



! DECLARING CLIMATE EMERGENCY !

a research into the question

**HOW CAN CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS COMPANIES BECOME
ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE?**

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Summary

The following Theoretical graduation paper explores perspectives for ecologically sustainable practice for contemporary circus companies. Current human activity threatens the lives of future generations on this planet through anthropogenic climate change, irresponsible use of finite resources and land, pollution and the mass extinction of species, as documented (among others) in the IPCC's fifth assessment report of 2014¹. The method for the theoretical framework is desk research on how to reach global ecological sustainability and gathering related knowledge acquired in the fields of theatre and music touring. Fieldwork consists of a case study about the contemporary circus company Acting for Climate and interviews held with selected members of a contemporary circus production house and a contemporary circus association. Findings of the theoretical framework and fieldwork are then translated to the field of circus in the form of a list of advises. In summary, contemporary circus companies are advised to reduce greenhouse gas emission related to transport and the energy use of stage lighting and AV equipment, procure materials as much as possible second hand, recycled, local, non-toxic and organically certified and employ a good communication strategy within the company but also with the audience and producers in order to inform and inspire others.

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Headline statements from the Summary for Policymakers*, Nov. 5, 2014, p. 1

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Introduction

Personal motivation

“Humanity is facing a crisis unprecedented in its history. A crisis that, unless immediately addressed, threatens to catapult us towards the destruction of all we hold dear, our planet’s ecosystems and the future of generations to come.”²

- Dr Emily Grossman, *Emergency on Planet Earth*

There is a near to 100% consensus between scientists that, if we do not change our way of living, consuming and producing, a climate catastrophe is inevitable. We need to drastically reduce our carbon emission, change our handling of finite resources and try to reestablish balance in the remaining ecosystems, otherwise (and already now) we will face life threatening consequences such as sea level rise, desertification, mass-extinction of species, more frequent extreme weather events, wildfires, droughts, famines and more.³

All my life I have been quite invested in environmentalism. Already as a child I wanted to protect the nature and animals around me. What has changed for me while growing up is understanding the urgency of it. Humanity stands at a historical pivoting point. We have to act NOW and drastically, otherwise the livelihoods of future generations are at stake. Mitigating climate change will require immense changes in our way of living, but there is nobody who will take that problem out of our hands.

In my immediate surroundings in Codarts and the contemporary circus field I have the impression that people are aware of climate change, but there is no collective attempt to commit to action against it. There is hardly any discussion about how to make our artistic practice ecologically sustainable. Also striking is that, even though considerable research on how to mitigate climate change exists, it hasn’t largely been applied to the circus field (as to my knowledge).

Hoping to raise awareness for the urgency of the topic, provide guidance and a starting point for further discussion, with my Theoretical Graduation Project I want to shed some light on the question **“How can contemporary circus companies become ecologically sustainable?”**

² Dr Emily Grossman. *Emergency on planet earth*. (Extinction rebellion: Version sept 2020, published for web and download). <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/> . p. 1

³ Ibid. and IPCC, *Headline statements from the Summary for Policymakers*, p. 1

The process of writing this thesis has given me quite some despair and fear, but also determination and hope. It showed me that there are a lot of possibilities to act while still performing our art. I want to encourage the circus sector, but especially young, emerging makers like me, to see the struggle against climate change as a chance to rethink our values, art and our connection to nature and each other and make them more sustainable, more just and more fulfilling.

Because, as Greta Thunberg put it in the closing words of her speech before the US Congress in 2019: **“You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up is never an option.”**⁴

⁴ Greta Thunberg, “I have a dream that the powerful take the climate crisis seriously.”, *The Independent*, sept. 20, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/greta-thunberg-congress-speech-climate-change-crisis-dream-a9112151.html>

Research questions

In view of the looming threat of what can only be called a climate catastrophe, this paper aims to research the question **“How can contemporary circus companies become ecologically sustainable?”**.

In order to approach that, the following sub-questions will be posed:

“How and why should the circus sector contribute to the issue of climate change?”,

“Which strategies are proposed by scientists and NGOs to avert the worst outcomes of climate change and how do they translate to the contemporary circus sector?”

and

“What effort and research about sustainability in comparable sectors can be instructive for the contemporary circus sector?”.

The fourth chapter will create a link to contemporary circus with the help of a case study from within the sector. The basis of this is an interview with the contemporary circus company “Acting For Climate”, a pioneer in the field of sustainability in contemporary circus.

Subsequently, the findings of the three sub questions will be integrated in the chapter **“Which measures can contemporary circus companies take to become ecologically sustainable?”**.

Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative research. All chapters except chapter four, which is an analysis of a case study, mainly rely on desk research.

For the scientific background I consulted two publications of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), namely the *“Climate Change 2014- Synthesis Report - Headline statements from the Summary for Policymakers”* and the *“Headline statements - Understanding Global Warming of 1.5°C”*, from 2018. I also consulted two guide books published by the organization Extinction Rebellion in cooperation with various scientists: *“This is not a Drill”* (2019) and *“Emergency on Planet Earth”* (Version 2020). It is important to notice the difference between these two publishers: The IPCC reports are commissioned by the United Nations, they are written with the highest scientific standards. The Extinction

Rebellion guide books are activistic, not scientific, in their nature, even though based on science. Nevertheless, they are valuable sources, because they address clearly the change that has to happen and the near inaction of governments on mitigating climate change. Additionally, I consulted the online article "*Climate math: What a 1.5-degree pathway would take*" (2020) published by the McKinsey global institute for the scientific chapter.

In the research about ecological sustainability within other performing arts sectors I used an array of guides published by the British organization Julie's Bicycle, most prominently "*Green Mobility - A guide to environmentally sustainable mobility for performing arts*" (2011) and the "*Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process.*" (2013). Furthermore I consulted the "*Green Touring Guide*" by Jan Christian Polania Giese and Julian Butz for the Popakademie Baden-Württemberg.

In order to compare the information gathered in the desk research with practical experiences from the workfield, in chapter four I analyse a case study about the contemporary circus company Acting for Climate. They are pioneers of addressing environmentalist topics on a content level as well as applying ecological sustainability within their artistic practice. For the case study I conducted an interview with Emma Langmoen, who is a board- and core crew member of Acting for Climate. Chapter four is dedicated to analyzing their methods in order to understand what contemporary circus companies can learn from this example. Next to Emma Langmoen (Acting for Climate), I also conducted interviews with Rosa Boon, producer and founding member of TENT, house of contemporary circus in the Netherlands and Marina Rieger, who is working in the field of sustainability within the BUZZ (federal association for contemporary circus in Germany). The interview with Rosa Boon was used to gain more knowledge about the build up of the contemporary circus sector for understanding better, in which way experiences from the theater and music touring sector are applicable to it. With Marina Rieger I talked about structural changes that would need to happen in the contemporary circus sector, for example in the funding and booking. In the end I did not integrate the findings from this interview, because my main research question concerns the actions of individual circus companies.

The last chapter proposes concrete tools for contemporary circus companies to become ecologically sustainable. For the benefit of readability, I decided to converge my findings in the form of a list. The measures in the list are derived from the concepts examined in the foregoing chapters. They are structured around the categories of Transport, Energy use, Materials, Food, Accommodation and Communication. This structure is a combination of the measures examined in the theoretical chapters.

Definitions of terms

In order to understand the main research question, the terms “ecologically sustainable” and “contemporary circus company” need to be defined.

What is a Contemporary circus company?

Contemporary Circus is a form of circus that emerged in the 1970s and is characterised by its use of other art forms such as dance and theatre. Contemporary circus stylistically differs from classical circus by centering less around the display of skills and more around exploring the experience and emotions of the performer and the audience.⁵

It is difficult to define the term “contemporary circus company”, because the word company (or its translations) have different meanings in different countries.⁶ According to the online version of the Cambridge Dictionary, the word company describes “an organization that sells goods or services in order to make money”⁷. In the sense of this paper the word is used to refer to the organizations of at least one person that create and perform contemporary circus shows or acts.

This paper focuses on contemporary circus companies. Classical circuses might also have possibilities to become more sustainable, but it would have exceeded the scope of the paper to analyse how far functionalities, structures and processes are comparable to the practice of contemporary circus companies.

Even though contemporary circus companies are also not a homogeneous group and can differ significantly in size, production value, approaches and way of touring/ presenting, for this paper, the definition of a contemporary circus company is more structural than artistic. I will look at companies that are associated, connected and funded within the contemporary circus sector. It a priori excludes companies that perform with animals, because that is a stand- alone moral and environmental discussion.

⁵ “*What is contemporary circus?*”, Māra Pāvula, Homepage of RERIGA, accessed Oct. 22, 2021, <https://reriga.lv/en/2015/04/what-is-new-circus/>

⁶ Author, *Interview with Rosa Boon*, Oct. 20, 2012, Appendix

⁷ “Company”, Cambridge Dictionary, accessed Oct. 22, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/company>

What is environmental or ecological sustainability?

The term “sustainable” literally means “Capable of being sustained.” Often sustainability is divided into three aspects: ecological, economic and social sustainability.⁸

Ecological or environmental sustainability means using the earth's resources in a way that it can be sustained as a liveable planet for future generations.^{9 10}

Today, ecological sustainability is threatened by (more or less) recent human activity. Already in 1992, and then again in 2017 and 2019, there were official warning letters of significant groups of scientists that warned that climate change threatens the capability of future generations to live in an intact environment, due to severe damage to the atmosphere, oceans, ecosystems, soil productivity, and more.¹¹

One of the main threats to sustainability is global warming, because it results in rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events and contributes to the loss of biodiversity. Next to that, ecological sustainability includes some other factors such as a responsible use of non-regenerative resources and land, avoiding pollution of nature, oceans and atmosphere and stopping the mass extinction of species. In a sense, climate change is the most addressed and also the most applicable to changes in the contemporary circus sector. For this reason, this paper will often use greenhouse gas emission reduction as a benchmark, even though the proposed measures will also have positive effects in regards to other threats to sustainability.

In summary, for this paper, the term ecological sustainability for contemporary circus companies means, to find a responsible use of natural resources, avoid pollution of the biosphere and further loss of biodiversity, and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

⁸ “Sustainability”, Wikipedia, Accessed Oct.4, 2021. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability>

⁹ “Environmental Sustainability: Definition and Application”, study.com, Accessed Oct. 7, 2021 <https://study.com/academy/lesson/environmental-sustainability-definition-and-application.html>

¹⁰ “What is environmental sustainability?”, sphera.com, Accessed Oct. 7, 2021 <https://sphera.com/glossary/what-is-environmental-sustainability/>

¹¹ “Sustainability”, Wikipedia

How and why should the contemporary circus sector contribute to the issue of climate change?

“Science and technology alone cannot play the role of interpreting the existential crisis we face or shifting the destructive values that underpin the need for change. Culture explores the fierce poetry of the heart; the pain of what we are losing and a yearning for the restoration and celebration of life.”¹²

Statement of the organization “Culture declares emergency” on their website

Situating the circus sector in the debate

With the threatening perspective of inestimable climate catastrophe ahead and humanity being far from acting accordingly, one could argue that there are more pressing matters than greening the contemporary circus sector. Arguably, the art sector makes up for a minimal part of the worldwide greenhouse gas emissions and the contemporary circus sector is only a tiny part of this already small sector. So why bother, one would think.

As stated in the introduction, to a vast degree scientists agree that humanity needs to transition to a sustainable, post greenhouse gas society sooner rather than later. This requires every part of society to become as sustainable as possible, and especially climate neutral¹³ at a certain point. Following this logic, also the art sector and the contemporary circus sector need to become sustainable and climate neutral in themselves. Of course, the emissions in this sector are comparably little, but they are also not climate neutral.¹⁴

This argument is supported by the McKinsey Institute in the article “What a 1.5-degree pathway would take”. They address clearly that **“every part of the economy would need to decarbonize to achieve a 1.5-degree pathway.”** (Section 1). If any sector misses the goals set for them in the projection, other sectors would need to balance it out by developing even faster.¹⁵

¹² “Why declare? Why culture?”, Homepage culture declares, accessed Oct 22., 2021, <https://www.culturedeclares.org/resources/why-declare-why-culture>

¹³ “Climate neutral” means the same amount of greenhouse gasses that was emitted is being absorbed. See chapter 2

¹⁴ See the GHG emitting practices addressed in the following chapters

¹⁵ Kimberly Henderson et. al. “Climate Math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take”, *McKinsey Quarterly*. (McKinsey global institute: 2020.), Section 1

This argumentation underlines the urgency for the contemporary circus field to become ecologically sustainable alongside the rest of society. Beyond that, contemporary circus as an art form could have a trailblazing function in the fight against the climate emergency.

Art as a trailblazer

As Mitigating climate change and its consequences is one of the biggest challenges of our generation, the question arises, how to get sufficient numbers of citizens, politicians and companies to take the threat of climate change seriously and act accordingly.

Researchers propose that the arts could play a crucial role in this, because in comparison to scientific reports, art has the potential to trigger a different emotional response in the viewer.

The authors Diego Galafassi, Sacha Kagan et al. explain the importance of art in this conflict in the article “‘Raising the temperature’: the arts on a warming planet”. They demonstrate that the search for solutions to the climate crisis does not only depend on scientific facts, but also on social dynamics and values. The required change has to become “meaningful” for a lot of people, instead of only being threatening, because people have innate “psychological barriers” against making an effort to become more sustainable. Art can help overcome these barriers by emotionally connecting people to the topic.¹⁶ Out of this realization came a wave of scientists, artists and researchers calling for a re-evaluation of the role of the arts in this transformational process.

