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The big question: how can the performing arts sector act more sustainably?

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Mantua, 1st policy hub, March 12th 2025

 Sustainable performing arts

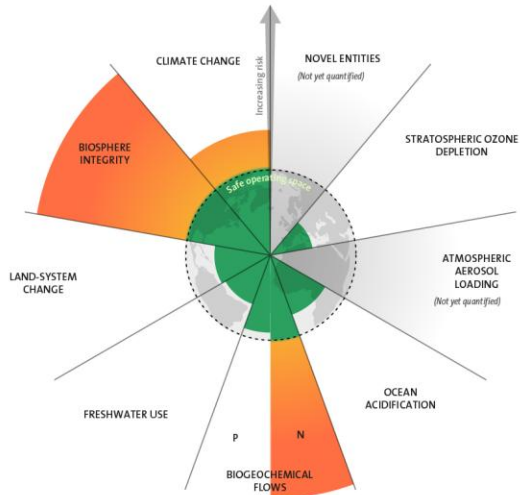
The Big Question:

How can the performing arts sector contribute to a more sustainable future?



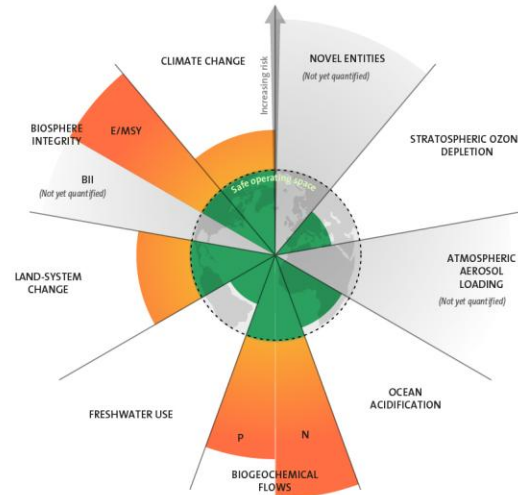
Planetary Boundaries: Why We Cannot Lose Focus

2009



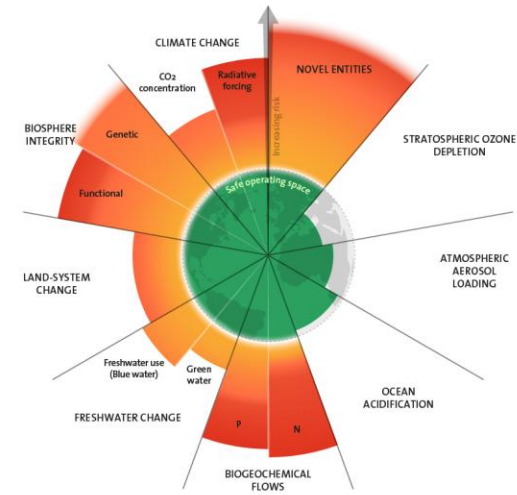
7 boundaries assessed,
3 crossed

2015



7 boundaries assessed,
4 crossed

2023



9 boundaries assessed,
6 crossed

- Global crises distract from sustainability
- We are exceeding Earth's limits
- Culture must keep climate on the agenda

