within the heritage sector, because of the development of technical adjustments.

De Veerman experiences difficulties in finding a balance between their main objective and sustainability. Although the project Art-Eco specifically focuses on sustainability, the main objective of de Veerman still is art education. For certain artistic products you need materials

that are not environmentally friendly, and there are not always ecological alternatives available. In such case they have to choose between their main objective, or sustainability, and since changing the main objective is too extreme, De Veerman is now in a process to explore how to deal with this tension. 4AD has similar experiences. As they are located in a rural area and their activities take place in the evening, their public comes by car. 4AD therefore thought about organizing their activities during daytime. This change seemed to be too drastic, as 4AD's music genres are linked to a club atmosphere, which is naturally created during the evening/night.

5.5.2 External

The cultural organizations aim to take up a ‘pioneering’ and ‘colonizing’ role regarding the transition to a sustainable society, and thereby they also work on just sustainability outside the boundaries of their own organization. I distinguish four main external functions that the cultural organizations carry out together. I describe these four functions, after which I divide them into social and ecological actions.

5.3.2.1 Four functions

Firstly, all the cultural organizations aim to *raise awareness on just sustainability*. They take up an exemplary role and communicate about their internal environmental efforts. As such, the cultural organizations offer their public sustainable options such as fair-trade, organic and vegetarian catering, public transport or carpooling possibilities, bicycle parking, etc. 4AD even offers artists the possibility to stay in their own local ‘hotel’. Thereby they prevent them having to commute from the concert hall to a hotel and back again. Furthermore the cultural organizations raise awareness on just sustainability through the content of their cultural activities. Their trainings, workshops, concerts, projects, etc. discuss socio-ecological themes.

Secondly, the cultural organizations *create a medium or platform for public debate* on sustainability. The artwork, project, experiment, training, etc. serves to start communication and debate on sustainable issues. For example in the project Art-Eco, the artworks from artists of the ‘South’ serve as a medium for communication on societal issues between schoolchildren in Flanders, and schoolchildren in their respective country in the ‘South’.

Sometimes these artworks are directly related to sustainability topics. In this project for example, an Argentinian artist that works with meat consumption is participating, as well as a South African reggae singer that writes songs about social injustice.

However, an artwork does not explicitly have to relate to sustainability themes to start a discussion on this topic. In this way, art is introduced as a method to reflect upon yourself and the world around you. The drinkable water-experiment of City Mine(d) is another example of how a debate on just sustainability can be introduced to the public. Together with local residents, City Mine(d) developed a water pavilion on an abandoned piece of land in Brussels, which now serves as a meeting place stimulating debate on water rights in the city. Local residents find here a platform to collectively discuss questions such as; who belongs the water to, what do we use it for, how can we treat waste water ourselves, etc.? In this way City Mine(d) empowers people to take the future of their neighbourhood into their own hands.

Thirdly, the cultural organizations *create a space for (informal) learning*. They do this by teaching people the basics of the socio-ecological crisis and by developing people's knowledge and skills needed to cope with socio-ecological challenges. The education centre Vormingplus is very committed to create these informal learning settings through trainings and long-term projects. Examples are trainings on gardening, up-cycling, alternative energy, sustainable agriculture, etc. In the project 'Green front gardens' for example, the educational centre gave residents from a deprived neighbourhood the possibility to brighten their front yard with a vegetable garden. Besides formal training courses on sustainable gardening, participants informally learned from each other on the common chore days.

Learning is also the central focus of the project Art-Eco. The children of the participating schools get a basic understanding of what sustainability implies; concepts such as ecological footprint, ecological (in)justice, environmental degradation, etc. are introduced. Moreover, Art-Eco approaches sustainability as an attitude; the project aims to teach children, tutors and board members to reflect upon their standing in the world, their relation to people from the 'global South' and their relation to the natural environment.

Furthermore the cultural organizations do not only teach people to adapt themselves to the standards and requirements of society and a changing environment, but also aim to encourage them to take on an active role in the quest for solutions to change society. Repair Café enables

sharing and the passing on of skills and knowledge regarding repairing. The café encourages people to critically reflect upon consumer society and gives people the tools to follow an alternative path. Also, Art-Eco does not stop after reflecting on socio-environmental problems. The project encourages schools to find solutions and to experiment with alternatives that make the school more sustainable.

A fourth function the cultural organizations take on is *building a strong network*. The cultural organizations endeavour to broaden the search for a sustainable society to the entire population. By making sustainability more concrete, accessible and understandable for everyone in society, they aim to take sustainable initiatives out of the niche. Besides this, the cultural organizations also aim to connect people and groups that work on common topics with each other. As a bridge-builder they support sustainable initiatives active in the region, and link them with each other.

Moreover they seek to bring organizations that are not yet engaged in sustainability issues into contact with organizations that are actively engaged in the transition process. In this way, they aim to inspire the former organizations to also take on a role in the transition process. An example for this can be found in Vormingplus Kempen. Recently the education centre noticed the uprising of many initiatives in the region that are collectively trying to manage the communal environment (water, wind, nature, etc.) in a sustainable manner. Vormingplus aims to follow, support and nourish this movement, which resulted in the organization of an inspirational evening on ‘the commons’. By doing this, the centre supported already existing initiatives on the commons and inspired groups who were not yet familiar with the concept. These crossovers led to new ideas and partnerships in the region; the starting up of a new community garden, and the idea to create a local windmill-energy cooperative are some of the examples. Also City Mine(d) pays primary attention to the creation of a strong network. For the collective, building a network means creating ‘the soft structures of the city’. They aim to initiate and strengthen social relations between people that allow them to meet and discuss the future development of the neighbourhood.

Remarkably, almost all of the interviewed organizations focus on the four functions, each with their own emphasis, while in literature experimenting with alternatives and imagining sustainable visions of the future is mainly attributed to the art sector, and creating a space for social learning is supposedly a task of socio-cultural organizations.

5.3.2.2 Social Sustainability Dimension

Method

An issue that all of the interviewees mention is the importance of *partnerships*. The cultural organizations collaborate with partners from the neighbourhood, the city, the province, and even with international partners. These partnerships are not only set up with partners from the cultural sector or likeminded ‘green’ organizations, but also with healthcare organizations, social services, education institutions, NGO’s, businesses, governmental agencies, etc. These collaborations can take different shapes; meetings, networks, co-productions, etc.

The cultural organizations experience these collaborations as useful in means of: (1) collectively dealing with sustainable issues; (2) directing ‘unsustainable’ partners into a ‘greener’ direction; (3) reaching a broader public and more specific target groups; (4) calling upon specific expertise regarding sustainable themes; (5) learning from each other by sharing experiences and knowledge. Finally De Veerman mentions that partnerships (6) help to get a better view on the organizations own identity and progress regarding sustainability. Furthermore Bellinkx states that “each new collaboration is a new chance to start from scratch and collectively develop a new narrative”.

The cultural organizations work on social sustainability by *broadening the search for a sustainable society*. For the cultural centre 30CC broadening the scope of sustainability initiatives is its main objective in the transition process. By developing a fresh and attractive communication strategy for the ‘Climate Week’, they aim to make transition ‘sexy’, ‘trendy’ and visible throughout the city. They combine this with concrete and easily accessible cultural activities (ranging from practical workshops to in-depth performances and debates), to make the transition to a sustainable society a matter that attracts all inhabitants of the city. Also the other cultural organizations try to make the rather vague and broad concept of ‘sustainability’ more understandable and relevant for the wider public by linking it to concrete actions and projects. Furthermore they address the all-embracing theme of sustainability by approaching it from one specific theme like water, alternative energy, or sustainable food consumption.

Most of the organizations *specifically focus on the inclusion of people that are left behind in the sustainability discourse*. Repair Café Leuven and City Mine(d) consider this being their

main task in the transition process. “As long as you cannot imagine a sustainability narrative that also takes less favoured people on board, the narrative is unfinished”, thus Segers of City Mine(d). The cultural organizations refer to disadvantaged groups such as cultural minorities, unemployed people, people living in poverty, elderly people, etc. The organizations open up their cultural activities towards disadvantaged groups and organize specific activities for them, in which they aim to approach sustainability from their point of view.

City Mine(d) believes that the focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups works stigmatizing and hence they propose a different approach. Instead of directing themselves towards disadvantaged groups, they use ‘co-creation’. They do not operate from a building or stage, but they go to abandoned public places (which are mostly located in deprived neighbourhoods) and work from there, together with the local residents. City Mine(d) develops an experiment based on a challenge that was experienced by people from this neighbourhood and look for people who have the skills needed to deal with this challenge. In this manner, says Segers, they focus on people’s qualities instead of people’s socio-economic or cultural background. City Mine(d) does not label people as ‘poor’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘unemployed’, but leaves room for self-definition. Also repair Café Leuven focuses on people’s skills by including them as volunteers in their project.

Another issue that is brought up regarding the inclusion of the entire society is the concept *‘everyone is expert’*. Students, children, teachers, board members, politicians, homeless people, people from the ‘North’ or the ‘South’, everyone has knowledge, skills and experiences that are needed in the search for a sustainable society. And the organizations aim to draw upon this collective know-how. Approaching socio-environmental problems from this perspective requires a different attitude from the professional. An attitude based on an equal relationship between student and teacher, citizen and politician, etc. The project Art-Eco e.g. aims to bring students, teachers and board members to the same level. Additionally the project starts from an equal relationship between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’. In practice, this is expressed by giving children a say in the content and shape of the project and by stimulating teachers to share experiences, and to ask advice from teachers from the South. The same idea is found in the concept of Repair Café Leuven and City Mine(d). People are approached as experts in city development/repairing; they are rewarded for their skills and knowledge and therefore they feel helpful in society. They believe that this approach works empowering.

People feel rewarded and they get a sense of ownership, which encourages them to participate in changing society into a desirable direction.

Furthermore the majority of the cultural organizations work on *community development*. They do this by creating a meeting place, and aiming to strengthen social cohesion in local neighbourhoods. K.ERF e.g., stresses the importance of traditions, as these have the power to bring people together and ‘build society’. Therefore they aim to foster traditions and pass them on to future generations. Community building is also one of the main focuses of Vormingplus Kempen. One example is the project ‘Community Benches’, where on demand of the community, a bench is collectively designed and placed in the neighbourhood. This functions as a leverage for the social cohesion in the respected area. Around this bench they organize several activities to bring neighbours together.

Finally, the interviewees mention the importance of *being up-to-date on what is happening in society* in order to develop projects, trainings and activities based on dedicated current needs and desires, as well as to *share the knowledge and experience* gained throughout the projects with the sector and beyond.