In short, art has the power to evoke change by addressing emotions. As true as this may be, these arguments support art that deals with climate change in content. But it seems evident, that these findings can also be transferred to the circumstances artists work under, concretely, how sustainable their **practice** is in itself. The Green Touring Guide, a compilation of tips for musicians to make their tours more green, expresses the communicative effect that sustainable art and entertainment practice can have on an audience: “[...] **Musicians are prominent role models for many people, or are at least the center of a great deal of attention. If my favorite indie band from the UK has its shirts manufactured in a manner that is fair and ecological, then I as a fan might look closer at the origin of my clothes the next time I go shopping.**”(p. 6)¹⁷

According to a study on climate change art from 2021, which analysed spectators’ reactions on 37 climate related art pieces, the most emotionally evocative were the pieces that fall

¹⁶ Diego Galafassi et al. “‘Raising the temperature’: the arts on a warming planet”. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. 2018. Nr. 31:71–79: p.73 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.12.010>

¹⁷ Jan Christian Polania Giese and Julian Butz. *Green Touring Guide* (Mannheim: Popakademie Baden-Württemberg): p.6 https://greentouring.net/downloads/GreenTouringGuide_EN.pdf

under the cluster **“the awesome solution”**. The other clusters were “the comforting utopia,” “the challenging dystopia” and “the mediocre mythology”.¹⁸ This proposes that art that represents a desirable, sustainable ideology and shows that becoming sustainable can actually be enriching instead of just restricting, has the potential to engage the audience in an emotional way.

This paper is based on the assumption that making your artistic practice as sustainable as possible and employing an effective communication strategy, can be one interpretation of displaying “the awesome solution”. Circus productions that are successful and well received can inspire a lot of people by being a positive example of sustainable practice and by evoking positive and hopeful emotions around the topic.

The Green Mobility Guide by the organization Juliet’s Bicycle makes claims similar to mine: **“Firstly, by demanding higher environmental standards from themselves, colleagues, suppliers and funders, the performing arts can lead with “bottom up” initiatives, that put pressure on governments [...] while preparing themselves for a climate changing future. Secondly, by transforming artistic practice [...] the performing arts set an example to their audiences, which strengthens the capacity of the performing arts to participate in and indeed stimulate dialogue on this most vital issue.”**¹⁹

In this sense, becoming ecologically sustainable should be a priority for circus artists to tap the full potential of their position as role models and trail blazers for transformation, not only in content but also in the practice of their art.

¹⁸ L. K. Sommer and C.A. Klöckner, “Does activist art have the capacity to raise awareness in audiences?—A study on climate change art at the ArtCOP21 event in Paris.” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 15(1), 60–75. (2021): abstract. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000247>

¹⁹ Catherine Bottrill and Christina Tsiarta, *Green Mobility - A guide to environmentally sustainable mobility for performing arts*, (Julie’s Bicycle and On The Move: 2011), p. 18

Which strategies are proposed by scientists and NGOs to avert the worst outcomes of climate change and how do they translate to the contemporary circus sector?

This chapter will approach the question how the contemporary circus sector can become ecologically sustainable by looking at the scientific and economic research conducted outside of the art sector. Since a big part of ecological sustainability consists of limiting global warming to 1,5°C, I will introduce the concept of climate neutrality. The main part of the chapter is dedicated to looking at models suggested for reaching climate neutrality on an organizational and global level and analyse which ideas can be transferred to the contemporary circus sector.

Climate neutrality as a pinpoint for ecological sustainability

Following up on the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change's fifth assessment from 2014, 169 countries signed the "Paris agreement" from December 2015, a contract stating that, in order to sustain this planet suitable for human existence, they will stop the greenhouse effect and restrict the related global warming at "well below" 2.0°C, aiming for 1,5°C in comparison to pre industrial times.²⁰

The 1,5° C limit is a scientifically deduced estimate on how much global warming would likely be possible without catastrophic consequences.²¹

In order to stay under 1,5°C warming, a remaining carbon budget was calculated. All accumulative emissions produced after 2018 can not exceed 570 Gt of greenhouse gasses.²² According to the calculations of the McKinsey institute, if emissions would continue like they were when the report was released in 2020, the remaining carbon budget would be used up by 2031.²³

In order to not trespass the remaining carbon budget, the concept of climate neutrality is introduced. It means that the amount of greenhouse gases emitted equals the amount of

²⁰ "The Paris Agreement", UNFCCC website, Accessed Oct. 21, 2021, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

²¹ Kimberly Henderson et. al, "Climate Math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take", Introduction

²² Ibid., Section 1

²³ Ibid.

greenhouse gases being absorbed (for example naturally by plants or by technical CO² capture and sequestration). Climate neutrality needs to be reached globally, in order to not emit more greenhouse gas than determined in the carbon budget.

Climate neutrality is often also paraphrased as carbon neutrality, but since the greenhouse effect is not only powered by CO², but also by other greenhouse gasses, such as methane and nitrous oxide, climate neutrality is the more wholesome term.²⁴

Consequently, different possible pathways to climate neutrality were calculated by scientists and NGOs. According to the IPCC special report on global warming of 1,5°C, commissioned by the Conference of the Parties (COP), full climate neutrality needs to be achieved until 2050.²⁵ However, this calculation has been criticised by other organizations like Extinction Rebellion to not be extensive enough, since it does rely heavily on negative emission technologies, that are partly not existing yet and partly deemed unrealistic to employ on a sufficiently big scale.²⁶ Instead, they are advocating for acting on the **precautionary principle** and work on reaching global climate neutrality until 2030 the latest. Extinction rebellion stresses to aim for climate neutrality rather sooner than later, because the later we start reducing emissions, the more drastic the measures have to be.²⁷

The concepts of climate neutrality and ecological sustainability are closely related. Even though ecological sustainability encompasses additional checkpoints such as biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, land use, freshwater, ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosols and chemical pollution, as the report “our common future” points out, all of these stressors on the environment are related to each other.²⁸ For example, massive deforestation fuels biodiversity loss, loss of soil and global warming.²⁹ Global warming itself has an effect on most of the other stressors, for example threatening the survival of flora and fauna.³⁰

Circus companies as small enterprises

If contemporary circus companies are viewed as small scale enterprises, one can find a lot of information about how enterprises and individuals can become climate neutral. Most

²⁴ Alex Kirby, *Kick The Habit: A UN guide to climate neutrality*, (UNEMG: 2008.), p. 14

²⁵ “Headline statements - Understanding Global Warming of 1.5°C”, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, accessed Oct. 22, 2021. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/resources/headline-statements/>

²⁶ Grossman, *Emergency on planet earth*, p. 108

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our common future*, p. 36

²⁹ Chiara Badiali, Alison Tickell and Louis Walsh, *Creative spaces for nature - Briefing - How creative organisations and artists can support biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems*. (London: Julie's Bicycle: 2019), p. 8-9

³⁰ Ibid. p.9

sources viewed for this thesis propose a variation of a model that in the UN Guide “Kick the habit” is called “the reduction cycle”: **count and analyse, act, reduce, offset, evaluate.**³¹

According to this model, institutions that want to become climate neutral always start with making an inventory of their greenhouse gas emission. By knowing which actions emit which amount of greenhouse gasses they are advised to make a detailed plan of how to reduce how much emissions and until when. The next phase is to bring this plan into action. After a designated time period they analyze what worked out and what did not and the remaining carbon footprint should be set off. Then, the cycle starts again, implementing the insights of the first cycle.

Greenhouse gas offset means taking measures that ensure that as much greenhouse gas as was emitted is being absorbed from the atmosphere again. Usually that is accomplished by buying offset certificates for the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that is left after the reduction measures were applied. The money gets invested into environmental projects such as reforestation, on a scale that (mathematically) permits the new trees to absorb the amount of greenhouse gas from the atmosphere that was emitted. Offset can also invest into projects like renewable energy production or research into CO² sequestration technologies. Offset has been criticised as an easy way for enterprises to “wash away” their environmental “sins”. On the other hand it brings chances for global sustainability, as it encourages investment into sectors that urgently need to develop in order to keep the temperature rise under 1.5°C.³² For a wholesome sustainability approach it is important to make an effort to reduce emissions as much as possible before offsetting.

Global pathways to climate neutrality

In order to analyse the emission of a specific company, it is important to understand which technologies that are used in the work practice emit greenhouse gases. For this, it can help to have a look at global greenhouse gas emissions.

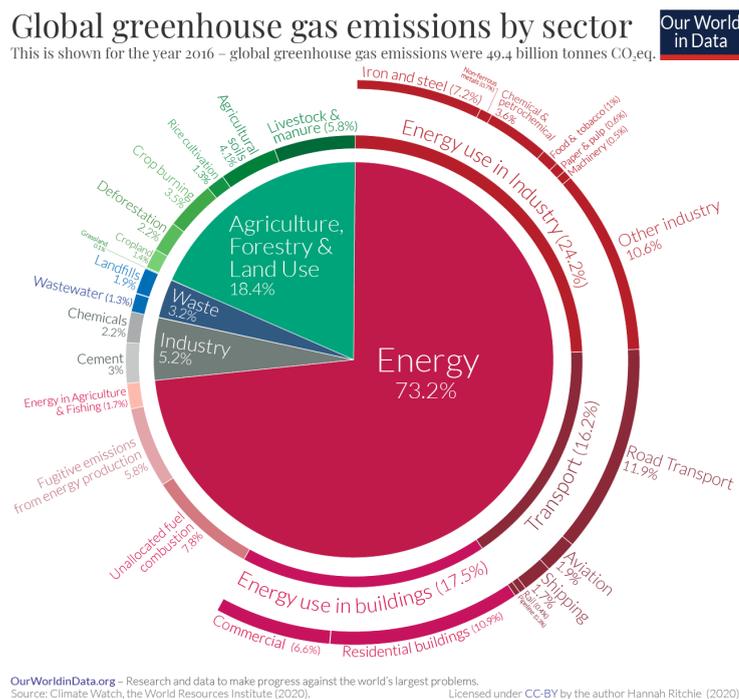
Globally, the by far biggest emitter of greenhouse gases is the energy sector, which contributed for 73,2% of all greenhouse gas emissions in 2016. This sector includes all GHGs emitted by power generation, thus energy use in industry (24,2%), transport (16,2%), buildings (17,5%) and others (15,3%).³³

³¹ Alex Kirby, *Kick The Habit: A UN guide to climate neutrality*, p. 53

³² *Ibid.*, p.161

³³ “Emissions by sector”, Our World in Data, Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2020). Accessed Oct.7, 2021. <https://ourworldindata.org/emissions-by-sector>

The sector that emits the second most, is the sector of Agriculture and Forestry with 18,4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions refer to greenhouse gases that are directly released by agricultural processes, for example the methane emitted by livestock and it's manure (5,8% of global emissions) or the release of greenhouse gasses from the soil and forests being degraded or cut down.³⁴



The McKinsey institute outlines three possible pathways for reaching climate neutrality in their article “Climate math: What a 1,5-degree pathway would take”. They distribute the necessary change into five major shifts that need to happen: “reforming food and forestry”, “electrifying our lives”, “adapting industrial operations”, “decarbonizing power and fuel” and “ramping up carbon- capture and carbon sequestration activity”.³⁵ This is in accordance with the numbers of which sector emits how much greenhouse gases, looked at in the paragraph before.

The shift “**reforming food and forestry**” requires changing the way of farming and what is farmed as well as how much food gets wasted. The consumption of animal products needs to reduce drastically, “new”, less destructive farming methods would need to be favoured over industrial farming and food waste, that is currently at over 30%, would need to be reduced.³⁶ Contemporary Circus Companies have to do with “food and forestry” through food and drink. That includes catering for the artists in the rehearsal period and on tour, but also possible snacks, meals and drinks sold to the audience.

The shift “**electrifying our lives**” refers to the necessity of replacing the on-the-spot combustion of fossil fuels (oil and gas), for instance for transport and heating, by electric

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kimberly Henderson et. al, “Climate Math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take”, Section 1

³⁶ Ibid., Section 2

alternatives, which can be powered with renewable energy.³⁷ In the contemporary circus sector direct combustion happens for example in transport, when companies travel by car, bus, ship, plane or (non-electric) train. Also the buildings used for training, rehearsals and shows might be heated with gas.

“Decarbonizing power and fuel” encompasses transitioning all electricity production from burning fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) to renewable energies, with bioenergy and (blue) hydrogen as bridging technologies.³⁸ This decarbonization is a prerequisite for the shift “electrifying our lives”. If electricity powered things, for example electric cars, run on power won from fossil fuels, they indirectly emit greenhouse gas.

Contemporary Circus companies use electricity for lighting, AV equipment, cooking, transport by train etc. They can support the shift to renewable energy production by choosing which energy to procure and with that in which companies to invest. Switching to a green energy provider makes sure your own actions are less polluting and strengthens the renewable energy sector. If a company runs their own space, they should switch to a renewable energy provider. If they use other’s spaces for training, residencies and performances, they can bring the topic up with their hosts.

The shift **“adapting industrial operations”** is about decarbonizing the production industry (such as construction, manufacturing, iron and steel, cement etc.). It does not really overlap with the contemporary circus sector, except for material purchased for productions like timber, metal and textiles.

According to the McKinsey institute, it is mathematically not possible to reach the 1.5°C target without **“ramping up carbon- capture and carbon sequestration activity”**.³⁹ This means using technological and nature-based methods of capturing greenhouse gases directly where they are emitted and removing CO² from the atmosphere. For both, new technologies are emerging, but they are not developed enough yet to be applied on a large scale. The only proven method for removing CO² from the atmosphere is nature itself: plants are removing CO² from the atmosphere and storing it as part of their metabolism. This means halting deforestation and investing in reforestation is necessary. As the report puts it:

“All the scenarios we modelled would require rapid reforestation between now and 2030. At the height of the effort in that year, an area the size of Iceland would need to be reforested annually.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., Section 3

³⁸ Ibid., Section 5

³⁹ Ibid., Section 6

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Again, this shift seems to need the coordinated effort of governments to be developed and applied on a large enough scale. But individuals and companies can invest into it with their greenhouse gas offset.⁴¹ This also applies to contemporary circus companies.

Adding everything together and deducing from the five shifts of the article, the areas in which contemporary circus companies can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions are Food, Material, Electrification, Use of energy and Offset.