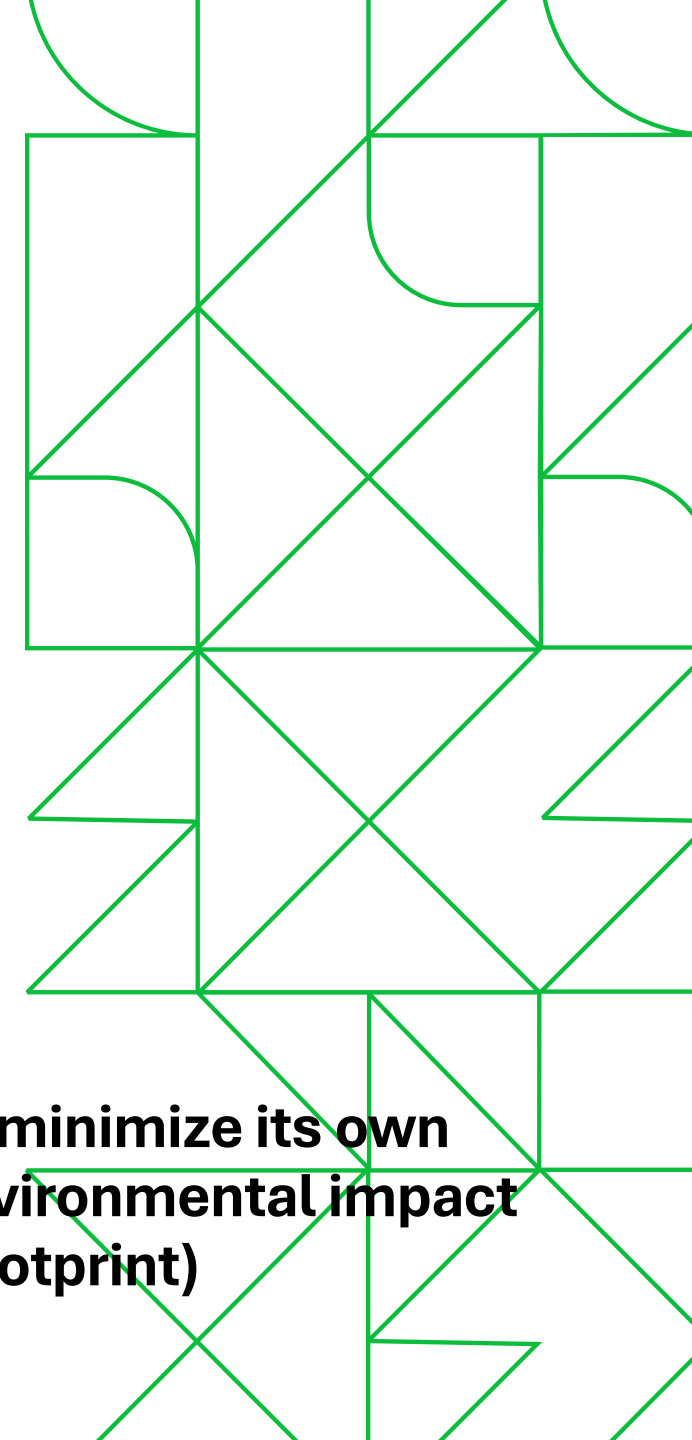
Our (dual) responsibility

**To inspire and mobilize
change (handprint)**



**To minimize its own
environmental impact
(footprint)**

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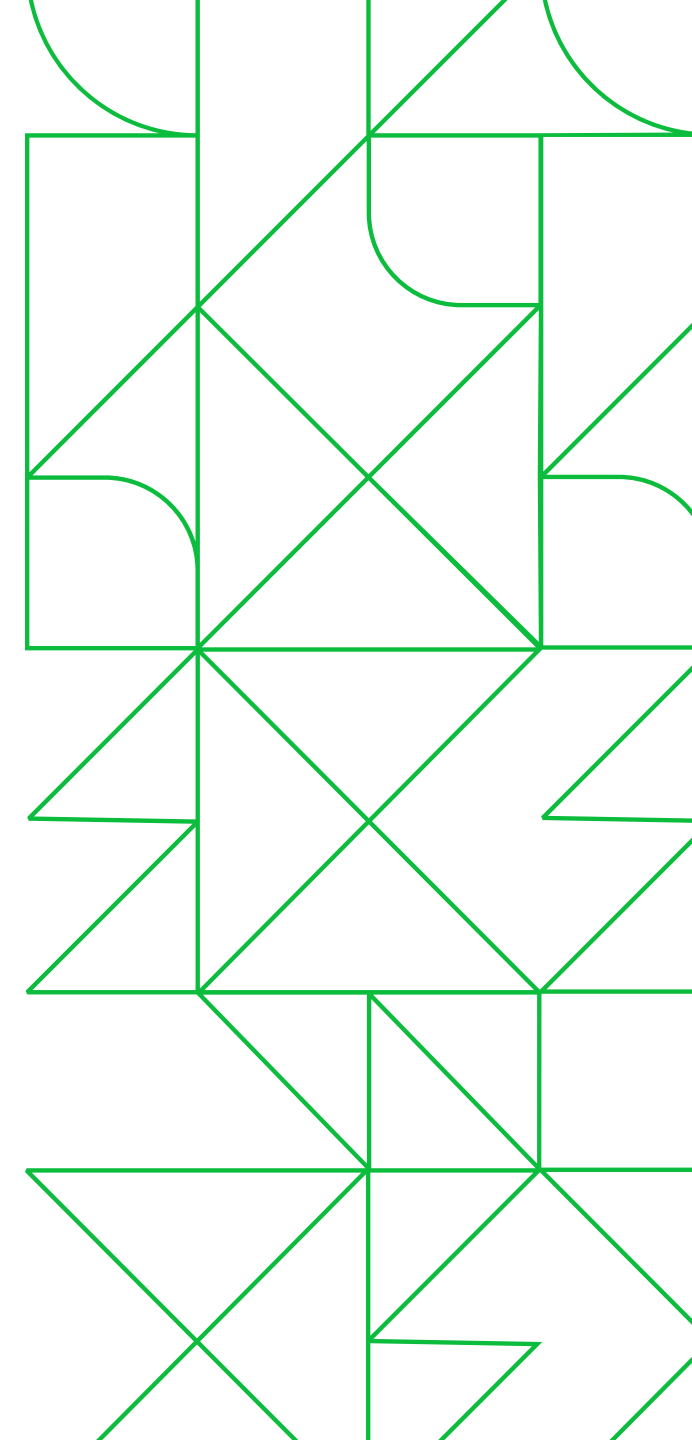
Footprint – The Environmental Cost