These examples show that cultural organizations understand social sustainability as paying attention to the process. They aim to make a participatory, emancipatory, inclusive and democratic project of the transition to a sustainable society. The cultural organizations initiate the debate on sustainability to the broad public and aim to encourage people to become ‘active citizens’ that engage in imagining and developing a different, more sustainable future. Similar ideas can be found in Holemans (2013) and Welzer (2013). Holemans (2013) refers in this context to ‘ecological citizens’, which are citizens who actively participate in public debates and work together to discover new future perspectives. Welzer (2013) argues for introducing the concept ‘Zukunftsfähigkeit’ (‘future orientation’), instead of ‘Zukunftfeindlichkeit’ (‘aversion to the future’). Hereby he means that we should focus on creating a new future instead of being afraid for the future and going along in our consumer society, where industries decide our needs. People should regain control over their own life and take responsibility for other people and the environment.

Content

The cultural organizations also introduce issues of social (in)justice into the content of their cultural activities. Examples are the ‘Possible Futures Festival’, trainings on participation and citizenship, a talk about ethical banking, projects about poverty elevation and democracy, experiments around ‘the commons’, etc. The cultural activities enable people to understand social issues and aim to encourage people to reflect upon them.

Furthermore, they respond to current affairs that are covered in the media. 4AD organized e.g. a fundraising campaign for the victims of the civil war in Syria. Vooruit in the same way organizes activities in relation to national campaigns such as ‘Fair-trade week’.

5.3.2.3 Ecological Sustainability Dimension

Method

“Sustainability is not just about making art with recycled material. That is too superficial. What it really is about is a way of thinking and looking at the world” (Barbara Bellinkx, De Veerman, 2013).

The cultural organizations aim to *look at their activities from a green perspective*. First of all they do this by adopting a long-term vision. Art-Eco e.g. is a two year project, which aims to change the current school structure into a more sustainable one. This is a long-term process that will not have results from one day to the other, as it requires a change in people’s attitudes and behaviour. They believe that once this sustainable structure is installed however, it will have lasting positive effects on society and the environment. Also, they encourage schools to buy less materials, but of better quality. Furthermore they experiment with new ideas of making art that does not use waste materials (paper, glue, pencils, etc.). Repair Café is also very reflective towards the materials they use to repair. They always try to recycle leftovers and waste material. The different cultural organizations also mention that they reflect upon the time and location of the activity in order to make it possible for participants to come by public transport or bike.

The cultural organizations also aim *for raising awareness on environmental issues*. Offering sustainable catering is one example. None of the cultural organizations completely bans

unsustainable options however, but they do make the sustainable offer more attractive (e.g. promoting the vegetarian options, having a wide variety of fair trade and organic products, etc.). Additionally, they raise awareness by visible actions such as a beehive, or solar panels on the rooftop, an insect hotel in the garden, or a vegetable garden

Also regarding ecological sustainability, *networks* play an important role. Vooruit is co-founder of the local network ‘Green Track Gent’. In this network Vooruit works together with the other cultural actors of the city Gent in the area of ecology. They share experiences and knowledge regarding environmental management. Furthermore they explore possibilities of ‘collaborative consumption’ of printing materials, energy, a service vehicle, etc. Regarding energy e.g., Green Track Gent is part of Energent, a local renewable energy cooperative. The cultural centre 30CC is part of the network ‘Green Track Leuven’. This network was recently launched, but is not yet as successful as their counterpart in Gent. Furthermore the cultural centre established a collaboration between the different cultural services of the city (library, archive and heritage cell), by means of a transversal eco-team.

Heritage Cell K.ERF is experimenting with a project that *reconnects people to the landscape*. Together with the tourism sector they are developing mythical maps of the region. These are walking routes alongside places in the landscape that are connected to a mythical story. By telling the cultural story behind the landscape, K.ERF aims to connect people to the environment and make people proud of their region. Consequently K.ERF believes that in this way people will respect the environment and take care of it.

Furthermore, K.ERF also aims to *show the relationship between humans, machines and nature*, a connection that is made invisible in consumer society⁹. They do this by supporting traditional (non-polluting) crafts. Examples are clog-making, milling, beekeeping and ecological landscape management. The heritage cell does not promote the return to a handicraft industry, but instead aims to explore how traditional skills can be relevant today in making society more sustainable. Also, Repair Café aims to reconnect people to the materials that are used for the products they use and to its producers.

⁹ Many argue that we live in a consumer society today. One particularity of which is the disparity (spatial, temporal, social, cultural) of production and consumption; primary resource extraction is separated from ultimate consumption decisions (Conca 2002:144). Industrial production of food e.g. has become increasingly invisible to food consumers. This withholds consumers from the necessary information and context regarding the production process, needed to make sustainable choices (Conca 2002:133-145; Lockie 2002).

The latter two examples show how cultural organizations can introduce Plumwood's (2002:3) argument for 'a culture of environmental embeddedness', by which she refers to a culture that values, and fully acknowledges the non-human sphere and our dependency on it. According to Plumwood (2002:113), people and groups who aim to bring about social change should raise awareness on how we depend on nature, show people the importance and value of nature in everyday life, and generate local narratives of the earth showing nature's own creativity and agency. This is what K.ERF aims to achieve by telling the cultural and mythical stories behind landscapes and giving away insights in production processes. The heritage cell recently started to experiment with these ideas to reconnect people to nature and aims to further develop these kinds of activities.

Content

The cultural organizations also touch upon ecological issues in their programme (projects, trainings, activities, etc.). Examples are trainings in relation to 'We Love Eco', the festival 'How to Save the World in Ten Days', a Green Movie Afternoon, the experiment 'Clean Water', etc. The cultural activities enable people to understand ecological issues and encourage them to reflect upon these.

Regarding ecological sustainability, the cultural organizations also *respond to current issues*. One of the schools in the project Art-Eco e.g. has a partnership with a school in the Philippines. After they heard about the typhoon Haiyan (2013) the children were worried about their friends in the Philippines. Teachers grasped this moment to engage the children in a discussion on climate change and ecological (in)justice. Another example can be found in 4AD. When the music club heard the same news about the typhoon, they immediately set up a fundraising project to support the victims.

5.5.2.5 Barriers and Difficulties

Here I present an overview of the barriers and difficulties that the cultural organizations encounter when working externally on just sustainability. In the following chapter the main tensions are discussed more in-depth, and solutions are explored.

An issue that most of the cultural organizations mention is the difficulty to deal with the complex, vague and broad concept ‘sustainability’. It can be interpreted in so many different ways that it becomes paralyzing.

There has been an emphasis from the Flemish government to include sustainability into the cultural sector, while the previous policy focused more on diversity. 30CC and K.ERF express their concern that sustainability might disappear from the agenda in the next government period. Van Schoelant of 30CC wonders “how the sector can ensure that the search for a sustainable society remains an urgent issue”.

For most of the organizations, the social and ecological dimensions of sustainability go hand in hand. They do not experience any tensions between them. K.ERF however experiences contrasting interests between social and ecological issues when fostering traditions. Traditions can strengthen social cohesion, but on the other hand they can be harmful for the environment. Examples are the light parade, gees riding, Christmas trees, etc. Does the strong community-enforcing effect compensates for the environmental pollution, or should these traditions be forbidden? K.ERF notices that traditions are changeable, and that they should adapt to new times and circumstances. These changes however should come from society, instead of being imposed on society, thus Lefevere. Also City Mine(d) wonders if, when the link between the social and ecological aspect becomes irrelevant, a priority has to be made.

Also the used strategies bring forward some difficulties. E.g. choosing between short term contacts with a broad public or long term projects with a selected public. Repair Café chooses the first option, as they organize a Repair Café every month on a different location in order to reach a broad public. But will this single contact be enough to change people’s attitudes and behaviour? Repair Café hopes that by organizing a Repair Café at a certain location, people will become inspired to regularly organize a Repair Café themselves in that respective place. In this way the concept can be multiplied. Vormingplus Kempen on the other hand decided to focus more on in-depth projects with a limited public. By organizing long-term projects, they hope to engage people in a long-term process, which will increase chances of people actually adopting environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours. Also, Repair Café perceived a tension between being more concrete and easy accessible, and imparting underlying norms and values. During one of the Repair Café’s, the partner organization distributed evaluation forms among the visitors. When analysing these forms, Repair Café detected an overall trend;

visitors make suggestions from an ‘economic rationale’ that guides the Repair Café in the direction of the ‘regular economic system’, while this is exactly what the initiative aims to prevent. This example shows that the café’s underlying critique, values and norms might not reach the visitors.

The cultural organizations aim to empower the voices of the people that are not included in the sustainability discourse so far, but they wonder if they will succeed and go far enough in engaging these groups in their activities. How can they offer disadvantaged groups added value, when ‘culture’ and ‘sustainability’ are not their primary concerns? Vormingplus Kempen also wonders what rights they have to intervene in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and telling them that ‘they have a problem that should be solved’.

Another issue they discussed several times during the interviews is what path of change the cultural organizations should follow. Is it a path of revolution; radical change and resistance, or a path of evolution; stepwise changes and collaboration? Or is it somewhere in between?

The cultural organizations mentioned some uncertainties regarding communication and raising awareness for sustainability issues. The music club 4AD wonders e.g. how they can take on an exemplary role and raise awareness towards the public, without blaming people or pointing out their responsibilities. The following quote illustrates this concern: “If you are invited for dinner at a vegetarian’s house, you eat vegetarian, but you do not want to hear an entire sermon of why you should become vegetarian as well. People who necessarily have to convince you from their own beliefs are experienced as annoying and 4AD does not want to be perceived like that”. Based on this, 4AD wants to inform people about their sustainable identity without becoming a moralist. This is a concern mentioned by most of the cultural organizations. Instead of reminding people of their duties and responsibilities, the organizations aim to adopt a positive approach by making sustainable choices more attractive.

De Veerman mentioned another concern on raising awareness. They assume that by now, everyone agrees that the sector should take up an exemplary role and carry out a sustainable message to the public, but how far can organizations go in raising awareness? Can cultural organizations ask engagement or have demands from the public? In the case of the Art-Eco project, Bellinkx gives the following examples: “Can we ask children not to bring plastic to school or (material) birthday presents? Can we have a discussion in class about the amount of

Christmas presents they receive? Or are we in these cases invading the children's private sphere, and if so, are we allowed to do so?" Music club 4AD has a similar concern; the music centre wonders if they can ask the public not to come by car to the concerts. 4AD chose not to do so and decided to compensate the public's CO₂ emissions by investing in a local environmental project. At the same time they will use this project to raise awareness of the issue.

Finally, K.ERF mentioned that they need to get to know the theory on sustainability and transition thinking better. They recently got engaged in the topic and have the feeling they need more theoretical input.

5.4 From Difficulties to Challenges and Opportunities

During the focus group we further discussed the main barriers and difficulties encountered during the individual interviews, and explored how these can be turned into opportunities and solutions. I discuss the results in this section. The participants prefer to speak of 'challenges' rather than 'difficulties or barriers'. This is based on the idea that framing the encountered difficulties as challenges opens up opportunities for a positive discussion on solutions. An argument for this positive approach can be found in 'appreciative inquiry's' (AI). AI is an organizational development strategy, which was later developed into a research methodology that is often used in participatory research (Reed 2007:21). In order to effectively engage people in bringing about change, AI argues, research should focus on exploring positive questions since it draws attention on the good things already achieved, and gives participants the energy and a sense of responsibility to engage in future change (Reed 2007:27-28). When focussing on problems instead, people feel discouraged by limitations.