Next to finding measures to limit global warming, the definition of ecological sustainability given in the introduction encompasses finding a responsible use of natural resources and avoiding pollution of the biosphere and further loss of biodiversity. Due to the interconnectivity of these processes, each of the shifts introduced above for reducing greenhouse gas emission, also has applications for one or more of the other angles of ecological sustainability. For instance, “Reforming food and forestry” is also needed in order to, firstly, stop the loss of biodiversity (deforestation fuels loss of biodiversity and is happening to a large extend for agriculture; pesticides and monocultures are threatening flora and fauna)⁴² -, secondly, reduce pollution (chemical fertilizers pollute soil and water⁴³ and less forest means less filtered air)⁴⁴, and, thirdly, ensuring a responsible use of resources (modern farming methods lead to loss and degradation of the soil)⁴⁵.

Shifting away from fossil fuels is necessary for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also falls under the category “responsible use of resources”, since fossil fuels are not renewable and will run out at a given moment.⁴⁶

“Ramping up carbon- capture and carbon sequestration activity” can have positive implications for biodiversity, if it leads to reforestation and renaturalization.⁴⁷

As a summary, for all of the four aspects of ecological sustainability, the procurement of materials and the management of waste play an important role for contemporary circus companies. When procuring materials, food or equipment, not only the carbon footprint of the product needs to be considered, but also whether they were produced organically, locally and as least polluting as possible.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Chiara Badiali, Alison Tickell and Louis Walsh, *Creative spaces for nature - Briefing - How creative organisations and artists can support biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems*, p. 8

⁴³ Ibid., p. 10

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 15

⁴⁵ P. Borrelli, D.A. Robinson, L.R. Fleischer *et al.*, “An assessment of the global impact of 21st century land use change on soil erosion.” *Nat Commun* **8**, 2013 (2017): Abstract. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-017-02142-7>

⁴⁶ Ama Lorenz, “When will fossil fuels run out?”, Fair Planet, May 05, 2020. Accessed Oct. 20, 2021

⁴⁷ Kimberly Henderson *et. al.*, “Climate Math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take”, Section 6

Shifting Values for a sustainable future

The article "Climate math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take" (Kimberly Henderson et. al, 2020) focuses mainly on technical solutions for how and how fast to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There have been voices for decades pointing out that merely decarbonizing technology, but sticking to the same consumption habits, economic values and resource distribution, will not be enough to make global society resilient to climate change. As Kate Raworth points out in the article "A new economics" in the Extinction Rebellion handbook "This is not a drill", climate change is closely related to the fact that the current economic system in the leading parts of the world is based on continual growth and encourages a degenerative use of resources. Continual growth however stands in direct contradiction to sustainability, because the resources of the planet are not infinite.⁴⁸

Following this argumentation, it is needed to reduce the overall consumption of energy, not only to replace it with green sources. For example, electric cars are a greener alternative to combustion engines, if they are powered with renewable energy, but they also require a great deal of energy and finite and polluting materials in the manufacturing.⁴⁹ Also, as seen in the McKinsey article, at the moment the facilities for covering such a high demand for power from renewable sources are not expanded enough.⁵⁰ A successful sustainability strategy therefore does not stop with changing to greener technologies, but also has to reduce energy consumption wherever possible.

The second shift Raworth proposes in her essay is the one from a degenerative to a regenerative system. In a degenerative system the use of materials follows the scheme of take → make → use → loose. As a contrast, in a regenerative system, such as nature, resources get restored, repaired, reused and recycled after use.⁵¹

Both are related to what, in the frame of the economic system, society is striving to. Raworth criticises, that with economic growth as a main focus, the economy fails its inherent purpose of distributing resources in a way that is profitable for everyone. By exploiting the earth's resources in a degenerative way, a few people become richer, but the earth's system does not sustain itself.⁵²

⁴⁸ Kate Raworth, "A new economics". In *This is not a drill : an Extinction Rebellion handbook*. Farrell, Clare, Alison Green, Sam Knights, William Skeaping and Extinction Rebellion (Organisation). (London: Penguin Books, 2019), p.

⁴⁹ André Gonçalves, "Are electric cars really greener?", *You Matter*, Sept. 25, 2018, Accessed Oct. 23, 2021 <https://youmatter.world/en/are-electric-cars-eco-friendly-and-zero-emission-vehicles-26440/>

⁵⁰ Kimberly Henderson et. al, "Climate Math - What a 1.5 degree pathway would take", Section 5

⁵¹ Kate Raworth, "A new economics", Chapter 25

⁵² Ibid.

Contemporary Circus can learn from this opinion, that, if it is to become truly sustainable, there has to be a change in values and a rethinking of priorities. There has to be an evaluation of what is necessary and in which areas there can be abstinence for the benefit of sustainability. I explore this topic further in chapter 4 and I hope to contribute to this discussion with my list of measures created in chapter 5.

What effort and research about sustainability in comparable sectors can be instructive for the contemporary circus sector?

“The path forwards is clear: we need to move away from an economy that operates based on a “take, make, dispose” approach to design and production, towards an approach that seeks to reuse, repurpose and recycle components, and ensure that waste is managed responsibly.”⁵³ Juliet’s Bicycle, the Sustainable Production Guide, p. 3

In order to find guidance in the question how contemporary circus companies can become more sustainable, this chapter aims to evaluate what research into sustainability has been done in comparable sectors. I will look specifically at the fields of theatre and music touring. In both fields there are already some productions, individuals and umbrella organizations that researched and invested into ecological sustainability. Juliet’s Bicycle for example is an umbrella organization that offers free, performing art oriented emission calculators online, conducts research and shares news, information, inspirations, tools, guides and tips on their website. Their resources and guides are very useful tools in creating my list of measures to become more sustainable for the circus field.

In this chapter I consult two main sources: one that deals with theatre, the “Sustainable Production Guide” published by Juliet’s Bicycle in 2013 and one source that focuses on sustainable music touring, the “Green Touring Guide” published by the Popakademie Baden-Württemberg and the Green Music Initiative.

Of course one should consider the differences between the fields. Contemporary circus companies often perform on stages, sometimes in tents and sometimes open air or site specific. The comparison to the field of theatre suggests itself, since both, generally speaking, employ a stage setting, stage lights, costumes, props, a rehearsal period and a certain amount of performances. One big difference is that theatre performances are often set in one theatre and contemporary circus performances usually tour. For this reason it seemed useful to also look into the music touring sector and see what efforts have been made there.

⁵³ Juliet’s Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, (Juliet’s Bicycle: 2013.), p. 3

For the comparison it needs to be taken in consideration that productions in both the music and the theatre sector are often bigger, of a higher production value and employ more people than contemporary circus companies. There are big companies like Cirque du Soleil with 4000 employees of which 1.300 are artists,⁵⁴ but it is also common that circus companies consist only of one or two people. Contemporary circus companies also rarely have the workshops and facilities available to theatre.⁵⁵

Additionally, circus companies often differ structurally from theatre productions. They often consist of a small group of artists, who are founders, directors, designers, production managers and marketing department in one.⁵⁶

Areas of improvement

The Green Production Guide divides the potential to save emissions into the following fields: **Energy, Lighting, Sound and AV, Set design, scenic art and construction, costumes and fabric** and **marketing/ communication**. For each field they give hands-on sustainability tips for before, during and after the production. In all fields they look at the aspects of energy, materials, transport, and waste. All of the fields also appear in circus productions, even though possibly in different proportions.

The Green Touring Guide focuses on everything happening on tour. They divide their proposals into the fields of **mobility, venue, catering, hospitality, merchandise** and **communication**, all of which also apply to contemporary circus touring.

The environmental management process

On a more overall level than the hands-on tips given by the guides, the Green Touring Guide advises as a general structure to follow an environmental management process, like the reduction cycle discussed in chapter two.⁵⁷

In the **Planning phase** the emissions of a (previous or estimated) tour or production get measured. By doing this it is possible to figure out in which area there are the most emissions and which measures promise to be effective. From this, the team formulates expectations and goals that lead to a sustainability policy, a concrete plan of measures to achieve the goals and a greenhouse gas budget (how much greenhouse gas can be emitted over the course of the production).

⁵⁴ "About Cirque", Cirque du Soleil, Homepage, accessed Oct. 23, 2021.

<https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/press/kits/corporate/about-cirque>

⁵⁵ Rosa Boon, Interview with author, Oct. 20, 2021.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p.20

In the **Doing phase** the measures get put into action, with the help of assigned responsibilities. Simultaneously the **Checking phase** starts with the aim to monitor if the measures are put in action and if they show the desired effect.

The Sustainable Production Guide points out that, in order to correctly count the emissions and compare it to future productions, all emissions need to be monitored during the process. They advise to distribute responsibilities and make clear in advance who tracks which emissions. All roles that work with materials, such as costume, set design, merchandise and marketing need to track the materials and amounts used, the power consumption of the stage lights can be measured directly in the rig with a sub-meter or with a software and the amount of energy used for heating and so on can be asked from the venue.⁵⁸

After the production, the process gets evaluated.

Lastly, in the **Acting phase**, results of the procedure get communicated first within the team and then to the outside world. Based on the evaluation, new goals and measures get set. This feeds into the beginning of a new cycle.

Communication

In both of the guides communication is an important topic. This includes communication within the team, with contacts and stakeholders (sponsors, venues, suppliers etc.) and with the audience.

Firstly, a production that wants to become more sustainable needs to make sure that all people in the team are on the same side. The more people that actively support the process, the bigger the chances for its success.⁵⁹ If it is a production with a bigger team, the director, producer, artistic director and production manager have to formulate a clear vision and plan and make sure everyone in the production knows it and has their own tasks and responsibilities in it. In case people get hired, they can make sure the vision is already communicated in the job description and -interviews so they can pick people that stand behind the sustainability goals. During the creation process, it is helpful to keep the topic on the agenda of meetings, share challenges and successes and include the knowledge and ideas of the employees.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Julie's Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p. 15-16

⁵⁹ Julie's Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p. 6

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Secondly, communication with third parties involved is a key element. That includes sponsors, venues, manufacturers, caterers. Many might have their own environmental policies or knowledge and can help to reach the goal. The Green Touring Guide proposes to include sustainability requests in the technical rider or even have a separate green rider. There it can be specified for example that catering should be organic, vegan and regional or that they should book sustainable accommodation options.⁶¹

On top of it all, the communication with the audience is very relevant. As discussed in chapter two, the effect of a performing arts production becoming sustainable is not only about the actual amount of greenhouse gasses saved in practice, but has the potential to reach further through inspiring and informing the audience. For this, a well done communication strategy is needed.

Both guides propose an abundance of small tips for audience communication. Firstly the commitment of the production should be made clear. Companies can publish their vision, policy or guidelines on their website. Sustainability can be a regular topic on the blog, newsletter or social media. The guideline is to stay honest, engaging and positive, to communicate achievements, but to also address challenges to make the process relatable.⁶²

It is good to celebrate achievements to show that sustainability is possible without loss of quality and that it can be fun and inspiring. As the Green Touring Guide puts it: **“Good pilot projects are the key to lifting green touring out of a niche and into the mainstream! They need to show that both small productions as well as large-scale tours can be climate friendly without requiring significant additional personal effort and financial costs.”**⁶³

Another part of the communication strategy is also to share experiences with the network. In that way, arts and culture makers can learn from each other and develop further.⁶⁴

Next to sharing knowledge, connecting within the network is the foundation for making a difference on a structural or political level. Art institutions can band together to give their vision of a sustainable future more weight. One example of this is “Culture declares Climate Emergency”, a UK based network organization, behind which artists of all kinds rally to exert pressure on the government to act according to the climate emergency.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p.35 a.o.

⁶² Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p.45-47 and Julie’s Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p. 43-44

⁶³ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p. 50

⁶⁴ Julie’s Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p.10 a.o.

⁶⁵ “Arts & Culture declare a Climate & Ecological Emergency”, Culture Declares, Homepage, accessed Oct. 5th, 2021, <https://www.culturedeclares.org/>

Sustainability engagement of the audience

Audience communication can also have an actual effect on lowering emissions. Productions can propose actions to the audience. One example for this is that audience travel makes up a big part of the emission budget of a show.⁶⁶ Beforehand communication can be a way to reduce this, for example by embedding a travel carbon calculator on your website and encouraging the audience to come by public transport, bike, foot or car sharing.⁶⁷

On Jack Johnson's 2014 Tour "All at once" there were multiple measures in place that encouraged fans to join the sustainability cause that the musician and his band committed to. For instance, fans could buy a carbon offset sticker on the event or directly when buying the ticket online.⁶⁸ Also, at all of the concerts, there were information stands through which fans could make an official commitment to a good cause such as helping to clean up a beach or stopping the use of single use plastic bags. They would take a picture of themselves holding a signboard with their commitment on it and share it through social media.⁶⁹

The concept behind these ways of encouraging the audience to a certain sustainability practice is the principle of reciprocity. By communicating what the show has already done to reduce their emissions, the company can ask the audience to play their part, and do something themselves.⁷⁰

For the impact of the message it can also work to create measures that the audience can personally and physically experience. For example, there have been multiple shows that worked with some form of energy bike on which the audience or the performers had to cycle to generate the power to run the show. The theatre company fanSHEN even placed self built energy bikes with batteries in gyms in the neighbourhood. So the sporting people were generating the energy for the show and could get discounts in return.⁷¹

Taking cost and effort into account

A non-representative survey conducted by Julie's Bicycle and On the Move published in the Green Mobility Guide in 2011 concludes that the need for ecological sustainability in the art sector is being recognized, but it is not being treated as a priority. They attribute that to a

⁶⁶ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p. 27

⁶⁷ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p. 27-28

⁶⁸ Jack Johnson, *All At Once 2014 Impact Results*. PDF for Download. Downloaded Oct. 07, 2021. <https://jackjohnsonmusic.com/images/ugc/uploads/misc/JJ2014-RECAP.pdf>, p. 5