- **Energy consumption** in theaters, lighting, and stage technology.
- **Materials** for sets, costumes, and props, which often follow a **take-make-waste** model.
- **Audience travel and artist mobility**, which contribute significantly to carbon emissions.



Handprint – The Power to Drive Change

- We shape narratives
- We move emotions
- We bring communities together



The Performing Arts as a Model for Sustainability

- Art must lead, not just reflect
- Integrate sustainability in creation
- Develop green production models
- Advocate for policy changes

Zukunftskunst – The Art of Shaping the Future

The four dimensions of sustainability (Schneidewind, 2018):

Science and knowledge – Understanding the crisis.

Politics and governance – Creating the right frameworks.

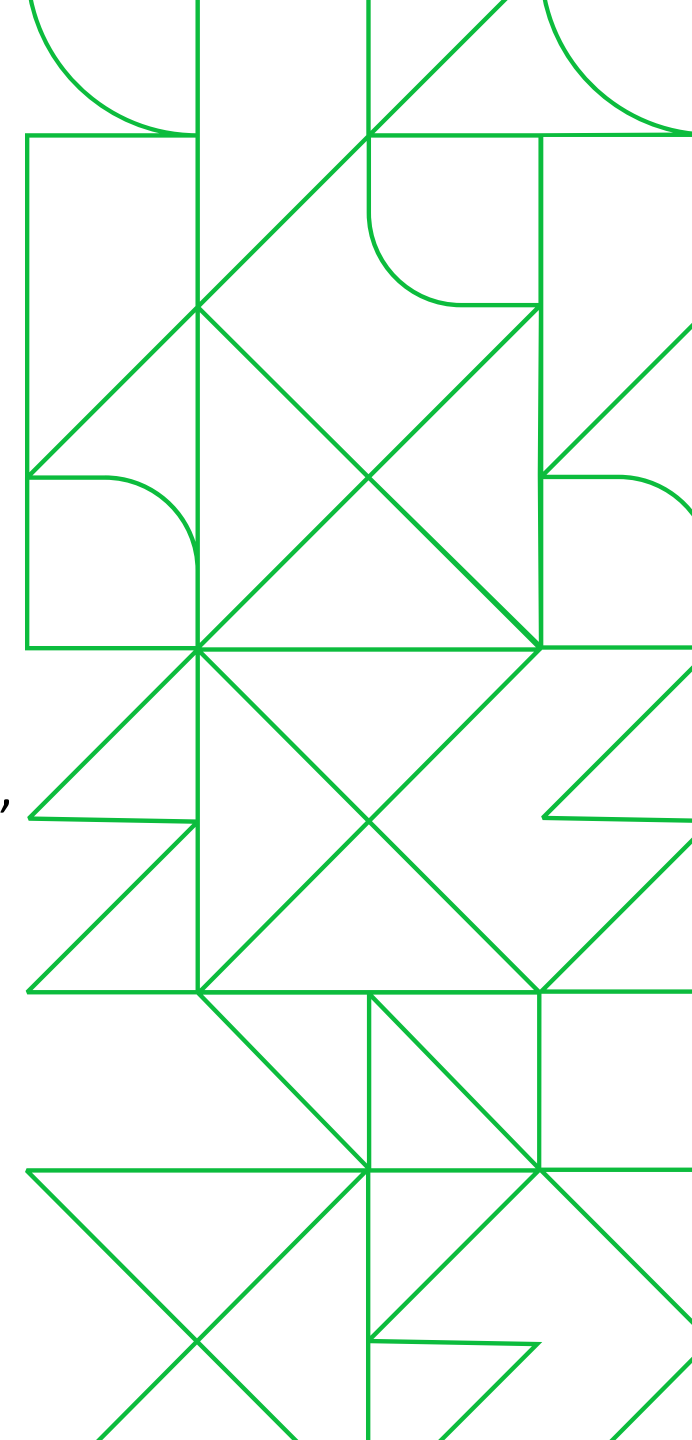
Economy and technology – Developing sustainable business models.