Because of the time limit of the focus group, I selected the challenges that were most interesting considering the aim of the research. Therefore not all of the encountered difficulties and barriers mentioned in the previous section are discussed. Hence, with this paragraph I aim to initiate a discussion between the different subsectors on common challenges and possible solutions. I hope that it will serve as an incentive to further develop these collective discussions.

5.4.1 Dealing with the Vague, Broad and Complex Concept ‘Sustainability’

A first challenge mentioned by the organizations, is the ‘de-politicized’ character of the concept ‘sustainability’. According to Segers of City Mine(d) ‘sustainability’ becomes a commonly used and accepted term and “we are not allowed anymore to disagree about it or to discuss the concept”. He states that ‘sustainability’ lost its political aspect; there is no place for conflict or discussion on different interests. Accordingly ‘sustainability’ became an empty concept, which makes it difficult to work with. City Mine(d) proposes to search for new concepts that allow disagreements and ideological debates. Limited resources for the sector are seen by the collective as an opportunity to ‘re-politicize’ the concept, as it forces organizations to take position and make related choices. All of the cultural organizations agree with City Mine(d)’s opinion and believe that the cultural sector should collectively define what they mean with ‘sustainability’; they should sharpen and give meaning to the concept or look for alternative concepts.

5.4.2 Making Sustainability Concrete and Link it to ‘The Bigger Picture’

Another challenge is how the organizations can make ‘sustainability’ more concrete and understandable towards a broader public and at the same time approach it from a holistic perspective. When discussing the methods and strategies, it became clear that the organizations aim to make ‘sustainability’ accessible and concrete for the broad public. Practical activities and thematic approaches are common ways to do this. But how can cultural organizations be more concrete without reducing sustainability’s complexity into individual, separated aspects? How do the cultural organizations make sustainability concrete and at the same time show the bigger picture and share the activities’ underlying values and norms. If people join a Repair Café e.g., they might just join because it is fun and because they can fix things for free, but how do you ensure that the participants also comprehend the underlying norms and values of the concept and the critique on consumer society? In the focus group I introduced this concern and asked how the cultural organizations deal with this tension.

All of the cultural organizations react in the same way. They all believe that their strength lies in their concreteness, because it opens up the transition process to a broad public. Understanding the bigger picture on interlinked social, environmental and economic problems

should not be a condition to participate in the transition process since the search to a sustainable society should be an inclusive process. Van Schoelant of 30CC wonders if it will make a difference if people know ‘the big picture’; “Isn’t it enough if people make small changes in their daily life, although they do not know the bigger and more complex story behind these actions?”

Further, the organizations believe that the bigger picture frightens and paralyzes people. Like Segers of City Mine(d) explains; “Now we work around water, but that is not the point. The problem is that the point is so deep that it becomes too abstract, which scares people.” The organizations aim to reduce people’s fear of the future by highlighting the positive aspects of the search for a sustainable society. By engaging people in concrete activities people do not feel the pressure of ‘the big whole’ and they feel that they can have an influence in changing society. Although the organizations focus on concrete activities and specific themes, they aim to make people reflect upon their attitudes and lifestyle. The cultural organizations might focus on water, energy or food, but these themes are used as an accessible entry point from which the practices aim at encouraging people to adopt a sustainable way of thinking and acting. City Mine(d) takes e.g. water as a starting point to engage people in the sustainability narrative, and later link it to deeper social and political issues on water as a common good. Doing so, they transcend individual themes.

5.4.3 The Path of Change

According to Kenis (2010:103), not all actors in the transition debate share the same idea on how the change to a sustainable society should occur. Some believe it is by stepwise, gradual improvements, based on consensus, while others argue for radical changes with tipping points and leaps. Paredis (2013) and Bisschop & Debruyne (2013) showed a concern regarding the consensus-approach of transition initiatives, as it seems to prevent transition initiatives to put their radical analysis and objectives into practice. Deciding which path of change to follow is a challenge mentioned several times by the organizations. During the focus group we thoroughly discussed this issue in order to find what could be a desirable path for the cultural organizations to follow. The cultural organizations positioned themselves on the following tension field;

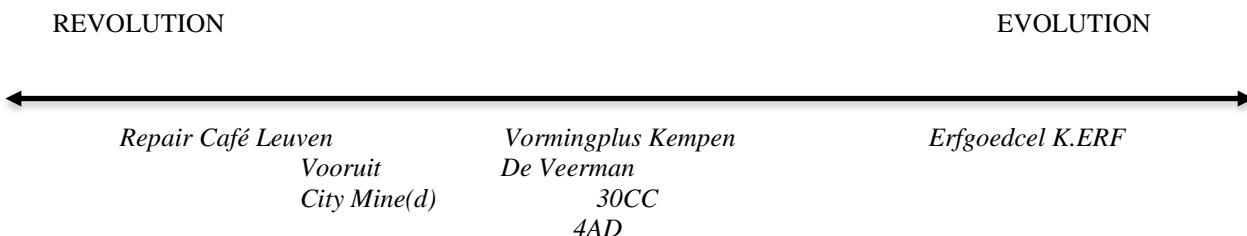


Figure 3: The position of the organizations on the tension field ‘evolution vs. revolution’, a result of the focus group

Revolution is explained as radical change, resistance, questioning the system, activism and challenging policies, while evolution is explained as stepwise, gradual changes, through collaboration (also with proponents of the current system), based on consensus and through the creation of a support base for change. The concepts revolution and evolution, which might resemble ‘extreme’, were purposively chosen to provoke discussion.

5.4.3.1 Situation of the Organizations on the Tension Field

The only cultural organization that positions itself at the evolution side is K.ERF. The heritage cell prefers to stay on the background, while supporting volunteers and communities to take action. “We are the bees, we cross-pollinate and then we leave”, as such Lefevere. Furthermore, the heritage cell starts from traditions, and traditions are no revolutionary ideas. Instead they are very familiar and close to people.

According to Vooruit and 4AD, tending towards the path of revolution and carry out some form of activism is part of the role of the cultural sector. Vooruit believes that the arts should look for societal relevance. Accordingly, the art centre has the ambition to go into the city more often to gather people around sustainable themes in public spaces. Vooruit notes however that they cannot go too far in taking on this activist role, as activism does not bring about measurable crowd turnout or income, while the latter are essential for the art centres’ existence.

De Veerman places itself in the middle. While they perceive their work as evolutionary, for their public it feels like revolution. “What we experience as small evident steps are experienced by our public as revolutionary changes”, thus Bellinckx. Vormingplus Kempen shares this experience. Ideas such as ‘the commons’ seem ground-breaking for the public, while the education centre considers it is a logical thought. Because of this difference between the cultural practice’s and the public’s understanding of what is radical and what is not, they

have to be very careful when introducing new ideas in order not to scare the public. Also music centre 4AD and 30CC are balancing between these two approaches.

City Mine(d) prefers the term radicalism above revolution. The question how radical they should be, is one of City Mine(d) main concerns. In contrast to their initial years they do not want to be ‘acid activists’ who frighten everyone. On the contrary, they aim to reach and inspire a broad public without overwhelming them. However this softer approach has a consequence; they take things for granted that they would previously critically question.

Accordingly, City Mine(d) experiences the spectrum between radicalism and collaboration as an existing tension field. On the one hand, they aim to be radical and question injustices within the system, while on the other hand wanting to build a strong and broad network between all levels and actors of society. This networking approach would not work if they would actively oppose the system. Although City Mine(d) indicates that they are struggling while trying to find the right position in this tension field, Corijn and Goth (2011) praise the organization for finding the right balance between radicalism and networking, which gives them transformative power. According to Corijn and Goth (2011:155) City Mine(d) adopts a constructive, deliberative and transformative approach, which allows them to make rather unusual coalitions between ‘ordinary’ people and actors from the political sphere or city planning. Through its networking approach City Mine(d) allows different actors from society to develop a vision and become part of the planning process (Corijn en Groth 2011:156).

5.4.3.2 Evolution or Revolution, or is there something in Between?

All of the cultural organizations agree that it is not strictly revolution *or* evolution, but revolution *and* evolution. You need revolution as a trigger to initiate the debate on sustainability. Revolution eventually becomes evolution; ideas developed in the niche such as ‘The Climate Week’ or ‘Repair Café’ were first perceived as revolutionary whereas now they evolved into common practices. And in order to anchor these revolutionary ideas in society, the cultural organizations believe that collaboration is needed. Therefore revolution and evolution are not contradictory, but they follow up and complement each other. Instead of choosing one of the approaches, Vormingplus believes that it is even better to combine both strategies by collaborating with different partners. Vormingplus Kempen proposes that the cultural sector should approach sustainability themes from different angles; some partners can

follow the activist path, while others look for strategic collaborations within governmental institutions. This way you can work on the theme from two fronts at the same time and have more transformative power. De Veerman agrees, but in order to use this strategy you need to find ‘partners in crime’ and that is not as evident in any region.

Being a city service prevents the cultural centre 30CC to take radical actions, because they are dependent on the municipality and cannot make decisions independently. Vooruit proposes a possible solution. The art centre is not dependent on the municipality like 30CC, but their agency is restricted by the rules of cultural heritage. Vooruit experiences this as a daily tension field, but instead of seeing it as an obstacle, they approach it as a pleasant challenge. The art centre takes the heritage staff on board and engages them as stakeholders. In this manner they give them a sense of ownership. On a structural base Vooruit consults their stakeholders and calls upon their expertise regarding legislations for heritage protection, and at the same time emphasize their radical sustainable wishes regarding the building’s infrastructure. This results in the heritage staff feeling appreciated and welcomed, and slowly understanding why Vooruit attaches such importance to sustainability. Accordingly they will make further efforts to make these sustainable future visions come true.

This approach is an example of how both sides of the tension field can be combined. Just like Vooruit and 30CC, De Veerman experiences a similar challenge. Within a school context there are also certain things which cannot be influenced. According to Bellinkx, children e.g., often do not have the power to make decisions; at home it are the parents who decide and at school it are the teachers. Therefore, De Veerman searches for issues within the existing school structure that are in children’s own hands and works on these issues. Furthermore they aim to change the educational structure by enlarging the decision power and participation of children.

6 Conclusions

At first, I explored how culture, and more specific the cultural sector can contribute to the transition to a sustainable society. Both academics and professionals active in the cultural field argue that culture, understood as a way of life, inherent values and norms of society, can guide the sustainability debate in the direction of a discussion on values, worldviews and

lifestyles. Approaching sustainability from a cultural perspective opens up a discussion on the meaning of our live and especially on a vision on our future life. Although, there is no readymade answer for how this sustainable future should look like and neither for how we should get there. Transition studies, as introduced in this thesis, aim to understand how structural societal changes occur in order to guide and influence transitions in a sustainable direction.