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.6

⁷⁰ Julie's Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p. 45

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 46

lack of guidance, specific funding and governmental instruction.⁷² Furthermore, they remark that:

“The perception that environmental sustainability will have negative budgetary and artistic implications is still strong.”⁷³

Sustainability in production is often perceived as a cost factor and something that takes away from the professionalism and quality of the product. However, there are pathways well tested, also by bigger productions than the average contemporary circus company. The Sustainable Production Guide by Julie’s Bicycle lists plenty of productions of a high budget and quality that made extensive sustainability commitments, such as the Broadway productions “After Miss Julie” and “Peter and the starcatcher”.⁷⁴ Moreover, it argues that “going green” can even save money.⁷⁵

The production ‘Peter and the Starcatcher’ employed personnel for their costume and stage setting department three weeks earlier than usual. Therefore, they could procure all the material needed second hand. They used very innovative means for procuring some of the material, like a cooperation with Disney to include materials from the set of “The Little Mermaid” and asking local restaurants for their wine corks. This approach saved them 22.000 pounds excluding the money for the extra employees. Still, they won a Tony award for best Design, **“a testament to the fact that sustainable design approaches can work on a commercial, as well as a small scale.”⁷⁶**

Also in the music sector there are examples of famous musicians seriously investing into ecological sustainability, for instance Jack Johnson and the band Radiohead.⁷⁷

However, the Green Production Guide advises that it can be beneficial to plan in more time in the production process, because changing well oiled habits, finding new contacts, suppliers and shops and recycling the used materials after the production requires extra work. They emphasize that it is necessary to take this into account for the overall schedule of the production.⁷⁸

⁷² Catherine Bottrill and Christina Tsiarta, *Green Mobility - A guide to environmentally sustainable mobility for performing arts*, p. 5

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Julie’s Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p. 7 and 36

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.13

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 36

⁷⁷ Polania Giese and Butz. *Green Touring Guide*, p. 13-14 and 19

⁷⁸ Julie’s Bicycle, *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*, p.7

More time needs to be scheduled also when the touring is organized in a sustainable way. Often greener means of transport need more time, for example taking the train instead of the plane.⁷⁹

Focuspoint transport

The Green touring guide offers several case studies of bands that committed to a sustainability trajectory. A breakdown of their greenhouse gas emissions analysis shows that transport, including crew travel, freight and audience travel, makes up by far the biggest part of their greenhouse gas footprint. For the band “We invented Paris” transport accounted for 45% of the footprint of the tour (13% crew travel, 32% audience travel).⁸⁰

While it is not possible to assume that these examples are one-on-one transferable to contemporary circus companies, it is at least an indication. Traditionally, circus is a travelling art form and that is reflected in today’s contemporary companies. Taking that into account, this section will give a brief overview over the energy efficiency of the different modes of transport.

According to the article “Which form of transport has the smallest carbon footprint?” by Hannah Ritchie for the website Our World in Data, next to cycling and walking, rail travel is almost always the most efficient transport option, with a carbon footprint of 6g to 41g of CO₂equivalents per passenger and kilometre, depending on the energy mix of the country. In comparison, the carbon footprint for a single person travelling in a medium sized petrol car is 192gCO₂eq per kilometre.⁸¹

Regarding the carbon footprint of air travel, it should be considered that the emissions per passenger and kilometre are significantly higher for domestic and short haul flights (<1000km) than for long-haul flights, because the take off requires more energy. For flights over 2000km the amount of emission per kilometre stays relatively static with increasing distance.⁸² According to Our World in Data, for distances over 1000km it can be more fuel efficient to fly than to travel by car if you travel alone, however, that significantly changes when the car transports more than one person. According to their numbers from 2018, the carbon footprint in carbon dioxide equivalents per travelled kilometre is 192g CO₂eq for one person travelling alone in a medium sized petrol car and half (96g CO₂eq) per person, when two people share a car. In this case, the numbers are much lower than the emissions of

⁷⁹ Author, Interview with Emma Langmoen, Appendix

⁸⁰ Polania Giese and Butz, *Green touring guide*, p. 16

⁸¹ “Which form of transport has the smallest carbon footprint?”, Hannah Ritchie, Our World in Data, accessed Oct. 21, 2021. <https://ourworldindata.org/travel-carbon-footprint>

⁸² Ibid.

even a long haul flight in economy, which emits 150g CO²eq. per kilometre and person.⁸³ Following that logic, travelling with four people in a medium sized petrol car would result in a carbon footprint of 48g CO²eq per person and kilometre, which is still less good than travelling by train, but much less far off.

In the reality of a tour, travelling with a van or truck probably often has significant advantages for transporting the equipment and reaching venues that are further off the grid. Taking that into account, Julie's Bicycle's "Practical Guide: Touring" recommends, when touring by car or van, to keep the number of vehicles low, organize car sharing and pack the set space efficiently.⁸⁴ The Green Touring Guide recommends comparing setlists with the venues before the tour and only take what is necessary with you.⁸⁵ Both guides recommend, when renting vehicles for the tour, to ask for electric or fuel efficient cars and, if applicable, ask for a driver with fuel efficient driving training.⁸⁶

Next to these practical considerations, examples like the tours of Acting for Climate show that it is also possible to tour in unusual, (almost) emission free ways, like by bike or sailing boat.⁸⁷ Another positive example offered by the Practical Guide: Touring is the Handlebards company that toured Europe by bike in 2013 and 2014, covering a total of 2000 miles (about 3200 kilometres). The transport related emissions concluded to 1t of CO² equivalents (for taking ferries), whilst according to their calculations, if they would have travelled by car the emissions would have added up to 52t CO²eq. Furthermore, they decided to work with local musicians instead of bringing them along, which was a positive experience for Paul Moss, the executive director: **"We've now got a great working relationship with many of the bands we've worked with over the past two years."**⁸⁸

Regarding freight transport, according to the Green Mobility Guide, air freight has the biggest carbon footprint. For cross continental freight they recommend to plan in enough time so freight can be shipped by sea instead of by plane.⁸⁹

All guides consulted for this paper address that a big part of the carbon footprint of a production is the audience travel. According to the Green Mobility Guide, it is the biggest source of greenhouse gasses in the performing art sector.⁹⁰ They advise to try to decrease

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Julie's Bicycle, *practical guide: touring*, (Julie's Bicycle, 2015) p.11

⁸⁵ Polania Giese and Butz, *Green touring guide*, p. 27

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.26 and Julie's bicycle, *Practical Guide touring*, p. 11

⁸⁷ Author, *Interview with Emma Langmoen*, Appendix

⁸⁸ Julie's Bicycle, *Practical Guide: Touring*, p. 12

⁸⁹ Catherine Bottrill and Christina Tsiarta, *Green Mobility - A guide to environmentally sustainable mobility for performing arts*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.26

that by fan communication: **“While it is not necessarily within their direct control, it is still crucial that performing arts organisations do everything they can to encourage audiences to make low environmental impact travel choices.”**⁹¹

The hierarchy of means of transport that should be communicated to the audience is:
Walking and cycling over public transport over car sharing over private vehicles.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 26

“Acting for Climate” - an example for ecological sustainability within in the contemporary circus field

In order to relate the findings from science, theater and music touring to the reality of contemporary circus companies, this chapter analyses the artistic practice of a company that is strongly engaged in environmentalism both within their artistic content and their way of working. For this, I interviewed Emma Langmoen, core crew- and board member of the contemporary circus and performing arts company Acting for Climate.⁹² Acting for Climate was funded in 2014 in Norway and has been performing in Scandinavia and the Nordic-Baltic region since then.⁹³ Since 2019 there also is a branch of the company in Montréal.⁹⁴

(Ecological) sustainability is deeply ingrained in the work of Acting for Climate. The base of that is the strong belief in the power and the responsibility of the individual. Langmoen expresses that it is important to realize that there always is a choice to try to do things as sustainable as possible, even if, for example, the funding systems are not yet encouraging it or the government is not acting sufficiently. On the contrary: she emphasizes that by starting to act from the bottom up, change in higher levels of government can be triggered. As an example she offers that in 2019 the Norwegian art fund established an additional temporary grant for art projects about environmentalism, because the demand for it was so high.

In the words of Langmoen: **“Of course you can shift things quicker if it is the government that does political changes, but these are not separate entities. It is all interconnected. And that is why by doing something from the bottom up, we can shift the narrative or the ideas of what is the norm and what would we like the political frame to mirror.”**

Even though the concept of Acting for climate is focused on artistically working with environmentalism, within their work content and practice blend together to build a whole. According to Langmoen, contemporary circus is great for addressing climate change related topics, because it can create space for the emotions of the audience. Furthermore, circus naturally deals with themes like relations, help, connection, community or balance and

⁹² Transcript of the interview in Appendix

⁹³ “About us”, Acting for Climate, Homepage, accessed Oct. 19, 2021, <https://www.actingforclimate.com/about-us>

⁹⁴ “About us”, Acting for Climate Montreal, Homepage, accessed Oct. 19, 2021, <https://www.actingforclimate.com/copy-of-about-us>

therefore is very suitable to show the values that a sustainable society needs. Langmoen feels that by expressing these things on stage they can create hope in the audience, because they show that a different world is possible. Exactly because of that, acting ecologically sustainable as a company is important. Langmoen offers that an environmentalist message in a show is likely to be less convincing, if the artists do not make their own ways of working sustainable. She expresses her belief that every small step is valuable, but **“it is the strongest if you both practically do it and have it in your performance. Because as an artist everything is so interlinked and you need to have some conviction in what you do, not just in what you present on stage”**.

Ecological sustainability in practice

As an internationally operating sector, transport is one of the key discrepancies of ecological sustainability in contemporary circus companies. Acting for Climates reacts to this problem in very thorough- but also creative ways. Generally, they employ a no-flight policy for all their projects, but for their touring shows they go even further than that. The first big project of the company, the show *“Into the Water”* (2019), was set on a sailing ship. With this ship they toured harbours around the Baltic sea. In 2022 a new show, *“Ripples”*, is planned to start touring with the same ship. The show *“Bark”* (2021) is a venue specific show set in forests, that tours mainly by bicycle. These two examples avoid close to all greenhouse gas emissions from transport. Next to that they illustrate that creative, maybe even seemingly utopian solutions, like touring a professional circus show by pedal power, can be possible.

The show *“Kime”* (2020) is the first indoor show of Acting for Climate and tours by public transport. In order to keep the emissions low, they try to always choose the most sustainable option available. Additionally, they try to organize their tours in a way that as little transport as possible is needed. That includes reaching out to other performance possibilities, for example playing the piece for schools. By doing that, they can have more performances in the same region.

The handling of transport related emissions shows that sustainability is being treated as a priority requirement in planning shows and touring for Acting for Climate. Langmoen addresses in the interview that sometimes they have to say no to great opportunities, like being asked to perform for a very short period somewhere very far away. For her, it is also about changing the perception of what success is: **“You are not only successful if you play the biggest venues all over the world with the biggest companies. You are super successful if you manage to make a living as an artist performing for communities**

that usually don't see so much art, or make a living by performing in your local area", according to Langmoen.

Next to reducing their transportation emissions, Acting for climate aims for ecological sustainability in the energy use of production equipment, scenography, costumes and food. The food in their productions is vegan and a lot of it is dumpster dived. The costumes and props are recycled or fixed from second hand materials.

The fact that most of Acting for Climate's performances are outside is a way to save energy in production equipment (less stage lighting is needed, if the performance happens during daylight) and in avoiding heating and running a building, also for the rehearsal period.

Tips for contemporary circus companies in becoming ecologically sustainable

The tips Langmoen has for contemporary circus companies that want to become "green" focus around values and reinsurance.

For her, if you want to become truly sustainable, it means that you have to "**jump in**", even though it can mean having to let go of common understandings of success. Judging from the fact that Acting for Climate receives a lot of positive reactions within the workfield and a lot of people want to work together with them, she assumes that there are a lot of circus artists that want to work in a more environmentally sustainable way, but they often do not know of each other. For this reason she proposes to find at least one other person that shares the same ideas or values, in order to support each other in the process and share ideas.

In line with the research of the foregoing chapter, Langmoen judges that for them, operating more sustainably does not weigh heavily financially, but it costs more time. For example, traveling by train, or even bike takes longer than flying and procuring food from the dumpster is more time consuming than buying it in the supermarket. In working socially and economically sustainably as a company, for her that is a conflict: **"If we would really work sustainably it would also be reflected if you spend two hours per night to go dumpster diving. If that is asked from you as part of a project, it should be in your salary. Right now it is not."**

Summing it up, the case study about the company Acting for Climate provides some very helpful insights into the question "How can contemporary circus companies become ecologically sustainable?" The key takeaways from this chapter are in the field of transport

and about encouraging a general shift in attitude and values in the contemporary circus field. The company Acting for Climate is a good example for the possibility of planning tours to be more transport efficient by, for example, finding meaningful local connections and performing possibilities and trying the impossible, like a tour on bike or sailing ship. More generally speaking, the interview with Langmoen encourages not to be scared to merge your identity as an artist with your personal beliefs and to use your artistic practice for exploring, living and showing an ecologically sustainable alternative.

Which measures can contemporary circus companies take to become ecologically sustainable?

The following chapter proposes concrete measures to improve the sustainability of contemporary circus companies in more detail. As addressed before, contemporary circus companies vary in their size, their style of touring, their venues, their use of scenery and lights and their budget, to name a few factors, so there can not be one sustainability pathway that fits all.

For that reason, the following tips will be structured in a list. Not all tips will be applicable for all companies.

Combining the findings of the previous chapters, it seems that, in order to really become more sustainable, a contemporary circus company should follow an environmental management process. This establishes sustainability as one of the requirements a production has to fulfil, on the same level as the budget planning.

Beginning by analysing the previous emissions helps to raise awareness of which actions will have relevant positive outcomes. By sourcing all ideas and expectations in the team, a clear vision and policy can be formulated.