Culture and creativity – Shaping a new vision for the future.



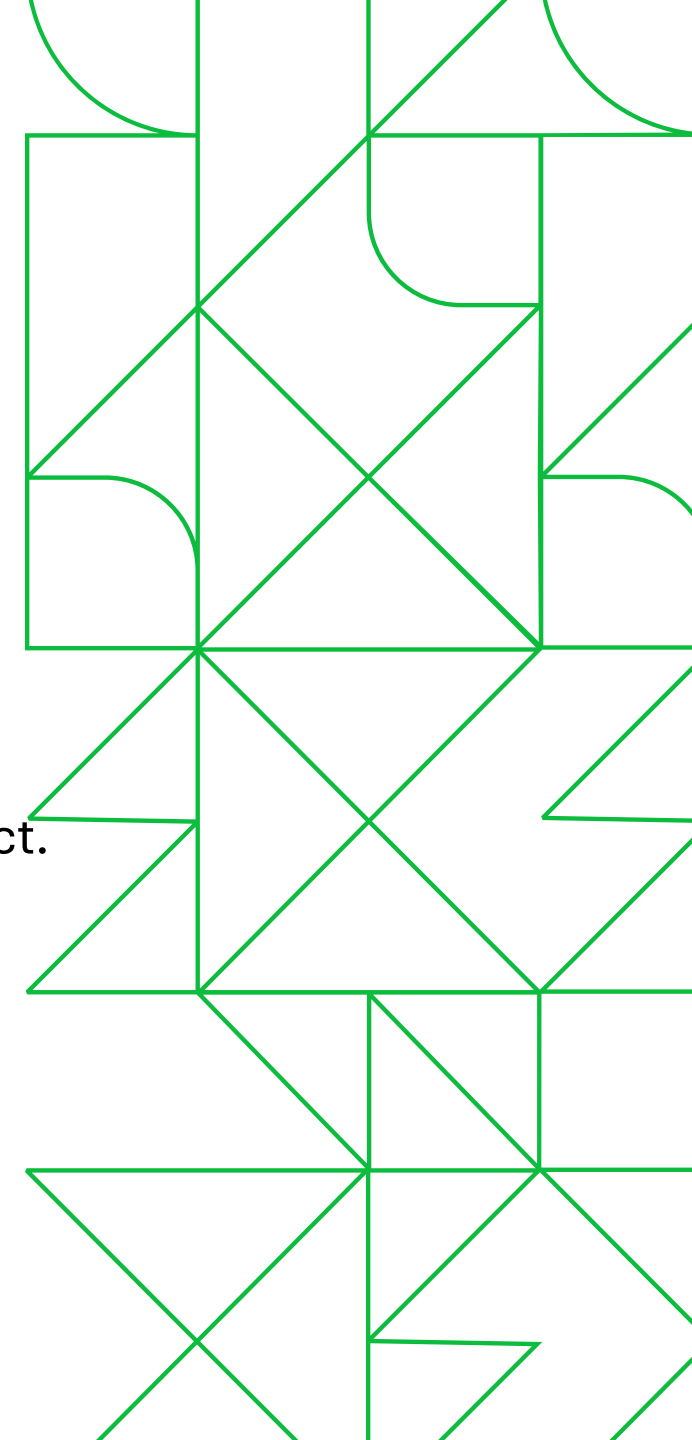
Scaling Up Sustainability – Policies, Innovation & Networks

- ✓ **Policy & Funding** – Public funding should include sustainability criteria, and the sector must advocate for financial incentives and eco-conscious cultural policies.
- ✓ **Digital & Hybrid Solutions** – While in-person experiences remain crucial, digital tools can help reduce emissions, enable remote collaborations, and support sustainability in set design and production.
- ✓ **Green Cultural Networks** – The sector must develop shared low-emission touring models, sustainable stage design, eco-friendly material sourcing, and stronger cross-institutional collaboration.



Conclusion – Leading by Example

- ✓ **Reduce footprint** – Cut waste, energy use, and emissions.
- ✓ **Expand handprint** – Inspire change through artistic expression.
- ✓ **Lead by example** – The arts must integrate sustainability at every level.
- ✓ **Advocate for systemic change** – Push for green policies and funding.
- ✓ **Strengthen cultural networks** – Collaboration is key to long-term impact.
- ✓ **Make sustainability an ongoing process** – Beyond projects, it must become the norm.



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Thank you!

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