While transition theory looks promising, several authors criticize current transition initiatives because they lack a socio-political dimension (Debruyne & De Bisschop 2013; Kenis 2010). While they argue that sustainability should be understood as a learning process of experimenting and reflection for the entire society, transition initiatives often do not include ‘ordinary people’ in this search-process. Future visions and strategies on how to get there are developed by ‘pioneers’ (the elite, innovative entrepreneurs, policy makers, etc.) and later, through participatory methods, imposed on ‘the people’ (*Ibid*).

This research shows that the cultural sector can play an important role in ‘re-politicizing’ transition initiatives by opening up the on-going inquiry-process for a sustainable future towards ‘ordinary people’. The eight cultural organizations that were used as case-studies, perceive the latter as one of their main tasks in the transition process. In order to engage people in this search they create a platform for public debate on socio-ecological issues. They do this by creating a space for (informal) learning and by connecting different groups of society with each other. In this manner they encourage and enable people to become, what Holemans (2010) calls ‘ecological citizens’ that participate in public debates and learn, think and work together to discover a sustainable future vision. Besides broadening the search for a sustainable future towards all levels of society, the organizations also aim to be a role model by implementing a sustainable policy within their own organization and by raising awareness on socio-ecological issues.

Although I focus on the role of cultural organizations, I want to emphasize that they are just one actor in the transition process. Transition theorists argue for adopting a multi-actor approach, by which they mean that all relevant societal actors should be engaged in, and take responsibility for, this process (Jones & Demeyere 2009). Cultural organizations, operating in the niche, are not the only driver for change. Different actors at different levels should link up and reinforce each other (*Ibid*). By discussing the organization’s networking-approach I

showed how they make the connection to other societal actors like individual citizens, schools, social services, municipality, city planners, etc. Further research that specifically focuses on the relationship between cultural organizations and other societal actors could however be beneficial to better understand how to create a stimulating environment for change. Especially the role of the (local) government seems to play an important role as they are mentioned several times by the organizations as having both a limiting and stimulating effect on their commitment to sustainability.

Secondly, I aimed to contribute to a broader understanding of cultural organizations commitment to just sustainability by exploring how organizations combine the social and ecological dimension of sustainability. The interviews show that the cultural organizations do not merely understand sustainability as a process of ‘ecological modernization’; they aim to leave the economic and technical rationale and instead approach sustainability from a cultural perspective; as a way of looking on and thinking about the world. And cultural practices accordingly are about how to enact in this world. In order to successfully engage with just sustainability, the organizations believe that ‘sustainability’ should be approached as a transversal dimension throughout the entire organization. And by understanding sustainability as a way of looking at, and relating to, people and the environment, they bring together the social and ecological dimension of sustainability.

The organizations develop their internal functioning and public activities with respect for people and the environment. Concretely this means, that they aim to develop their internal policy and public activities in an inclusive, participatory, emancipatory and environmental friendly way, and at the same time take into account its (long term) effects on society and the environment. Also in the content of their activities the organizations seek to not separate social from ecological topics, instead they aspire to let people reflect on the connection between both. And additionally, they experiment with activities that encourage people to reflect upon their relation to other people, their community and the environment. A more practical summary of how cultural organizations can work on both sustainability dimensions can be found in the reflection framework, added in appendix G.

By following a participatory research method, I aimed to answer the research questions and simultaneously making the research into an emancipatory process for the participating organizations. The in-depth interviews encouraged the organizations to look at their

organization from a broad, socio-ecological perspective. It helped them to make more explicit what they perceive as obvious and to structure the way in which they work on both sustainability dimensions, a process that most of them did not undergo before. It also encouraged them to reflect upon their own position in the transition process and areas of improvement. Several organizations mentioned that they experienced the interviews as inspiring, as it opened up new discussions within their organization. In this thesis I aimed to bring together the experience and knowledge from different cultural organizations in order to contribute to develop a broader picture of how cultural organizations can work on social and ecological sustainability. In this way none of the participating organizations engage with all issues brought up in the discussion, and all of them can continue to further develop their work in a more sustainable direction. I hope that this thesis and especially the reflection framework (Appendix G), can give the organizations guidance and inspiration during this process. In order to approach sustainability in an even more holistic way, I recommend a complementary research that explores cultural organizations' linkage with, and role towards, the economic sustainability dimension.

Remarkably, the way in which the cultural organizations work on social and ecological sustainability as well as the difficulties and challenges they encounter when doing so, are similar between all the organizations no matter to which subsector they belong. And this while initiatives to make the sector more sustainable are mostly held within the boundaries of the sectors of art, heritage or socio-cultural work. The organizations however prefer to call these 'challenges' as they open up a perspective towards a discussion on possible solutions. This thesis initiated an inter-sectorial discussion on how to deal with these challenges. During the focus group session the organizations realized that they have many things in common, and accordingly they experienced it as an inspiring exchange which they would like to see being continued. This experience shows that network organizations like Pulse are needed to further develop these collaborations in order to collectively give meaning to the concept 'sustainability' and 'a sustainable future', to discuss common challenges, and to explore possible solutions.

To conclude, I would like to share the most inspiring and encouraging idea that I learned from the cultural organizations; namely: do not get overwhelmed or discouraged by the current situation, instead keep dreaming about a different future. We should look at the socio-

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ecological crisis as a challenge to rethink our way of living and to develop an alternative sustainable and attractive future.

Appendix A: List of Exploratory Interviews

- 4AD, Music Club
- De Veerman, art-educative organization
- KWB, Christian workersmovement
- Social Spaces, a cross-disciplinary research group of the MAD-Faculty (Media, Arts & Design Faculty)
- Vormingplus Kempen, adult education centre
- De Vieze Gasten, socio-artistic organization
- Vormingplus Limburg, adult education
- K.ERF, heritage cell
- Muntpunt, library
- GC 't Heilaar, community centre
- CC Muze, cultural centre
- Tapis Plein, expertise centre of cultural heritage
- Repair Café Leuven, socio-cultural movement
- Vormingplus Brabant-Oost, adult education centre
- Vooruit, art centre
- City Mine(d), collective of artists, architects and activists
- Welvaert Welton, collective of artists
- De Pianofabriek, arts centre, community- and training-centre
- FARO, Flemish Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage
- 30CC, cultural centre Leuven
- Benjamin Verdonck., theatermaker, writer, visual artist and actor

Appendix B: Example Summarizing Sheet

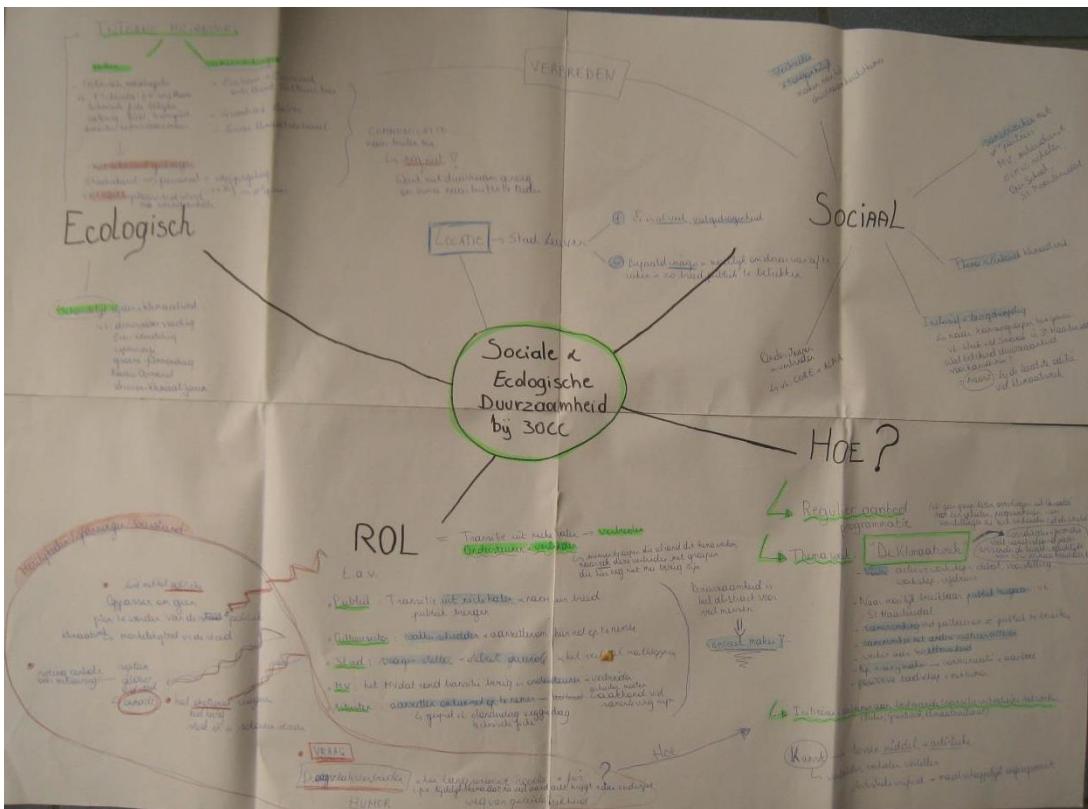
SOCIAL DIMENSION	ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION
<p>Method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inclusive and easy accessible:</i> By means of a diverse offer (practical workshops and activities, performances, projects, etc.) and by collaborating with different partners (like local associations, schools, welfare organizations, etc.) they aim to reach a broad audience. • <i>Participatory:</i> The neighborhood can participate in the development of sustainable projects for example in the process of developing a sustainable living concept, further do local associations get the opportunity to present themselves in the lobby before the performances start. • <i>Collaborations with partners outside the sector and partners without a 'green mindset':</i> Nature and forest, IOK, the municipality, welfare organizations, local companies, schools, associations, etc. • <i>Framing:</i> Sustainability is approach from a creative angle and not from an 'educative angle', no educative theatre but bringing sustainability in a playful way. <p>Theme: <u>programmation</u> and festivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New look/approach on living: project 'habit-breaker' • Sustainable themes in the performances of the regular offer • Linking sustainable side activities to regular performances <p>Intern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported by the entire team by giving every staff member a responsibility <p>Extern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towards the audience, associations, and the municipality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is communication to the outside about internal measures (illumination, cleaning products, insulation, etc.), but not enough - Audience: People who come by bike receive a saddle cover, awareness raising and asking for engagement by means of the ecological footprint test, final congress in the end - Associations: calling upon them to offer sustainable activities within the community centers <u>programmation</u> → so far no response - Municipality: they accepted and support the year campaign 'Green Season'. Sustainability is now on the agenda, but so far 'Green Season' did not have a big impact yet. - Businesses: encouraging their sustainable initiatives 	<p>Method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inclusive and easy accessible:</i> By means of a diverse offer (practical workshops and activities, performances, projects, etc.) and by collaborating with different partners (like local associations, schools, welfare organizations, etc.) they aim to reach a broad audience. • <i>Participatory:</i> The neighborhood can participate in the development of sustainable projects for example in the process of developing a sustainable living concept, further do local associations get the opportunity to present themselves in the lobby before the performances start. • <i>Collaborations with partners outside the sector and partners without a 'green mindset':</i> Nature and forest, IOK, the municipality, welfare organizations, local companies, schools, associations, etc. • <i>Framing:</i> Sustainability is approach from a creative angle and not from an 'educative angle', no educative theatre but bringing sustainability in a playful way. <p>Content (value shifts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities organized around national campaigns like carfree Sunday, week of the forest, etc. → making use of the attention given to the theme in the media • The audience was asked to calculate their ecological footprint in the beginning of the season, at the end of the season they will be asked to calculate their footprint again to see if there is any difference • School performances around ecological themes for example: nature (Radio Oorwoud and O Echo) • Exhibition 'Eleentiek': before the media promoted more use of energy while today it is the way around = awareness raising on energy use • Market and congress for businesses: showing that businesses are trying to become more sustainable, extending nature areas to industrial areas • Plan to <u>built</u> a garden with ecological and local herbs and vegetables + insect friendly + asking schools to participate and develop an 'educational garden' • Land art: Artistic interventions in nature: fusing art and nature

Appendix C: Social and Ecological Sustainability Dimension

This scheme is based upon the interviews in the exploratory research and literature review. Both dimensions relate to one another, therefore there is some overlap between both in the table below.