In order to estimate in what ways a circus company emits greenhouse gases, it is possible to combine the subdivisions from the article “Climate math, what a 1.5 degree pathway would take”, the Sustainable Production Guide and the Green Touring Guide. For further structuring, they will be combined into the fields of **Transport** (delivery, tour, audience), **Energy use** (heating, lights, AV), **Materials** (costumes, stage, marketing, merchandise), **Food** (artist catering and audience food), **Accommodation** and **Communication**.

When creating a sustainability planning, there has to be a balance between the major greenhouse gas saving measures and small, creative steps that can have a big communicative impact. If only small, creative steps are employed, like using refillable bottles but not reducing air travel, a company might be accused of greenwashing. On the other hand, one of the reasons why the arts are relevant in the fight against the climate crisis is the fact that they can employ their creativity to help figure out new, sustainable practices. Also, if a measure is highly communicative, it serves a role in inspiring audiences to work on their own sustainability. In this sense, it is most useful to walk both roads at the same time.

List of measures⁹⁵

GENERAL

Communicate in the team. Include everybody's knowledge and ideas and make sure you are on the same page.

Formulate your own green guidelines/ VMO/ self commitment and make it publicly available, e.g. on your website.

Publicly declare climate emergency as a cultural institution⁹⁶

Which societal values are connected for you to the transformation to a sustainable society?
Work on making these values baselines of your relationships within the team, with partners and with the audience.

Be creative! Even if the direct emission reduction of an action seems small, the message it sends can be inspiring and moving!

Choose a green bank.

If you have or rent your own space consider biodiversity and wildlife:

Create green spaces inside and outside for air filtration, mental wellbeing and as biotop for insects

Plant native species that are good for polluters

Install beehives, nesting boxes, bug hotels

Cooperate with a local nature initiative for these changes

Strive for climate neutrality before 2030 by following the environmental management process and offsetting the remainder of emissions.

⁹⁵ The proposed measures are derived from the sources used in the paper, namely:
Author, *Interview with Emma Langmoen*, appendix;
Chiara Badiali et al. *Creative spaces for nature - Briefing - How creative organisations and artists can support biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems*;
Catherine Bottrill et al. *Green Mobility - A guide to environmentally sustainable mobility for performing arts*;
Kimberly Henderson et al. *Climate math: What a 1.5-degree pathway would take*;
Julie's Bicycle. *Sustainable production guide: How to limit environmental impacts at every stage in the production process*;
Julie's Bicycle. *Practical Guide: Touring*;
Jan Christian Polania Giese et al. *Green Touring Guide*

⁹⁶ "Arts & Culture declare a Climate & Ecological Emergency". Culture Declares Emergency.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Analyse the greenhouse gas emissions of your production

Make a plan on how to reduce the emissions and/ or a carbon budget. Divide responsibilities.

Execute the plan.

Monitor emissions and materials throughout the execution phase. Check if measures are being executed and if they have the desired effect

Evaluate the production in comparison to your planning. Archive findings for future productions.

Offset the remainder of emissions

Restart the process from the top

TRANSPORT

FREIGHT

Request detailed in-house production equipment lists of the venues and only take on tour what is strictly needed

Using sea freight rather than air freight

ARTIST TRAVEL

Plan the routing of the tour as linear as possible, with as little detours as possible.

Perform multiple times while you are in one region/ city. For example by performing in schools, giving workshops, hosting Artists talks...

Prioritize bus/ train over private vehicles over flying. Avoid all domestic and short haul flights!

When travelling by car/ tour bus, prioritize energy efficient, hybrid- or electric cars. Ask for this with the rental agency. Keep the number of vehicles low.

Consider alternative travel options like cycling, walking, hitch hiking, car sharing, car pooling, sailing...

AUDIENCE TRAVEL

Choose venues that can be reached by public transport, bike or foot.

It can be beneficial to play rural areas (e.g. villages), if the audience consists of people from the area that then don't have to travel to the city for cultural events.

Advertise green means of travel to audience: point out that there will be parking spaces for bikes, public transport, possibly offer a carpooling network on your website

Create incentives for the audience to choose for public transport, bike or foot, e.g. discounts, a trinket, earlier access

ENERGY USAGE

Limit size of digital files you send, limit the energy consumption of your website by reducing the size of files that users need to load

Choose only for venues that have a green energy provider or include a request for green energy in your technical rider

If you have a building or space, choose a green energy provider or install solar panels. Inform yourself about possible improvements of the insulation to reduce the energy needed for heating.

Outdoor performances can have energy use advantages over inside performances, e.g. no heating and no light

Set a power limit before designing the lights. While designing, keep in mind that more is not always better.

Use energy efficient bulbs, for example tungsten moving lights rather than discharge

Use LED lights whenever possible

Track the energy consumption of the lights with sub-meter the rig, or cue-by-cue power calculation software such as FocusTrack.

Switch off all lights and AV equipment when not in use. Create a switch off routine or make one person responsible

Rehearse under working lights

MATERIAL

Try to source all materials second hand/ recycled. If not possible choose fair trade, organically certified products with a short supply way

Write a sustainable procurement policy in order to reduce emissions in all areas of the life cycle of the materials used. Ask: Where does it come from? Who made it? What is it made of? How is it packaged? What will happen to it after the production?

Get an overview over the different sustainability labels for timber, metal, textiles etc.

Choose only to work with suppliers and contractors who have robust environmental credentials and an up to date environmental policy.

Check the carbon impact of the type of materials used. For example, prioritize (FSC certified) timber over metal.

Avoid toxic, non- recyclable materials such as PVC (e.g. tape), polystyrene, and MDF (Medium-density fibreboard)

Avoid tropical wood

Use non-toxic, organic cleaning products and paint.

Design to maximise opportunities to reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle. (e.g. prioritize screws over nails and glue)

Hire a stage manager earlier in the production process, who can assist with sourcing second hand and/or ethical materials, props and costumes, and longer for recycling and finding new homes for things.

Print double sided on recycled, non bleached paper,

For promotion material choose for a print shop with environmental credentials

Reduce paper marketing

Consider sustainability with your merchandise. Sell only second hand or ecologically and fairly produced products. Choose good quality and avoid single use items.

Upcycling (e.g. of old promo material, old props) could make great merchandise!

Use rechargeable batteries

WASTE

Use the recycling possibilities given, run your own compost or a worm box

Make sure all materials used get reduced, reused, repurposed and, if not differently possible, recycled correctly

FOOD

Choose for vegan, organic, seasonal catering or ask for it in the technical rider

Avoid palm oil

Ask the caterer to reduce plastic packaging

Use refillable bottles, ask for a drinking water tap or dispenser in your technical rider

Support local, organic food initiatives

Reduce food waste: communicate exactly what and how much you need

Dumpster dive or use platforms as "to good to go"

ACCOMMODATION

Choose for accommodation with green credentials. Consider couch surfing/ small hostels instead of big hotels.

On certain websites (e.g.: bookbetter.org) you can compare the carbon footprint of accommodations

COMMUNICATION

Communicate your efforts to audience and colleagues to inspire them

Portray the positive, inspiring, hopeful alternative. Being sustainable shouldn't feel like you are giving up things. Celebrate achievements

Once the data on environmental impact reduction is collected by the production manager, analyse it for press potential. If you have made any really remarkable savings then put together a press release for local- and industry press.

Include the fans in the process, e.g. by shared sustainable activities or experienceable measures, like having to cycle on an energy bike to provide the electricity for the show

Network with other like-minded companies to build a lobby and share knowledge and experience

Join a political association like "Artists declare climate emergency"

Encourage third parties such as venues or sponsors to join you on your mission.

Communicate your own efforts and willingness to support them if needed.

Create a green rider for venues and bookers

Consider to get certified as a climate neutral organization

Conclusion

This paper approached the topic of ecologically sustainable practice for contemporary circus companies.

Firstly, I demonstrated the urgency of the topic, by showing that ecological sustainability is threatened by humanity's (mis)management of the earth's resources and biosphere, for example by anthropogenic climate change. Mitigating climate change requires urgent reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions. Other threats to ecological sustainability are the depletion of natural resources, pollution of land, sea and atmosphere and the loss of biodiversity.

The first chapter situates the contemporary circus sector in the debate, by pointing out its potential for inducing change through art. Research proposes that art can address the topic of climate change in a different way than scientific communication. Furthermore it can encourage change by portraying an inspiring, positive vision of what a sustainable society could look like. The chapter proposes to see sustainable practice as a second way a contemporary circus company can be inspiring and instructing to the audience, next to addressing environmental topics with the artistic content.

The second chapter explores scientific propositions of pathways to ecological sustainability. Following the report "Climate Math: What a 1.5° pathway would take" by the McKinsey institute in 2020 it is deduced that the change that needs to happen can be structured into the fields of land use and farming, electrification, power production, industrial production and carbon sequestration. The contemporary circus sector has intersections with all of these fields. These mainly consist of consumption choices: Which materials and food are being procured, which modes of transport and energy providers chosen and which projects are funded with the greenhouse gas offset.

The second finding of this chapter is rather political: It argues that the competition driven and degenerative nature of the economic system is opposing the concept of sustainability. Therefore contemporary circus companies striving for sustainability need to also question their values, consumption habits and their perception of what success is.

The third chapter looks for ways towards sustainable practice in the fields of theatre and music touring. From the research done in those fields we can learn the method of the environmental management process. It means that an institution that wants to operate ecologically sustainable analyses their current emissions, formulates a plan of how to reduce them, sets the plan into action and reflects on the outcomes of it. Following that, the circle starts anew.

Furthermore, this chapter outlines how to successfully communicate the sustainability trajectory within the team, with stakeholders, with the audience and with colleagues. It argues that this is vital in order to bring people to your side and inspire them.

The case study about Acting for Climate in the fourth chapter showcases a contemporary circus company for whom environmentalism is embedded in their work both artistically and practically. The chapter explains their way of reducing transport related emissions by choosing exceptional means of touring such as a sailing ship and bicycles. Moreover they act sustainably by consuming vegan food and procuring it from the dumpster to a large extent. Acting for climate reduces emissions by playing most of their shows outside and using materials that are recycled from previous projects or procured second hand. More than anything the chapter addresses the process and benefits of becoming ecologically sustainable from their point of view.

In the last chapter I draw upon the findings of my research and conclude that there is a whole range of big and small measures contemporary circus companies can take to become ecologically sustainable. The superordinate concept is the environmental management process. Analysing the environmental footprint of a production enables to plan an effective reduction strategy. The ways in which contemporary circus companies can become ecologically sustainable are subdivided into **Transport** (delivery, tour, audience), **Energy use** (heating, lights, AV), **Materials** (costumes, stage, marketing, merchandise), **Food** (artist catering and audience food), **Accommodation** and **Communication**. This division is derived from a combination of subdivisions used in the main sources. The chapter ends with a list of propositions for each of these fields of work.

Discussion

Already in the process of deciding on the topic for this thesis I was struggling with controversy that in the end did not get addressed in the paper.

It is the question of responsibility for the necessary transformations to mitigate climate change. For years there have been appeals to individuals to change their behaviour, by for example using the bike, recycling and eating less meat. With this, the responsibility seems to lie with the consumer and his:her choices. For example the report “Kick the habit”, published by the UN in 2008, proposes a combined approach of individual and political transformation.⁹⁷

Climate justice organisations like Extinction Rebellion challenge this notion by arguing that profound changes have to be made on an industrial and political level and that blaming an individual's actions draws attention away from the responsibility of governments and industry.⁹⁸

To find a middle ground, this paper considers contemporary circus companies as institutions that form (with other institutions like funding bodies, bookers, producers and venues) the industrial sector of contemporary circus, rather than the individual actions of circus performers as members of the society. In this sense, contemporary circus companies are not consumers, but producers. The actions of contemporary circus companies thus have another political dimension.

Still, this approach leaves the danger that circus companies that want to become sustainable need to walk a route that costs them lots of money, time and effort individually. It would be preferable and also more effective if there were transformations in higher ranking structures, such as the funding sector or national legislation. Even though I am showing measures for individual companies in this paper, I still want to make a standpoint for these structural changes to happen.

The interview I conducted with Marina Rieger from the Federal Association for Contemporary Circus in Germany (BUZZ) mainly focussed on the question, which structural changes are necessary in the contemporary circus sector, especially in the funding structures. Because the paper focused on the actions of individual companies, the findings of the interview were not incorporated in the end. Nevertheless, I want to propose this as a topic for further research and thought. I think there are structural changes that could be very

⁹⁷ Alex Kirby, *Kick The Habit: A UN guide to climate neutrality*, p. 46

⁹⁸ Grossman. *Emergency on planet earth*, p. 124-125

beneficial to the ecological sustainability of the contemporary circus sector as a whole, such as adapting funding criteria and rules for artist travel that can be reimbursed.

In the research process I was facing the difficulty that circus companies differ a lot from each other in the way they work. It is, as the Green Touring Guide expresses, impossible to formulate a sustainability plan that works for all contemporary circus companies. In the paper, I worked around that issue by introducing general concepts such as the environmental management process and offering a list of overall propositions that can be adapted to the specific company. Nevertheless, I think it would be very instructive to conduct quantitative research into the actual emissions of contemporary circus companies. For this thesis I offered the concept of climate neutrality. Since the contemporary circus sector is not climate neutral yet, as the greenhouse gas emitting practices described in the paper prove, it can be argued that there is potential for improvement. However, I see now that doing quantitative research into the emissions of contemporary circus companies would have given the paper a more stable foundation.

My research confirmed my assumption that in other art sectors there has already been more research into ecological sustainability. I found very elaborate and instructive guides applicable to all forms of performing art, especially published by the organization Julie's Bicycle. For anyone who aims to make their artistic practice more ecologically sustainable I recommend consulting their guides and using their free emission calculator for performing art productions. However, the slight let down to the omnipresence of sources published by Julie's Bicycle is a lack of diversity in sources. Other sources I consulted, like the Green Touring Guide published by the Popakademie Baden-Württemberg in Germany, refer back to sources of Julie's Bicycle. It is not necessarily a problem, because the Julie's Bicycle Guides have a big variety of authors. Nevertheless, also for this reason it would be desirable, if there was quantitative research into the emissions of contemporary circus companies, to broaden the sources of information.

Reflection

I experienced the process of writing this Theoretical Graduation Project as very stimulating, inspiring and instructive.

I chose the topic partly because for me it feels necessary to look into ecological sustainability before I start my own “career” as a circus artist. Technically, I think no matter which job you do, you should look into how you can contribute to the fight against the climate emergency, because -frankly- we do not have much time and the perspective of not changing anything is frightening. Nevertheless, as an aspiring circus artist it feels even more urgent, because of the travel-intensity of the sector.

I was surprised over the course of the research, how much useful material I found! When starting the topic, I was afraid that I would only find out things that are common knowledge already, like, for instance, that we should stop going by plane. All in all, my findings in itself are not revolutionary, but compiling them and making the connections and structures that I made was very instructive, at least for me. It gives me hope that trying to act sustainable towards the planet and being a contemporary circus performer can be compatible.

In the process I first wrote the desk research chapters and conducted the interviews later. In retrospect that was a shame, because the interviews were very interesting and they brought my awareness to additional things that would have been nice to research, but then the time was restricted. For example, Emma Langmoen and Marina Rieger both gave me tips for other knowledgeable people that I could talk to, but I did not get around to it anymore. Additionally, I have the gut feeling that it might be unscientific to conduct the interviews in the end, because it might increase the bias in developing the questions.

Leaving the scientific approach out of account, the interviews were an important part of the process. I was happy to create a relation from the desk research to the circus sector and the actual day to day practice. Furthermore, it was very inspiring to talk to other people invested in the topic. Especially in regards to Acting for Climate, because they do so many things that might seem utopical, but they still work, because they really go for it.

On the downside, I notice that my background in the topic is activist and not scientific. It might be a typical problem of circus students writing a TAP, but often during the process I doubted if I truly work scientifically. Not because I did not want to, just because I lack the tools and knowledge. For example, I know from a friend that is doing a doctor's degree in one of the humanities, that they use extensive methodology to interpret interviews. I did not do anything of the sorts.

All in all, ecological sustainability and climate justice are very important topics for me. Even though it can sometimes be depressing to see how our planet is being destroyed and nothing is done against it, even though the science has been crystal clear for decades, I really enjoyed working on this paper and hope I can continue my involvement with the topic beyond this theoretical graduation project.

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Appendix

Transcripts of Interviews

Interview with Emma Langmoen from the company Acting for Climate
11.10.2021, Interview conducted on "Zoom"

Meike: Who are you and what is your function in Acting For Climate?

Emma: My name is Emma, I am educated as a circus artist specialized in fixed trapeze, even though I don't do it so much lately. I am a board member and a core crew member of Acting For Climate. Acting For Climate is a performing arts company, working mostly with contemporary circus, dance and physical theatre and connects these to themes of environmentalism. We have the goal of inspiring people to act for a more sustainable future. That is both in our performances and also in how we do things. My role is being an artist, a creator and also an organizer/ administrator/ producer. All different hats at the same time.

M.: Next to making shows about climate change, are you also aiming to act ecologically sustainable as a company?

E.: Yes. We are working on different levels. We are working on artistically using the topic and also share methods and ways of creating with other artists (a lot of circus artists, but also other physical and non physical artists). And on the other hand we try to implement to do what we do sustainably. That is both ecologically sustainable and now we also try to look into how we can make it sustainable as human beings. To not push ourselves over the limit of what is actually healthy. To find structures that are both economical and socially/personally sustainable. We also try to work up to other art organizations, other companies, political bodies, municipalities, in order to work politically and push our agenda of environmentalism. Sometimes it is difficult to grasp what we are doing, but first and foremost we are a circus company, then a network, then an organization and then a politically influencing body.

M.: I would be interested in your practice of ecological sustainability. Do you have a structured approach? Do you measure your emissions and reduce them or are you just going with the things that come up?

E.: We haven't measured so far, We are in touch with different organizations that do that, about if it would be wise for us to do. In the project that is coming up in Denmark now, we are going to try to measure. But normally we all actually know what to do when it comes to climate change and reducing our footprint, especially as artists. And to just see at what levels we can use it. It has to do with transport, for instance we have a no-flight policy, we never cover travel by plane for any of our artists or projects. We have two projects that are toured by sail and one that is toured by bike. Travel is a big thing, especially when you are internationally touring. We also look at food, we have vegan food in our projects and we dumpster dive most of it. We look at the footprint that comes from production systems, for instance use of light or stage technique. For instance in our first sailing boat project I think our biggest impact was that we invested in a sound system for the company. That was a typical decision that wasn't thought all the way through, because there would have been possibilities to do it differently, of course. But we really look at everything that we use that is not our physical bodies and acoustic music, because it has an effect. And then there are

smaller things like scenography, costume, buying things that were used before. But it is not a structured system of a carbon calculator or something like this, it is more to look at what are the things we are doing that are more than a site specific thing right here and how can we make those choices as sustainable as possible.

M: It sounds like you have a very holistic approach. Even though you don't do an emission analysis, it seems like you are looking at the full range of a production.

E.: We are trying. And sometimes we are fucking up, also. But we are trying. And that also means saying no to things sometimes. We have been lucky and got quite a reach, that means we are getting invited to do nice performances and nice gigs. Come to COP and perform in Glasgow, or maybe you can have a weekend in Venice, or perform at the climate conference in New York. Those are all beautiful possibilities and maybe we could reach some people with our performance about environmentalism, but it would also mean that we would probably fly there. Or travel a long way just to spend a few days. So it is also about choices, deciding. I think many companies that do performances around the theme of sustainability justify for themselves that in a case like that it is more important that they come to play, then that they look at their own structures.

We think it is important to do what you can, even if that is just switching your normal milk with soy milk, but also to be aware that it is a choice that you have and that if you really want to work with sustainability, that you have to look at other possibilities. Local possibilities. Maybe not the one big festival on the other side of the world.

M.: You mentioned before that you have a no flight policy. Do you have other policies within the company of how things are done? Or are you usually on the same track ?

E.: Because we cook and eat together in our working periods, we have a policy that the food is vegan and most of it is dumpster dived. There is an exemption that sometimes if we dumpster dive dairy products, they are eaten, I have to confess, but commonly we have vegan food together. Our costumes and props are reused or bought second hand or fixed from second hand materials. We try to choose the most sustainable ways of travelling. For example we work a lot in Denmark and Norway, where there is the possibility to go by boat, which is not so sustainable and there is the possibility to go by bus or train, which is more sustainable.

This is an unwritten rule, but lot's of our working periods have been in places that are not traditional art residencies. For example we work a lot at a biodynamic farm that is run by a dancer. There for instance we help out on the farm maybe one day a week when we are there, so we try to do something that is actually practical, that has to do with something physical: weeding veggies or helping out in practical chores.

M.: Do you actually also play shows in venues?

E.: Mostly we do outdoor performances. In this we solve our issues of not wanting to use too much technical equipment. But that is also part of festivals or venues programming these outdoor performances. And then we have one indoor performance, the one that we are touring in Denmark soon. We will also play in schools with it. That is one way to actually play a lot but not travel big distance.

M.: So more performances in the same area...

E.: Yes, or even: Denmark is not such a big country. To be able to tour several weeks in Denmark and not only go to the venues that program contemporary circus, which are not a lot.

M.: Do you evaluate the venues in terms of their sustainability credentials before you go there? Are you in communication with them about sustainability?

E.: We haven't been, but it is in progress. Because we were doing mostly outdoor performances until this project. Actually we were meant to tour it [KIME] in spring and autumn of 2020 [performances were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic]. It premiered in January 2020 then we had two months of break and we were supposed to start a "grande tour" in the end of March 2020. So it has been on hold. For us it is actually the first tour that we are doing in indoor theatres. For this we are in the process of making a green rider to ask some questions. But right now we don't have other measures than for instance that we ask for travel reimbursement for land based travel. I actually think we could demand more from our venues than we are doing now. But maybe we have already sort of implemented these things in what we do. In our rider it says that we only take vegan food and that we travel on land, so we moved the responsibility from the venue to us but I think we could also push into the other direction.

M.: But if you have these things already in your rider, what would belong for you into the green rider additionally?

E.: I work a lot politically, also in the artist union here. And one of things that you can really ask a venue is, have they looked into energy use? Does the company they get the energy from use renewable energy sources? Is the building environmentally certified? We haven't done that until now. Maybe we will.

M.: Do you find it scary to demand things?

E.: Ähhh, no, not really actually. Of course, maybe it means that we loose some opportunities. But I think we have found a niche in the cultural field where we are allowed to demand a lot, because that is how we branded ourselves. So I think for Acting for Climate it is easier than if you are doing something else. If you are part of a cabaret and you come to do your act and suddenly start to ask questions like what is your policy on structural oppression, I think it could be more scary.

M.: What is for you the relation between addressing climate change and sustainability in your shows and practising it as a company? Can one work without the other?

E.: Our relation is that we do both. I definitely think that there are things that you can practically do sustainably without addressing it in the performance. In the same time I think it legitimate your performance more, if it is about sustainability, to also do things sustainably. There was research that if you are a climate activist and you do things that are unsustainable, people will have less belief in you.

I definitely think that everything you do matters and has importance in some way whether that is just taking it into your performance, or deciding not to fly. Everything is an important step in the right direction. But at the same time I think it is the strongest if you both practically do it and have it in your performance. Because as an artist everything is so interlinked and you need to have some conviction in what you do, not just in what you present on stage. What do you think?

M.: I find it a difficult question because I am struggling with the question of who is responsible for stopping climate change to happen and if that is individual companies or not. But I am writing this paper, so I am looking at what individual companies can do. But sometimes I think it would be so much more effective if the government would

just stop burning coal or something like that. So that is where the question comes from.

E.: Yes, But it is also important to realize that action triggers action and when people see action, they see hope. Then it also gives the drive to do something yourself. If you see somebody picking up trash in the street, Maybe you won't start picking up trash in the street, but it will start the thought process of it. "Climate change is happening." Or "there is pollution in the world, we have a nature crisis". And that can both influence your actions of doing something yourself, if you see somebody else does it, or shift your political beliefs that then will manifest in other places. Same thing with whether it should be grassroots change or whether it should be political change: all actions really matter and of course you can shift things quicker if it is the government that does political changes, but these are not separate entities. It is all interconnected. And that is why by doing something from the bottom up, we can shift the narrative or the ideas of what is the norm and what would we like the political frame to mirror.

A good example in Norway is that I think in 2019 the culture and arts fund decided to have a separate grant just for projects concerning art and environmentalism, multigenre. This they decided because they got so many applications from projects that were about sustainability in some way. And that wouldn't happen if the artists wouldn't take the initiative to investigate this topic, both practically and artistically. So it is also about creating the alternative.

M.: When I talked to Marina we were addressing that funding bodies should try to accommodate better for companies that try to be sustainable. How does that work for you? Do you fit into the funding system?

E.: For sure there are changes that need to be done from the funding side and I think that is happening also. At least the funding bodies I know either have or are in progress of implementing sustainability as one of their criterias. And for sure I think things like that it is cheaper to tour by plane than by train could be regulated through funding, for example that you get more funding if you choose to travel by land. But I still think that within the funding systems how they are right now (at least in the Nordic region where I work the most) it is definitely possible to do things sustainably. It is not like we need political changes to do it or that we can't do it before there are political changes. Of course it would help, it would make it easier and maybe it would mean that we have more of the money going to artist salaries and less of it to train expenses. But it is not like it is not possible yet to do things in a sustainable way.

M.: Do you generally think that being more sustainable as a company is more expensive?

E.: I think it takes more time. Economically I don't think it matters so much. But it requires more effort for us also in how we work as a collective. We have much smaller food expenses than most companies, but that is because we take the time to dumpster dive. And that is not reflected in our artistic salaries. I don't know how to handle it, because if we would really work sustainably it would also be reflected if you spend two hours per night to go dumpster diving and that is asked from you as part of a project, it should be in your salary. Right now it is not.

So it is a big difference in time, but not in money, unless you let the time reflect itself in money.

M.: What is the reaction of the audience on your work? Do you have a feeling about whether you change anything in them?

E.: I think there are many things. First and foremost there are not so many spaces in the world where you are allowed to open up emotionally about how climate change and the nature crisis effect you. That means that there is a lack of room to talk about this or share this. With our performances, there has been room for people to really open up whether that is to laugh or cry or talk with who they sit next to or talk with us after the performance. An important part in the role of art is creating spaces for emotions. I also think that there is this aspect of hope that art has the possibility to create in the narrative, like in the article that I also sent to you []. It is something about showing or manifesting the values that we would like to see in society. Circus for instance is brilliant in working with collaboration, supporting each other, community, help, balance or poetic quality in general, the beauty of life. Therefore it is a good way to show an alternative and show people some hope that a different world is possible and that there are people that are concerned about the same thing.

M.: What is the reaction of people in the workforce on your work?

E.: Mostly, people are very positive. There are a lot of people that would like to do the same or work with us, which is of course very flattering and gives me a lot of hope.

A lot of people have the fear that if they choose to do something activist or political, that they will not have any jobs. I think it is a question of priority and if you choose to prioritize, you are lucky, then you can still make it your work income to work with political performing arts and political circus. But it also requires that you actually kind of jump into it. That can be either that you choose a choice that you know is stable, if you know you can have a six month contract touring the world, maybe you choose that. And I totally understand it. But if you really want to do something political, something about sustainability, you have to prioritize it and see if it works.

M.: It is interesting: I also have this unreasonable fear that doing something political is taking something away from the quality of the artistic product. Do you recognize that?