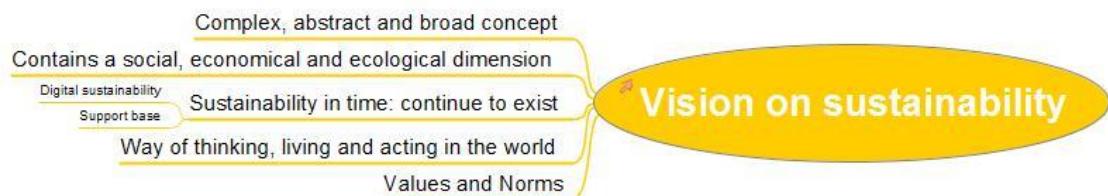
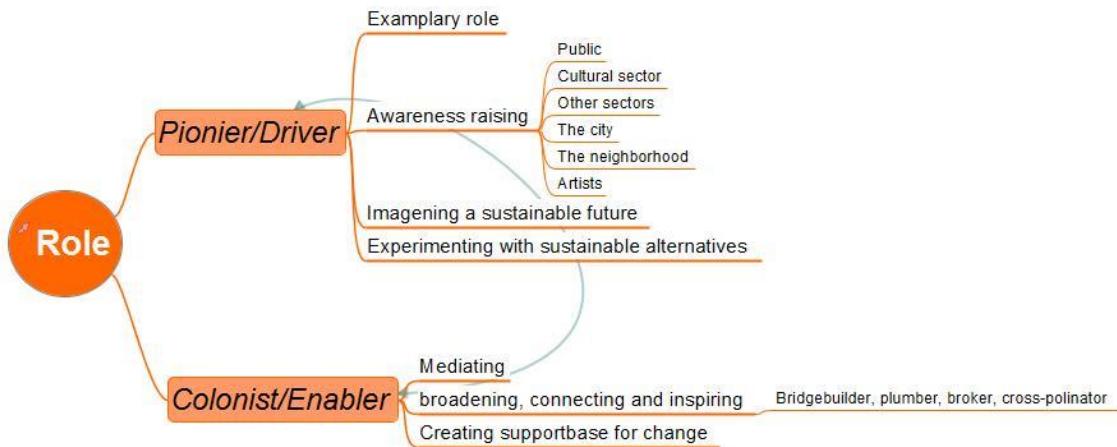
<i>Social dimension</i>	<i>Ecological dimension</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social justice is a priority (equal distribution, inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups, solidarity among different generations and different countries, etc.) • Active around social themes such as: democracy, diversity, social equality, justice, etc. +Awareness raising towards the public and encouraging behavioral change regarding these issues • Partnerships/collaborations with different actors (also outside the Cultural sector and at different policy levels) • New vision on ‘good life’ and ‘basic needs’ • New vision on the economy: sharing, recycling, consuming less, social economy, complementary currencies, etc. • Looking for a relational view on society • Reflexive and emancipatory character • Strengthening local resilience and social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic, ecological worldview • Reflecting on human-nature and human-animal relations • Long term perspective • Recognizing the ecosystems’ limits • Reducing the ecological footprint within the own practice and raising awareness on this issue towards the audience, neighborhood, city, sector, etc. • Active around ecological themes such as biodiversity, climate change, natural resources, sustainable energy/food/mobility/technology/etc., ecological justice, etc. +Awareness raising towards the public and encouraging behavioral change regarding these issues

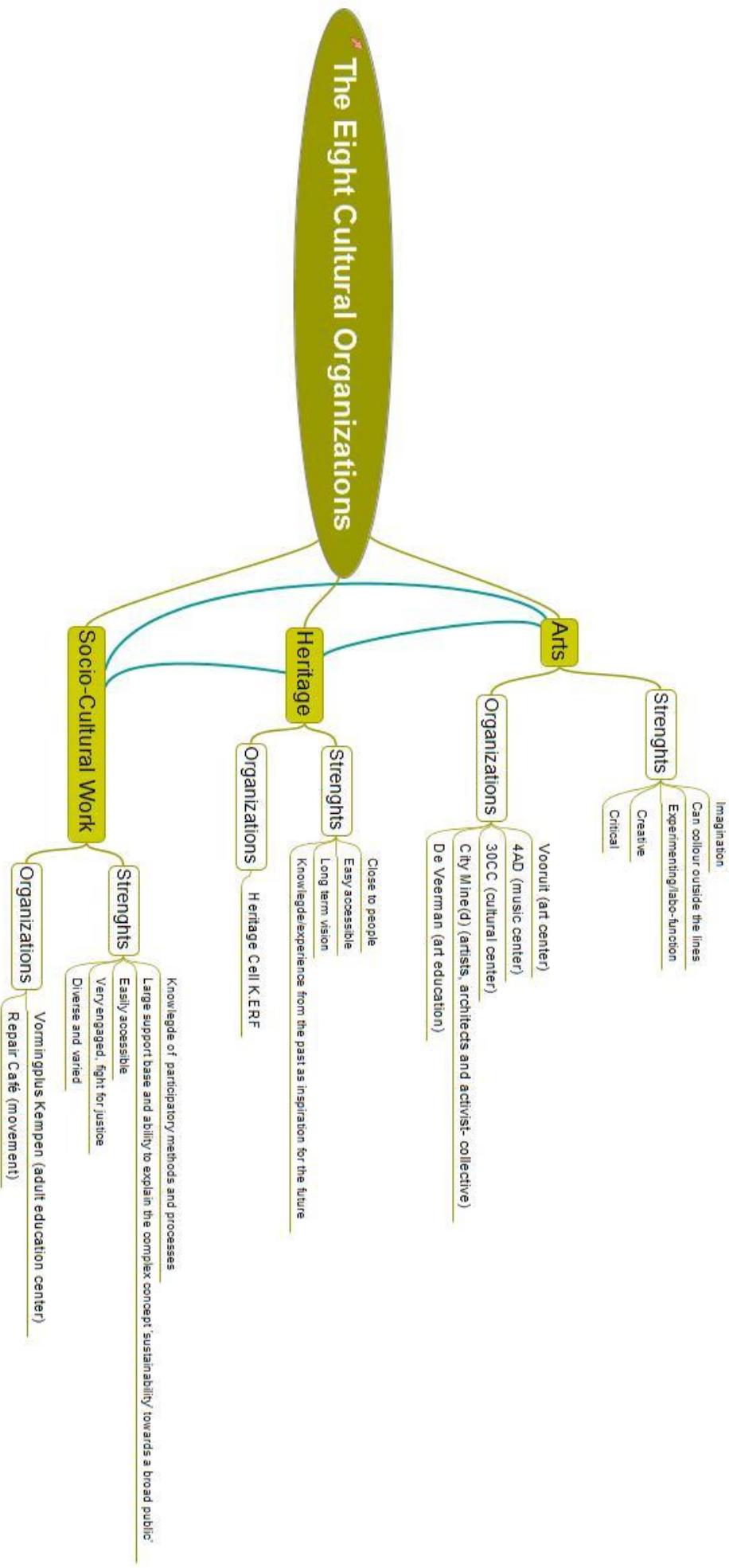
Appendix D: Example Mind Map Developed During Interview