E.: A lot of people believe or say that. I think in the end it is a question of taste, isn't it? But for me the best circus performances I have seen in my life were political performances. Those are the ones that stick with me. So for us it has been a question of practice. There is the saying that the master has failed more than the student has even tried. If you want to do it, you will not do the best thing on the first try. Or maybe you will and you're extremely lucky. It is really about finding the methods and trying, then you will find ways.

So I disagree. It is a question of taste, but I think if you don't really have anything to say, why should people spend one and a half hour looking at you?

When I was in circus school I got a lot of feedback from teachers that I would need to do something else than "That political circus". But now it is my work and I am perfectly happy with it. I think it is a question of taste, actually.

M.: Do you have tips for a contemporary Circus company that wants to become more ecologically sustainable in their practice?

E.: That you know from your heart what is the issue of your company, what are things that could be better. To really try to look for ways to travel without flying and to look at local strategies.

I want to also say that for me you are successful if you manage to create a tour in your local area and you manage to do an artistic project that is sustainable. That is also a value of success. You are not only successful if you play the biggest venues all over the world with the biggest companies. You are super successful if you manage to make a living as an artist performing for communities that usually don't see so much art, or make a living by performing in your local area or creating something locally.

Also, find at least one person that has your thought process. That can be someone outside the company also, and everybody wondering is very welcome to contact us. Have somebody to throw ideas with and that can help you and support you. I think we are a lot of people that want to do things more sustainably, it just sometimes can be lonely if the people around you don't have it on top of their priority list. So try to connect with others.

M: for me it feels like it is going a bit against the “trend” in the contemporary circus scene. When I talk to my friends in school and around, they are all expecting to play all over the world, one day here, one day there .

E.: For sure it is also fun to perform in big venues in front of thousands of people! But that doesn't mean that it has to be the norm of success.

So try to do and create things that go together with the values that you have. Don't think that you need to have your own personal values like I am a climate activist and then you have your artistic values, I am an internationally touring super hero that will show off my best tricks all over the world, but try to see how you can merge these two together.

M.:Can you explain again which shows you have and how they tour?

E.: The first big project that Acting for Climate had was the “Into the Water” project that toured in 2019. It was created in 2018. It was a performance on a sailing ship. In each harbour we did a festival, the “havnefest for klima” (Norwegian), the harbour celebration for climate. So that was toured with the sail ship from 1935.

We have “Bark” which is the forest performance that premiered in May and that is toured by bike and sometimes by train when changing countries.

The “Kime” performance, which means kernel or seed, that is an indoor performance about climate psychology we are touring by collective transport. This is the one we talked about earlier, that we are going to tour in venues and schools. So we try to go to many places within short distances and meet different audience groups also within the different cities.

Next summer we have the project “Ripples”, a new sailing ship project with the same ship about eco-grief and creating the language of the future. We are trying to manifest the world that we want to see in 50 years, in 2030 or in 2200 and try to live it in the present.

We also had a co-production on the sailing ship “boomerang travels” in the autumn of 2020. That was an answer to not being able to travel internationally, you can go on a sailing ship in your own city.

We also have some projects that are more social art projects. One is building up a cultural centre for youth, inclusion of Roma and environmental art in Slovakia, there we will go by train, I guess.

M.: How does it work to tour “Bark” by bike?

E.: I have to say that the sailship tours worked super well. Lots of seasickness, but otherwise it worked super well. The bike tour has potential for improvement. We did one week in each place and in spring we will do two weeks in each space. Because it is something like 80/ 90

km biking on our free day in between and to do many weeks of tour in which your free day is 80km on a bike that is quite a lot with all our stuff: rigging equipment, instruments, personal belongings and everything.

We will have changes in the future but as a pilot it was really good to figure out how it works. One of the things we drew from that was also that it would be better for us, to tour a performance that is not site specific by bike. Then you don't have to adapt to the local setting. A blackbox performance would be much nicer to tour by bike than a forest show, because most blackboxes are somehow similar.

M.: Did you go to all of the forests beforehand to scout them?

E.: It differed a bit. For some we went in beforehand, for some we found people that we knew in the nearby area and we had basically a digital guided tour of the forest. For the Danish tour (we had a tour in Denmark and then in Finland, with some Sweden in between) we did a call out where we drew the trees that we were looking for, and the kind of forest. We needed some trees for vertical dance and one tree, like an old tree in which we could do group acrobatics and climb around. So we were casting trees. It was the most difficult casting of the performance to find forests with the proper distances between those trees.

M.: What needs to change in society in order to become sustainable and avoid climate catastrophe? And what is the role of contemporary circus in it?

E.: It is a big question. For one, it is to realize the power that each and everyone of us possesses. And the responsibility that comes with it. The responsibility of being human in this age, and how we are connected to nature. With great power comes great responsibility, isn't it? We really need to look at it on all levels, in every choice we make: how can we make it more sustainable? We have so much power through the decisions we make that we really need to make the best decisions.

In general I think raising awareness and creating emotional connection to the nature and climate crisis is important and that is the part where contemporary circus presence plays a big role. Because we work with emotions, we work with feelings and we work with our relation to each other and society. So we have the possibility to create connections and tell new stories. To really show the alternative and show the alternative narratives, the ways that we want to relate to each other and nature.

M.: Are you, as Acting For Climate, part of a network of circus companies that think the same or part of an initiative like culture declares?

E.: We are part of "Concerned Artists Norway" and the initiative "Artists against Ecocide". And we have discussions with other companies and we have hosted some talks and panels, but it is not like we are part of some big network. It is also that many of us in the core crew are involved politically in other forms, so somehow there hasn't been the need for Acting For Climate to directly be involved. Me, for instance, I have been part of shaping the climate policy of the artist organizations of Norway now and I have been part of that because of my background and my work with acting for climate. But it is me personally and not Acting for Climate. And there is another person in the core crew that is working with the Stockholm resilience center etc. There are different approaches, but it is more because of the people we ended up being and not because we as a company have decided that we want to go into this.

One thing that we for sure want to do is to gather resources and help if we can and connect artists. We share how we do things and give workshops. That is not because we think we

have found the ultimate solutions or that we have so much to give because we are so wise, it is more to share “these are the things we figured out and if it can help you, we would love to share it”. Because it is more important to do something about the climate and nature crisis than that we keep our methods or our work to ourselves.

M.: Do you have something that you really want to say that didn't come up?

E.: It is a lot about acknowledging that everybody can't do everything, but everybody can do something. Some companies tour internationally across continents, and they will keep doing that, but maybe then they can find solutions how at least within each continent they can travel overland, or to plan tours in a way that you can have at least 20 performances without flying in between.

For us, for instance, we have one branch of the company in northern Europe and one in Canada. That was just a natural transition from the fact that we had some people in North America that were working with us in northern Europe and it just didn't make sense to cross the Atlantic. Maybe we are going to sail tour there within the next five years, but other than that we are not going to tour in North America. So why not start a branch of the company there and we can share methodologies and contact and the same values and go under the same umbrella.

M.: And spread also, slowly get everywhere...

E.: exactly. So we are looking at the circumstances and work from there

M.: How did you find each other?

E.: The company was started in 2014 by an actor from the Lecoq theatre school and a circus artist (Abigael Winsvold) and they decided that to build a movement, to build a company they needed to first explore how to do that artistically and to find some people. So they decided to hold annual one week workshops for professional artists about how we can artistically work with environmentalism and inspire people to act. So it was a long casting process in which the people that were in the workshops didn't know that they were part of developing a methodology and building a company. I was part of a workshop in 2017 and I was invited to join later. We are people from both different art genres and very different ways of working and artistic luggage and also style, that have come together and work together because we share this common value. We think that the course is maybe the most important and it fuels the company and keeps it going. We had some people that were part of the company until the first big project ended and then decided to do other things and some new people came in. Right now we have a project that is a one year workshop series of eight physical workshops for artists. One of the goals for that is also to get to know some people, train together, work together and maybe involve some of them in the company more. Because we have more projects than we actually have the capacity or people to do. It sounds like we are a big company sometimes, but actually we are just a few people, so we are looking into how we can make it bigger.

One of the nice things about the company is that we are gathered under the sense that my personal ego is less important than the actual issues of the world. And so far we have been giving workshops and sharing all our artistic methods and we still have work.

Interview With Rosa Boon from TENT, House for Contemporary Circus in the Netherlands

20.10.21, Interview conducted on “Zoom”

Meike: Who are you and what is your function within TENT and your function within the contemporary circus sector?

Rosa: My name is Rosa, I am one of the founders and a director of TENT, House for Contemporary Circus in Amsterdam. I am both an artistic and business director together with two partners, so we are organized collectively. That means I am not the Boss, we have a collective boss. My main focus goes to financing of the organization and the projects we do, external relations, sales... We always joke that I make the money and my colleagues spend it. Specifically I have some projects under my wings, like the new festival we started this year, this is not a Circus, and Back to Base.

My role within the contemporary circus field I would describe as that with TENT, together with my colleagues, we were one of the first ones with the festivals and the education to break a leg for contemporary circus in the Netherlands. So we did and still do a lot of lobbying, to make circus being taken seriously within the art field and put it on the map by organizing good quality shows, by lobbying, by organizing professionals days, by collaborating in specific projects in which young talent tours. I am also a board member of Circuspunt, that is our umbrella organization for the larger circus field – it is a network organization.

In dutch we say anjager, I don't know how to say this in english... The one that is pulling the car, running ahead.

M.: The avant garde maybe?

R.: Yes, something like that. The pioneers. We were really pioneering. Not any more, but we are still trying to build this sector stronger together.

M.: Is TENT a company or is the function something different?

R.: We have a different function. We started as a company, and now we are more of a production house. So we support a house for contemporary circus in which we produce work of makers. In dutch you also call that a company but we are not a company in the sense that everybody who runs us is also on stage. But as a function we support people with their working field in the Netherlands that have the ambition to create circus either on stage or as a director. The goal behind it is to strengthen contemporary circus and the development of it. But we do that by offering specific trajectories for makers to work in. That is the basis of our mission.

M.: Is that a structural difference, that a company doesn't have a mission but an economic purpose?

R.: I think companies can have a mission! I can imagine that Gandini juggling or No Fit State Circus for sure has a mission. But they achieve the mission with different activities than we do. Whilst we could have the same mission we could organize different activities to get there.

M.: What is then the definition of a circus company?

R.: A company, if you would translate that, is people working together, and in terms of a state art company you would say it is a collective of people that create something together and in french you would say, that also perform something together. And that they decide collectively on the wellbeing and how decisions are being made. While in the Netherlands for example we have a lot of what we call Gezellschaften, so companies, but that are run by one artistic leader, so they are not collectively organized. So this word of a company/ collective... it has so many meanings....

M.: For example I don't think Ghandini juggling is collectively organized. Or Cirque du Soleil is not collectively organized...

R.: No, they are not. Company XY is collectively organized and that is interesting. They are a true collective and every decision is made by the collective. They have working groups, but everybody who works on the show, but also the person for sales, is part of the collective.

M.: I have a question concerning the size of circus companies, because there are circus companies like Cirque du Soleil with thousands of employees, but that is not "the normal size" for a circus company, is it?

R.: There is no normal size. You have companies of one, you have companies of 20 and 50 and 10 and 3. I wouldn't say that there is a normal.

M.: But when I am looking at the differences between theatre productions and circus productions; I have the impression that in the circus it is way more normal that the artists have all the different hats on: being also director, costume designer, producer...

R.: Yes, that is right. In the traditional circus the person that builds the tent is also the performer and the director also sells the popcorn, as an example. This collective thinking is also part of the contemporary community. That is a really big Pro. I hear such good comments from a lot of theatres, especially in the Netherlands where they are not so used to circus companies, on how nice circus people are to work with and nobody is making difficulties. It really creates a feeling, that I believe you see back on stage. And I believe it is part of the strength that we have as an artform.

M.: I would have guessed that this [the fact that all roles are taken up by a small group of people] comes from the lack of structural funding. That contemporary circus doesn't have money to pay people to do the other things next to performing. But you think it is based in the tradition of the medium?

R.: I think it is based in the tradition of the medium and also in what I call the DNA of circus. Because in a lot of cases you can't do circus by yourself. If you are an acrobat you need a base or flyer. If you are a trapeze artist you maybe need somebody to lounge you. If you are a magician you might need somebody backstage... of course there are things that you can do on your own, but most of the circus technique requires collaboration. So that is something that for most of the circus artists also nowadays, a very normal thing, that you help each other out. Also within the schools, especially in Europe, it is something that is held high as a value.

M.: Do you, next to that, see other structural differences between theatre and circus productions in the netherlands?

R.: I see a difference in the sense that it [Circus] is not so structurally supported yet financially, a lot less than the theatre sector. It is not known to the audience, mostly contemporary circus, people don't know what it is. And in the way we work: Circus creations take much longer: A regular theatre or mime creation maybe takes 4 or 5 weeks of rehearsal, while most circus productions, depending on how many people are involved, take ten to sometimes 15 Weeks to create. Circus productions tend to be

more expensive because of more rehearsal time but also higher costs for safety and rigging, which is part of our working practice. On the other hand, we tend to perform much longer. And because language is not a problem in a lot of cases we are also able to tour internationally much easier than a theatre or mime piece.

M.: I have the impression that in Germany theatre tours much less than in the Netherlands. Do I understand correctly that in the Netherlands a theatre doesn't usually have their own ensemble and workshops and so on?

R.: Yeah, it is true. In the Netherlands it is pulled apart. We have the buildings, what we also call the stones, they are funded by the local communities, also their money to program. In only a few cases these stone buildings also have a company. For example in Rotterdam, you have theatre Rotterdam, they have several companies under the wings of the theatre. In Amsterdam you have the Schouwburg and they have the International Theatre Amsterdam as their house company.

M.: And do they then also have a place where they physically have workshops and such?