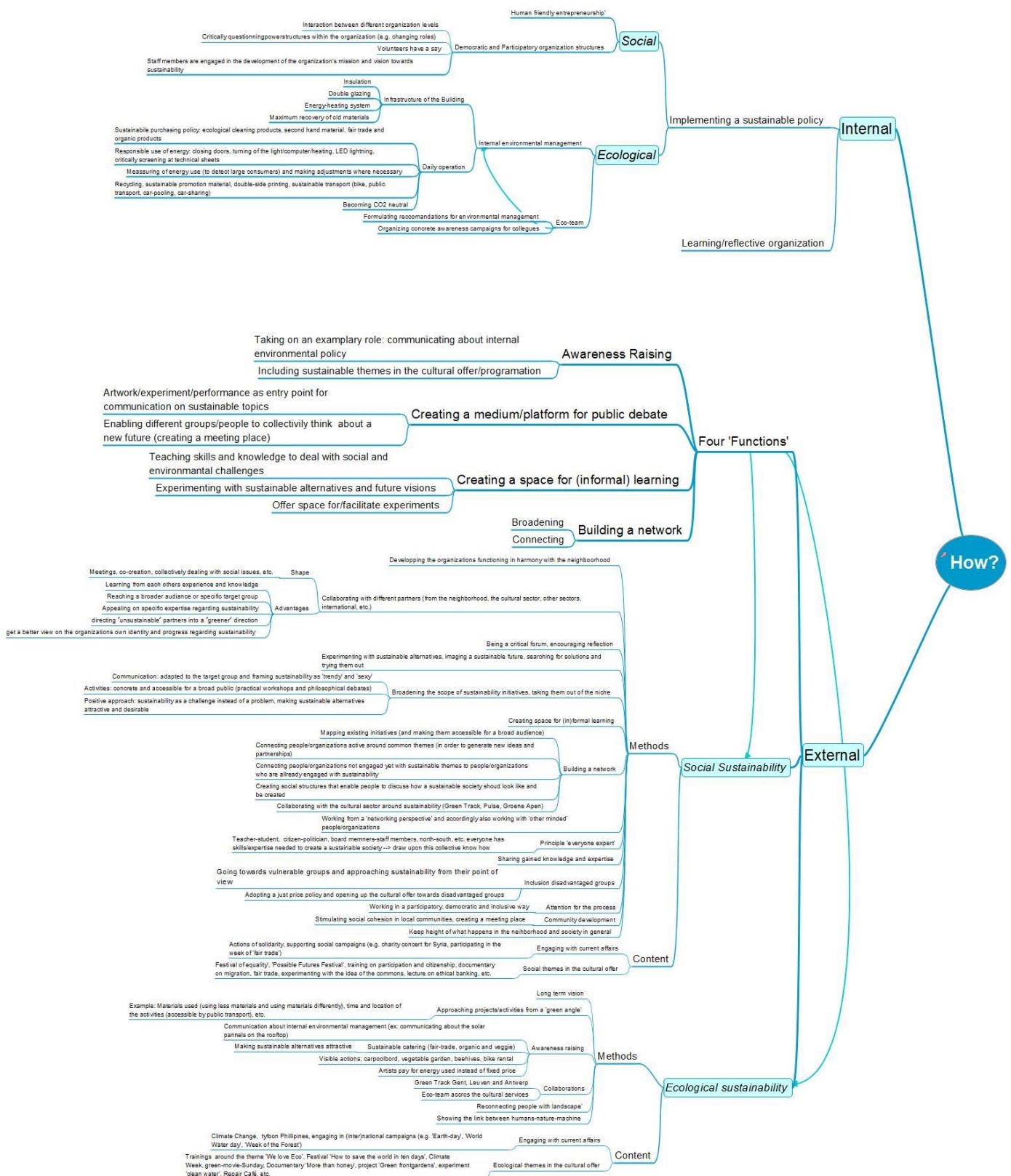


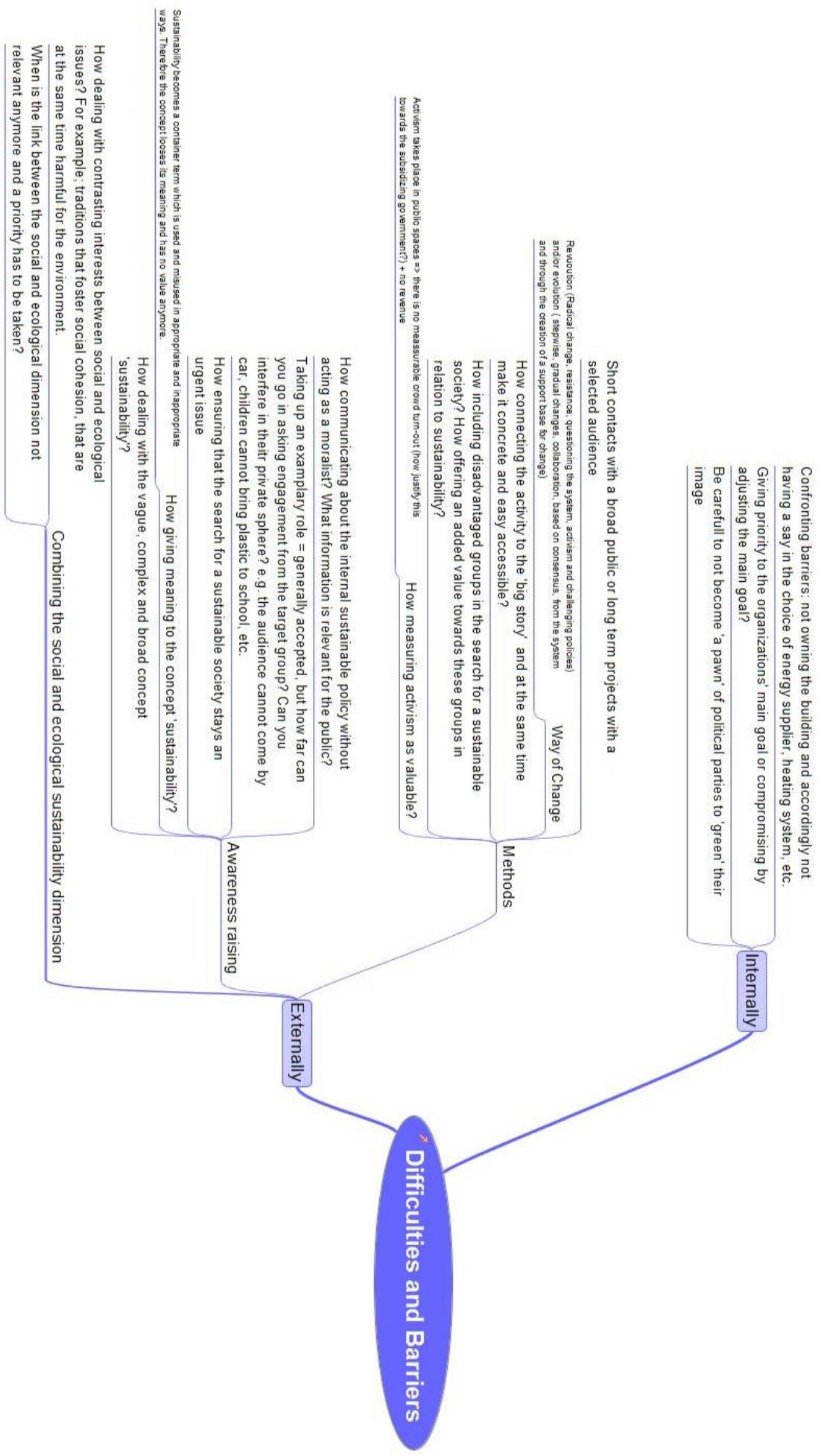
Appendix E: Summarizing Mind-map



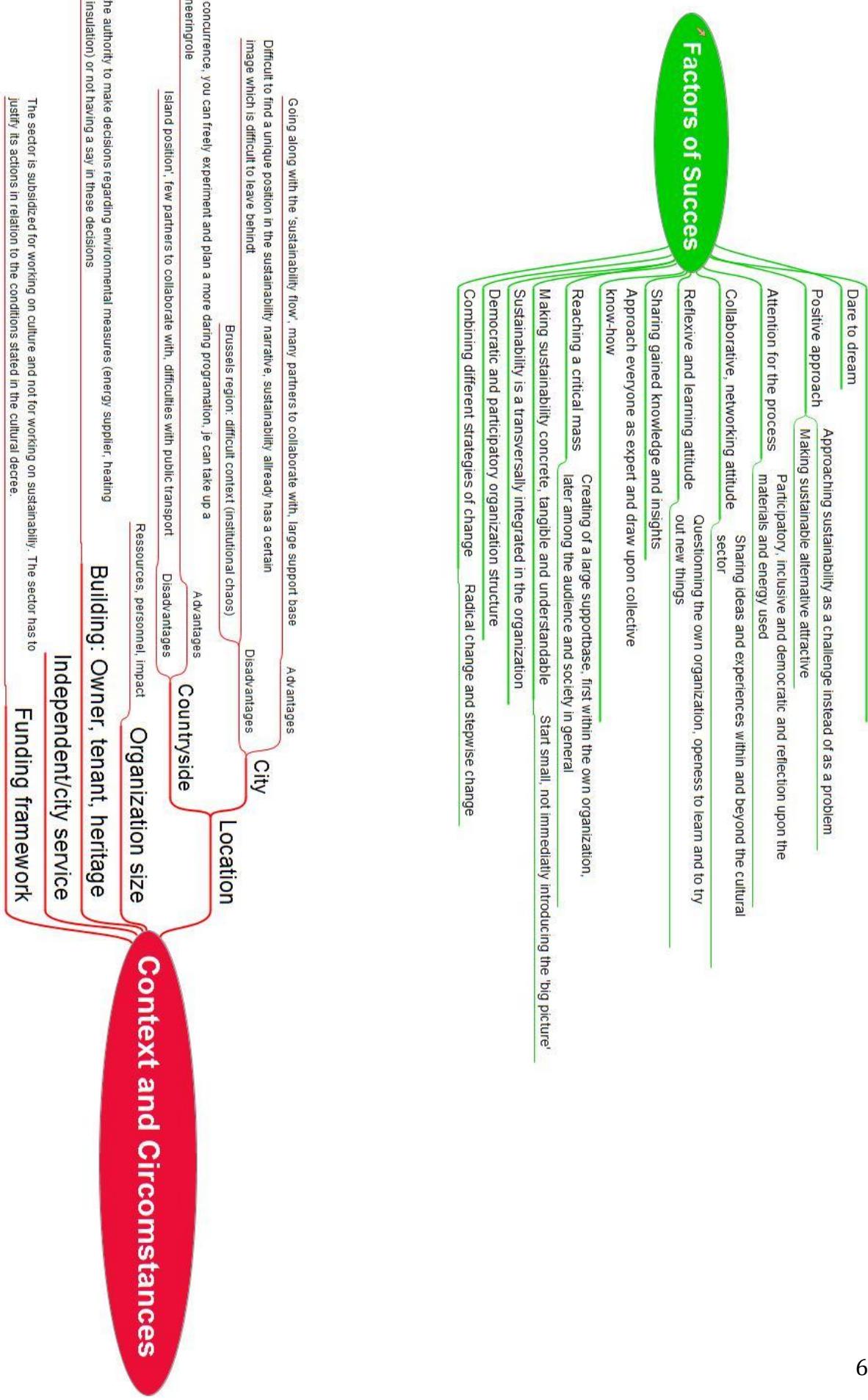








Exploring what kind of activities already exist in the region
and there-upon reflect how your organization can give an
added value



Appendix F: Plan Focus Group

Aim: Discussing in depth the *difficulties, challenges and factors of success* that the cultural practices encounter when working on just sustainability (**Time management: 3.5 hours**)

INTRODUCTION (10min)

- Welcome
- Presentation: name + organization + biggest challenge when working on sustainability
- Explanation of the focus group structure: part 1, part 2, with a pause in between, lunch
- ‘Rules of the game’: one person speaks each time, we want to hear everyone’s opinion, there are no right or wrong answers; all experiences and opinions are valuable for the research

PART 1: SHARING (30 min)

Presentation of mind map:

- The eight cultural practices and a short introduction on how they engage with social and ecological sustainability
- Vision on sustainability
- Role that the practices take up in the transition to a sustainable society
- How translated in practice? (intern and extern)
- Challenges and Successes

Do you agree? Questions? Additions?

PART 2: DEEPENING (2u 20 min)

Key area 1: In our organization sustainability is ... (20 min)

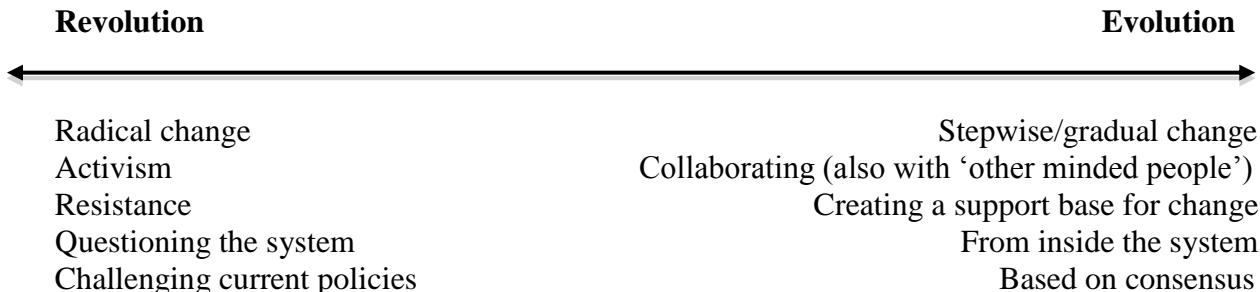
Sustainability in our organization is...

Point of Attention	Important theme	Transversal theme	Main theme
→			

Situate your organization on this line.

Sub questions: Why are you situated at that side of the line? What makes (conditions) that in your organization sustainability is a main theme/point of attention/...? Why isn’t it a main theme? Should it become the main theme?

Key area 2: Revolution-Evolution (25 min)



Situate your organization on the tension field.

Sub questions: why does your organization chooses for a revolutionary/evolutionary approach? Is it a choice or is it based on certain conditions? Which conditions? Why not adopting a revolutionary/evolutionary approach? Have you tried the other approach? Are they mutually exclusive? Is there something in between?

PAUSE (15 min)

Key area 4: Accessible – In depth (25 min)

Discuss the follow statement of artists Benjamin Verdonck in two groups:

"Everybody does the same: a garden on the rooftop, a repair café, bicycle campaign, car sharing, gardening, swap meetings, cooking with left overs, revaluing traditional crafts, give away markets, etc. [...] But I am interested in how you initiate a debate on the content and in depth analysis about the 'bigger issues and structures'. The latter is something global and complex and therefore much more difficult" (Verdonck, 2013).

By means of the following questions:

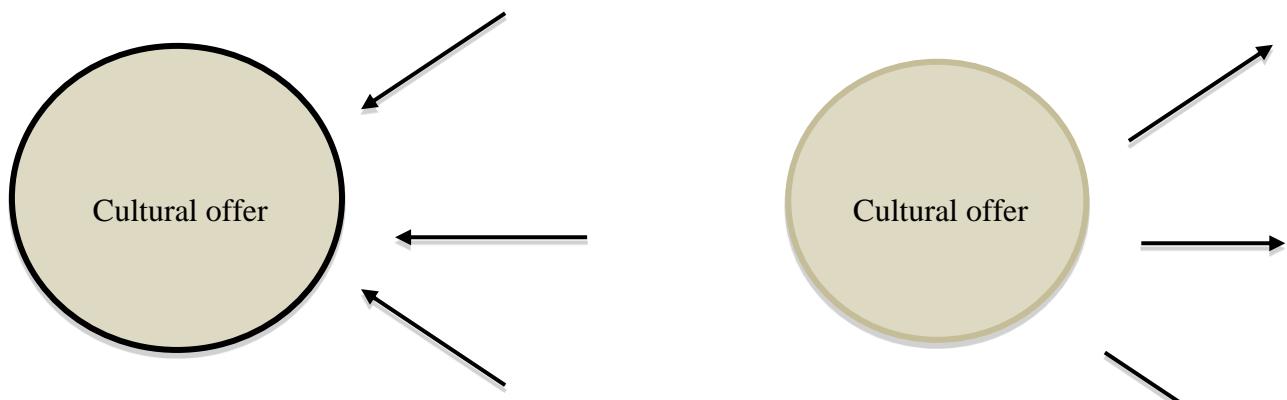
- How situating a concrete theme in the larger whole? How do you show the underlying root causes of the socio-ecological crisis?
- How imparting underlying norms and values and at the same time be concrete and easy accessible?

(Explain the question by means of the example of Repair Café Leuven → evaluation forms)

After the discussion in small groups, the main thoughts are presented in the entire group.

Key area 5: Including disadvantaged groups (25 min)

“Including everyone in the sustainability narrative and not merely making it into a ‘middle-class’ story”



Approach 1: Making the cultural offer on sustainable topics accessible for disadvantaged groups: ‘everyone is welcome’

Approach 2: Going towards disadvantaged groups and develop cultural projects/activities that approach sustainability from their point of view.

Where do you situate your organization?

Sub questions: How big is the impact of these activities/projects on your organization: single activities or regular activities? Do you take some of the knowledge gained within these projects/activities into your regular offer? Does your organization go far enough in including disadvantaged groups?

Key area 6: Collaboration between the subsectors (20 min)

Now that you better know each other and the way of working towards a sustainable society, do you see possible collaborations between the subsectors regarding the engagement in the transition towards a sustainable society? Or ways to reinforce each other

→ Write on a post-it the strengths of each subsector (except your own) regarding sustainability transition.

Afterwards the post-its are gathered in front, and discussed together

→ With which organization/subsector do you see possible collaborations? How could you reinforce each other?

Key area 6: Factors of Success (20 min)

Write on a post-it the three main conditions to successfully work on social and ecological sustainability.

The post-its are collected in the front and discussed.

END: Are there things missing? Do you want to add something? Are there any questions? (15 min)

Appendix G: Reflection Framework

Working on Social and Ecological Sustainability: A Reflection framework for Cultural Organizations

This framework is developed as a tool for cultural organizations to reflect upon their engagement to ‘just sustainability’. The term ‘just sustainability’ is used to stress both the social and ecological dimension of sustainability; sustainable practices should respect the ecosystems planetary boundaries and at the same time include issues of power and social justice. The framework is based on a research on sustainability transition in the Flemish cultural sector¹⁰. The research linked theoretical understandings of sustainable development, transition theory and cultural sustainability, to experiences of professionals that are active in the cultural field as well as engaged in the process of sustainability transition. Eight cultural organizations¹¹ served as case studies. Their insights and experiences led to a better understanding of how cultural organizations can possibly work on social and ecological sustainability. Further it showed what challenges, difficulties and opportunities cultural organizations could possibly encounter when doing so. The framework is developed around the main issues brought up by the participating organizations.

Cultural organizations are understood as organizations active in the cultural sector (art, heritage, socio-cultural work). Examples are art centres, libraries, heritage associations, socio-cultural organizations, etc. Within the research the transition to a sustainable society is understood as an ongoing learning process for the entire society; it is about learning, experimenting and reflection. By means of this framework cultural organizations can reflect upon their role in this learning process. The different issues guide cultural organizations to reflect upon their vision regarding sustainability and the ways in which they translate this into practice and concrete actions, projects, trainings, etc. The indicators for reflection help them to get a better view on its current position and progress regarding its engagement in the transition to a sustainable society; what are their strengths and which issues should be further developed.

The framework contains three indicators for reflection; vision on sustainability and a sustainable future, role in the transition process and realization into practice. The latter indicator is split up into social and ecological actions. They should however not be seen as separated. The social and ecological dimensions are strongly interrelated, social actions might be harmful for the environment or vice versa. Therefore every project/action/training/... should be screened on the social and environmental points of attention presented in this framework. The final section of the framework presents a list of ‘tips’, which are basic conditions to successfully work on just sustainability that emerged from the research.

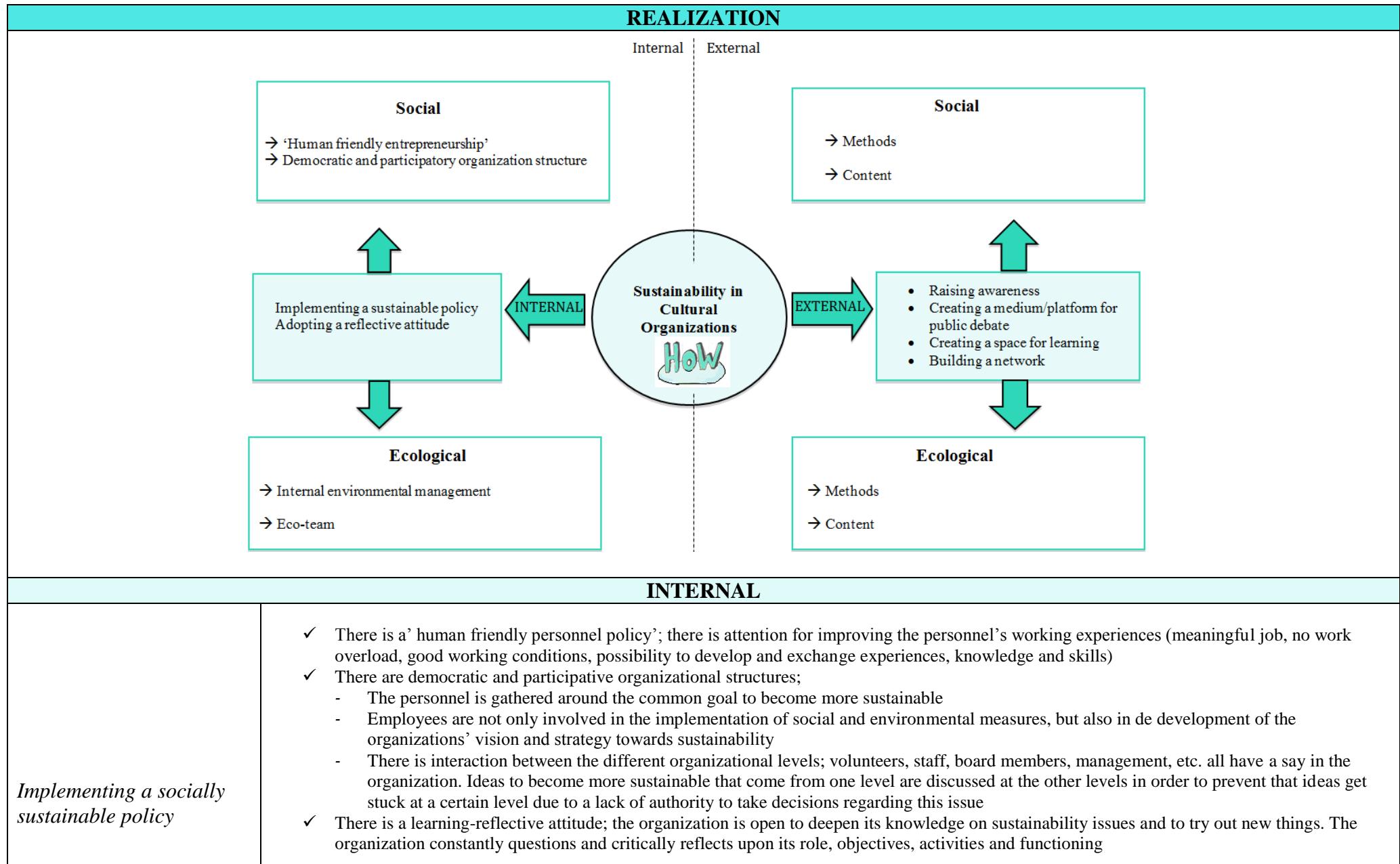
VISION

- ✓ There is a vision on how sustainability is understood
- ✓ There is a vision on how a sustainable future should look like
- ✓ This vision is developed with, and supported by, all the professionals working in the organization
- ✓ This vision contains both a social and ecological dimension and the relation between both
- ✓ Sustainability is transversally integrated into every aspect of the organization
- ✓ There is a developed a vision on the merging of the organizations main role/objective (culture) and the aim to contribute to a sustainable society.

¹⁰ Michiels L. 2014. *Engaging Society in the Search for a Sustainable Future*, master thesis: Human Ecology, Power Culture and Sustainability: Lund University

¹¹ The art centre ‘Vooruit’, the music club ‘4AD’, the cultural centre ‘30CC’, the organization for art education ‘De Veerman’, the collective of artists, activists and architects ‘City Mine(d)’, the heritage cell ‘K.ERF’, the socio-cultural movement ‘Repair Café Leuven’, and the adult education centre ‘Vormingplus Kempen’.

ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ There is an overview of what is happening in the region regarding sustainability transition: What is well developed and what is missing✓ There is an insight on the organization's own strengths and qualities in relation to sustainability and the way in which the organization can bring an added value✓ Based on the previous reflections, the organization's own role in the transition process is defined;
<p><i>Role as 'Pioneer':</i> creating, dreaming, exploring and inventing sustainable alternatives and futures, and taking up an exemplary role = Being the <i>driver</i> for change</p>
<p><i>Role as 'Colonist':</i> giving weight and scale to the ideas developed by pioneers, acting as 'bridge builders', 'mediator', 'plumber' or 'cross-pollinator' by connecting people and by creating a large support base for change = Being an <i>enabler</i> of change</p>
<p>! The research showed that a transition to a sustainable society is only possible when 'pioneers' and 'colonizers' work together, because both need and reinforce each other in bringing about change. Ideally, you take up both roles or collaborate with organizations fulfilling the complementing role</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ There is developed a strategy for which path is followed to bring about change; the path of 'evolution' and/or the path of 'revolution';
<p>'Evolution': stepwise, gradual changes, collaboration (also with proponents of the current system), based on consensus, from inside the system and through the creation of a support base for change.</p>
<p>'Revolution': radical change, experimenting with innovative ideas, resistance, questioning the system, activism and challenging current policies</p>
<p>! The research showed that cultural organizations do not strictly choose for revolution <i>or</i> evolution. They are no opposites, instead they follow up and complement each other. Revolution is needed as a trigger to initiate the debate on sustainability. And in order to anchor these revolutionary ideas in society, collaboration is needed. Ideally both approaches are combined within the same organization. Or collaborations are set up with partners fulfilling the complementing role.</p>



<p><i>Implementing an ecologically sustainable policy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal environmental management; there is a well-developed environmental policy which is expressed in; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The infrastructure of the building: there is attention for reducing its environmental impact for example by good insulation, double glazing, maximum recovery of old materials, green energy supplier, etc. ! Who has the responsibility regarding these environmental measures? If you as organization do not have a say in these decisions, reflect upon how you will engage the decision maker in your sustainable vision. - The daily operation; there is a sustainable purchasing policy (ecological cleaning products, second hand materials, fair trade, local and organic products), there is attention for reducing the use of energy (simple routines like closing doors, turning off the lights, heating and computers, etc.), there is attention for recycling, double-side printing, use of environmental friendly promotion material, use of sustainable transport (carpooling, public transport, bike, car sharing) ➔ These measures/actions are directed towards technical/infrastructural changes (e.g. renewable energy, insulation, etc.) <i>and</i> cultural behavioral changes (consuming less and consuming differently, e.g. rethinking promotion material, exploring ideas of sharing and upcycling) ✓ There are people designated as responsible for environmental management; It is clear who is responsible for the organization's internal environmentally conscious management: the entire team or a limited group of personnel. In the latter case, the limited group takes a leading role and develops strategies to engage the entire personnel in the process to become more sustainable ! For tips and checklists regarding environmental management I refer to the instruments developed by 'Jonge Sla' and 'Groene Apen' available at www.pulsenetwerk.be/category/instrumenten/
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EXTERNAL

In order to take on a pioneering and/or a colonizing role cultural organizations also work on just sustainability outside the boundaries of their own organization. The research showed that cultural organizations externally take up, all together, four functions;

Reflect upon which of these functions your organization is focusing now and which ones the organization should (further) develop in the future

- ✓ *Raising awareness for socio- ecological issues*; There is an approach developed for raising awareness on socio-ecological issues. The organization takes up an exemplary role by communicating about its internal sustainable policy and by including socio-ecological themes in the cultural offer. It is defined towards which groups/actors the organization takes up this role: the audience, the neighborhood, local authorities, artists, the cultural sector, other sectors, others.
- ✓ *Creating a medium/platform for public debate* on socio-ecological issues. There is an approach developed for creating a meeting place that enables different groups/people to collectively think about a new future. Projects/experiments/performances/artworks are developed as entry points for communication and debate on sustainable themes
- ✓ *Creating a space for (informal) learning*; There is an approach developed for teaching people the basics of the socio-ecological crises and for enabling them to develop the skills and knowledge needed to cope with socio-ecological challenges. Moreover, there is an approach formulated for encouraging people to take up an active role in the search for solutions to change society; experimenting with sustainable alternatives and developing future visions.
- ✓ *Building a strong network*; there is an approach developed for broadening the scope of sustainability initiatives and for bringing people and groups engaged with sustainability in contact with each other.

! The research showed that most of the cultural organizations focus on all four functions, each with their own emphasis.

These functions are developed into concrete social and ecological sustainability measures/actions:

<i>Social sustainability</i>	<p>There is attention for social justice in the <i>methods</i> used to develop projects, performances, festivals, etc.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The organization engages with its surrounding neighborhood and keeps up-to-date what is going on in the neighborhood and society in general ✓ There is openness to collaborate with different partners; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organization is eager to learn from other's experiences and knowledge and develops collaborations to enable this learning experience - These collaborations go beyond the cultural sector's boundaries and like-minded 'green' partners; partnerships are developed with the neighborhood, the municipality, health care organizations, businesses, NGO's, education institutions, governmental agencies, etc. - There is a networking attitude; common challenges are addressed together - There is a strategy for sharing gained knowledge and insights within and beyond the cultural sector ✓ The activities/projects/etc. stimulate the public to imagine a different future, to explore sustainable alternatives and solutions and to try them out. ✓ There is attention for community development; creating meeting places and strengthening social cohesion. ✓ There is attention for broadening the scope of transition initiatives to all levels of society by engaging everyone in the search process for a sustainable society; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability is made understandable, attractive and concrete for a broad public - The organization leaves their building/stage/museum/etc. and develop actions/projects in public spaces - The cultural activities give special attention to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and approaches sustainability from their point of view - The projects/activities/experiments/etc. are based on the principle 'everyone is expert'. This principle approaches everyone as expert in the transition towards a sustainable society. Children, teachers, citizens, politicians, staff members, board members, people from the 'North' or the 'South', etc., everyone has knowledge, skills and experiences that are needed in the search for a sustainable society. All these different kinds of expertise and experiences are seen as valuable and the organization draws upon this collective know how.
	<p>There is attention for social issues in the <i>content</i> of the cultural offer;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Projects/festivals/trainings/performances/etc. deal with themes of social justice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cultural activities enable people to understand the complexity of social issues such as social justice, inequality, north-south relations, poverty, democracy, migration, human rights, etc. and to see its linkages to environmental issues - The cultural activities encourage the public to reflect upon their position in society/the world and relation to other people. ✓ The organization engages with current social affairs that are covered in the media (ex: elections, civil war, migration, natural disasters in vulnerable regions) and (inter)national campaigns (week of Fair Trade, solidarity actions, etc.)
<i>Ecological Sustainability</i>	<p>There is attention for ecological sustainability in the <i>methods</i> used to develop the cultural offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The environmental impact of every aspect of the cultural offer is critically examined; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection on the materials used (promotion, art works, scenery, tools, etc.): reducing use of materials and different use of materials - Reflection on the long term effect and aim of the project/activity - Reflection on the time and location of the activity (accessible by public transport) ✓ The projects/activities raise awareness on environmental issues and encourage environmental friendly behavior; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organization developed a strategy to communicate about its internal environmental policy - There is a sustainable offer (e.g. sustainable catering, accessibility by public transport, bike parking) and visible actions (e.g. solar panels or beehive on the rooftop, a vegetable garden or insect hotel on the terrace, carpool-bord at the exit, etc.) - There is attention for showing nature's inherent value and for reconnecting people to the landscape - Sustainable choices are made attractive ✓ There are collaborations with partners in the region/cultural sector in order to reduce the organization's environmental impact;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge and experience is exchanged regarding environmental management - Collaborative campaigns/actions are set up - Possibilities of ‘collaborative consumption’ are explored (e.g. green energy, promotion material, service vehicle)
	<p>There is attention for ecological issues in the <i>content</i> of the cultural offer;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Projects/festivals/trainings/performances/etc. deal with ecological themes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cultural activities enable people to understand the complexity of environmental problems such as climate change, climate injustice, access to natural resources, loss of biodiversity, etc. and to see its connection to social issues - The cultural activities stimulate the audience to reflect upon their position in the ecosystem and their relation with the natural environment. - The cultural activities stimulate the audience to reflect upon consumer society, their environmental (un)friendly attitudes and lifestyle ✓ The organization engages with current environmental affairs (natural disasters, global warming, depletion of natural resources, deforestation, discussion on GMO's, etc.) and (inter)national campaigns (world water day, Thursday Veggie-day, climate forum, earth hour, car free Sunday, week of the forest, etc.)
TIPS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a large support base for change. First within the own organization, thereafter among the public. ✓ Approach sustainability as a transversal theme throughout the entire functioning (intern and extern) ✓ Approach sustainability from a positive perspective: approach social and environmental issues as a challenge instead of a problem. Make sustainable alternatives and a sustainable future attractive and desirable. Don't get discouraged by the current situation instead keep dreaming about a different future! ✓ Make the vague and complex term ‘sustainability’, understandable and easy accessible for the public through small and concrete activities. Use concrete themes as entry point to engage people in the debate and to let people reflect upon their attitudes and lifestyle. ✓ Approach every person from its skills and expertise, and draw upon the collective know-how existing in society ✓ Start from an open, networking and collaborative attitude ✓ Combine strategies of ‘evolution’ and ‘revolution’: question injustices within society and experiment with radical sustainable alternatives and at the same time collaborate with different actors of society in order to create a large support base to anchor these radical ideas. ✓ Develop the search for a sustainable society in a democratic, inclusive and participatory way ✓ Work from a reflective and learning attitude. The transition to a sustainable society should be understood as a continuous learning process. Continuously question your organization, critically reflect upon your work and be open to learn from other's experiences and experiment with new ideas. 	

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