R.: The national opera and ballet has it, for example, but it is only the very, very big ones. National opera and ballet, ETA, also Theatre Rotterdam has a workplace, costume department and those things. I think the bigger dance companies have it, but they need to be quite big. It is mostly the companies that are structurally funded directly by the ministry, they would tend to have their own workshops and costume departments and ateliers etc. Because it is extremely expensive. But I know in Germany it is much more regular to have that.

M.: Are there any contemporary Circus companies in the Netherlands that have their own performance venue instead of touring?

R.: No. No. We for example have a place where our office is, where also Back to Base was set, but it is not our building. We rent the office, and downstairs there is a theatre hall, so we can organize things there, but then we rent it. But it is one of our ambitions as TENT in the coming 5-6 years to find a place. Korzo has it. They have their own venue where they can program their own work and also have a workspace. But they are not only for circus. They have two functions. They have a function of being a production house and a function as being a presenting theatre.

M.: Do you have the feeling that circus companies in the Netherlands really go on a tour? Or do you always come back to where you live after the performance?

R.: It happens more [that we come back to where we live]. The Netherlands are so small that even when you tour the Netherlands, most of the time you just go back and forth. Because it is doable, and then it is always nicer to sleep in your own bed, especially if you don't have to be back there the next day.

If you live a little bit in the middle of the country most of the things are very reachable. Sometimes if we do school shows in Groningen very early on a Tuesday, we would go on a Monday night and sleep there, because in the morning it takes too much time.

M.: But then you wouldn't organize your tour in a way that you go, say, from Groningen to Enschede and then to Eindhoven.

R.: No, in that case we would go home to Amsterdam and then from there to Enschede. Usually that is cheaper. Sometimes it happens but it is not so regular.

But what is the definition of touring? That you don't come home in between? In the Netherlands we call it a tour even if you go up and down every day.

And if we can we will take the train and also the performers will take a train. I know that a lot of performers in the Netherlands try to do as much as they can by train which is a lot of the time very possible.

M.: Is this because of ecological consideration?

R.: It is an ecological consideration and also it takes less energy. If you perform you sometimes just want to sit and not have to drive.

A lot of the time companies leave that to the personal taste of people. If they were big companies they would rent a Bus, then it is cheaper to put everybody in. It has either financial reasons or reasons if you can get there easily.

M.: Do you witness any discussion or effort in the dutch contemporary circus sector to become ecologically sustainable?

R.: I think we are not so energy consuming in general, in the sense that we don't build huge decors like opera. I think there is not such a big awareness yet, but I think the whole scene is quite aware as individuals. You see that with a lot of the crews now we just order vegan food because everybody wants to eat vegan. But we keep these choices individual. We don't decide for a whole crew that they have to eat vegan. So we listen to the individual. So to answer your question I think within the sector it is not such a big issue yet and there is awareness, but on a personal level.

This is something to ask the festivals, because they would consume the most energy.

I think we don't have a huge footprint. Travelling is the footprint, and if you do that by train as much as possible, you can easily reduce that.

M.: Do you know if any of the funding institutions take sustainability as one of their criteria?

R.: Not in the judging yet. Maybe in the design sector they would, but it is also more of a hot topic there, because they physically produce a lot of stuff. But in the art scene it is not a criteria that you are being judged on. I do think it is a criteria that there is a lot of awareness about. That companies are really thinking about.

Interview with Marina Rieger, responsible for sustainability within the "Bundesverband Zeitgenössischer Zirkus" ("Federal Association for Contemporary Circus") in Germany

04.10.2021, Interview conducted on Zoom

Meike: Wer bist du und was ist deine Funktion (für den BUZZ und außerhalb)?

Marina: Ich bin Marina, in Berlin geboren und aufgewachsen, über Kinder und Jugendcircus und ein paar Nordeuropa Abstecher zu anderen Circusgruppen und –schulen zurück nach Berlin gekommen und habe 2018 angefangen bei der damals noch Initiative Neuer Circus [jetzt BUZZ] mitzuarbeiten. Diese wurde 2011 in Köln aus einer Initiative geschaffen, professionelle Strukturen in Deutschland zu schaffen, die für neuen - bzw. jetzt sprechen wir von zeitgenössischem- Circus nicht so vorhanden waren

Meine Positionen jetzt sind divers, da ich nicht mehr in Berlin wohne. Wir sind ja alle in Städtetolen aktiv, haben also eine ganz klassische regionale Anbindung wo wir unseren Hauptwohnsitz haben.

Dadurch dass ich gerade im Ausland bin, bin ich also eher in der kulturpolitischen Vernetzung Schwerpunkt international, also über das Netzwerk Circostrada, international network coordinator, selbsternannt. Aber die Arbeit in den AG s, die auch Interessengruppen sind, muss man nicht unbedingt aktiv im BUZZ sein. Das mit der Nachhaltigkeit kam seit ungefähr einem Jahr auf, aber als lose Geschichte mit verschiedenen Programmen, die auch ein bisschen durch Corona-Förderungen entstanden sind und ein bisschen klarere Form annehmen. Gerade arbeiten wir dafür an einem Format für die Nuit de Cirque.

Mei.: Was heißt das genau?

Ma.: Die Nuit de Cirque hat ein deutsches Pendant, die wird dieses Jahr über das Forum Neuer Circus, das ist auch ein Verein in Berlin, bundesweit Zeit für Circus heißen.

Wir veranstalten eine Art Pitch oder Auftakt Talk zum Thema Nachhaltigkeit. Das ist auch in Berlin entstanden mit jemandem vor Ort, Marek Petersen. Er kommt aus einer anderen Richtung, sodass er auch in der ökologischen- / Nachhaltigkeitsbewegung viel stärker aktiv war, und sich dann gefragt hat, ist das nicht auch relevant für Circusleute und wo sind da die Schnittstellen? Und das war unklar, vielleicht auch weil es da zu kulturpolitischen Strategien kommt. Dass man sich [der zeitgenössische Circus Sektor] erst mal aufstellt und sagt man will mehr, mehr, mehr, bzw. mehr Zugang. Und dann manchmal diese Frage: wir arbeiten vielleicht auch nicht im Sinne von nachhaltigem Aktivismus, wenn wir die ganze Zeit aktiv aktiv aktiv sind

Mei.: also wenn die Circusszene immer wachsen muss, mit immer größeren Zuschauerzahlen...

Ma.: Genau. Und das aber eben die einzigen validen Qualitätsmerkmale sind, wenn man sich zum Beispiel Förderungen anschaut. Und um damit die Biege zu kriegen haben wir gesagt wir laden ein zu einem Talk, aber auch um nochmal ein Stimmungsbild zu bekommen, weil es sich schon gezeigt hat, auch durch die Talk runden durch Corona, wo man auch gemerkt hat wir können gewisse Strukturen auch mal in Frage stellen, sie sind nicht das Non Plus Ultra. Es geht vor allen Dingen darum wie Touring anders gedacht werden kann: Muss man als Haus immer sagen: "Ich möchte die Premiere und dann darf niemand anderes in meinem Bundesland dieses Stück zeigen" und dass man vielleicht auch andere Strukturen ermöglicht, die viel mehr verknüpft sind mit längeren Aufenthalten wo man auch Spielt- Residenz – Spielt – Residenz

Mei.: also es geht dann um strukturelle Veränderungen im Sektor?

Ma.: Das wäre der Wunsch. Was der BUZZ machen kann, ist Diskurse anregen und Diskussionsräume öffnen und einladen. Er hat kulturpolitisch noch nicht so eine starke Stimme, nur im solidarischen Verbund der freien Szene der darstellenden Künste. Da sind wir aber auch ein Verein der neu dazugekommen ist, der vielleicht eine Minorität innerhalb der darstellenden Künste darstellt, andere Genres sind viel größer. Es ist ein bisschen strategisch. Aber was ich glaube wir gut können ist innerhalb der Circusszene zu stärken dass man darüber spricht und der Wissenstransfer stattfindet. Ganz niederschwellig. Dass man nicht erst die riesige 100000 € Förderung hat und dann mal kurz was zum Thema Nachhaltigkeit macht.

Mei.: Was ist dein persönlicher Bezug zu Nachhaltigkeit?

Ma.: Für mich ist das eine Bewegung die ganz stark in der Generation jetzt wieder gekommen ist. Es hat mich beeindruckt in Berlin mitzuerleben wie groß Fridays for Future wurde und wie sichtbar das auf einmal war dass es eben doch ein Thema von Generationen ist. Es ist in Deutschland schwierig, da wir so ein altes Land werden, dieses Thema bei Wahlen präsent zu halten. Und dadurch, dass ich so viel in Nordeuropa bin hat es mich schon beschäftigt und bewegt dass zum Beispiel Greta [Tunberg] so eine Figur ist die super präsent ist und wir denken "Schweden, wow, cool, da ist Greta", aber Greta war ja eben nicht zufrieden mit Schweden und die Klimaziele werden eben nicht erreicht. Und in diesem Paradox einen Mittelweg zu finden dass man nicht alles nur aufs Individuum stellt. Aber das Gefühl dass mich sehr beschäftigt hat, und wo es absolut eine Anbindung zum Circus gibt, ist zu lernen, wie man mit Ressourcen in einem Ökosystem umgeht. Gerade weil ich finde dass Circus ganz oft in minimalistischen Räumen gearbeitet hat wo er Werkzeuge geschaffen hat die Kreisläufe bilden. Als Praktik. Ich habe Einnahmen weil ich etwas spiele aber damit finanziere ich gleichzeitig eine neue Recherche, ein neues Produkt, das vielleicht mehr oder weniger künstlerisch ist, aber ich kann Dinge nochmal verwenden, sie in eine neue Perspektive setzen, anders kombinieren, ich kann etwas auch länger spielen als eine klassische Premiere, dann noch zweimal spielen und dann wird das ganze Bühnenbild eingemottet und taucht nie wieder auf. Da sehe ich auf jeden Fall Anknüpfungspunkte, die mich auch freudig stimmen das innerhalb des Circusses anzugehen.

Mei.: Du beziehst dich ja auf die Sustainable Development Goals der UN. Was ist Nachhaltigkeit für dich? Was ist ökologische Nachhaltigkeit?

Ma.: Aus dem Aspekt, dass die SDGs nicht nur ökologisch sind sondern, sozial, ökonomisch, ökologisch. Manche Aspekte, das war sehr spannend hier im Diskurs im Norden wird darüber geredet ob es nicht noch was viertes gibt: culture/ arts. Weil ganz oft gesagt wird dass es superwichtig ist, damit man Imagination und Kreativität auch vermitteln kann, die ein Hebel ist. Sie kann infrage stellen. Sie muss keine Antworten geben, aber sie kann Prozesse in Gang setzen.

Nachhaltigkeit für mich auch im Zusammenhang mit dem Aktivismus denken, ist es auch wichtig, dass man guckt, dass es sich auch auf andere Bereiche ausweitet. Als z.B. wenn ich mir meinen Arbeitstag angucke. Dass es wichtig ist dass man sagen kann dass man ein Wochenende hat, auch wenn es vielleicht Montag, Dienstag ist. Und bei ökologisch habe ich das Gefühl, es geht natürlich auch um Teil sein von der Umwelt, nicht nur Mensch im Bezug zur Umwelt, sondern wir sind integral Bestandteil und es geht eher um teilen und borgen und nicht immer um den Konsumgedanken, der sich oft einschleicht in unser Lebensgefühl.

Mei.: Wie hängen die Nachhaltigkeiten (wirtschaftlich, sozial und ökologisch) zusammen?

Ma.: Ja, sie hängen zusammen. Es strahlt alles vielleicht in verschiedene Richtungen aus, aber sie haben ja alle Überschneidungspunkte im Kern, also in mir. Es geht darum wie fühle ich mich und dass man trotzdem mit seiner Verkörperlichung arbeitet, dass man nicht einfach ignorieren kann was den Körper beschäftigt oder wie es ihm geht. Ich glaube dass das Formen sind die eher im zeitgenössischen Circus auftreten und die man sonst vielleicht ignoriert, aber das heißt ja nicht, dass es nicht da ist. Und man muss über den ganzen Habitus und die Routine erstmal ganz viel sensibilisieren. Die UNESCO hat eigene Ziele für den Kultursektor formuliert, aber was bedeutet es eben, eine Gleichstellung der Geschlechter, ein nicht binäres Denken im Kunstsektor, wie setzt man das um? Und wenn man sich dieses Ziel setzt, welche der STGs gehören dazu? Da kommen dann Ökologie, Ökonomie und Soziales zusammen.

Mei.: Hast du Material/ Erhebungen darüber, was an der artistischen Praxis wie umweltschädlich ist? Kennst du Kompanien die ihre Emissionen analysiert haben?

Ma.: Mein Gefühl ist, und teilweise führt der BUZZ halb valide Studien durch. Gerade hatten wir eine Mitgliederbefragung in der auch zur Nachhaltigkeit abgefragt wurde, wie relevant ist das für dich als Kompanie. Da hat man schon gemerkt dass es ganz oft, allein wenn es darum geht was machst du, dann geht es um tracking, data, statistik. Dass das eine komische Hürde darstellt. Na klar, es ist ein extra Bürokratieaufwand, der manchmal für Kompanien schwierig ist on top zu integrieren. Was ich sehe, auf Deutschland bezogen, arbeiten viele Kompanien auch schon bewusst(er). Wenn man kein Materialschlachten Stück hat, man kann Dinge wieder verwerten, man schmeißt ja auch nicht nach der Produktion das Trapez weg, sondern hat es erst mal für eine Zeit. Yolande Sommer und ihr Kollektiv „Drei Mal Eva“ will eine Untersuchung machen, wenn wir uns die Körper von Artist*innen anschauen, wie passt das eigentlich Trainingsplan mit dem [Menstruations-] Zyklus zusammen und wie kann man es umstellen, dass es nicht gegen den Körper gehen muss, sondern dass man vielleicht andere Rhythmen findet. Und ich glaube z:B die Circus Morsa Produktion thematisiert das inhaltlich, indem sie das Fortschrittsdenken hinterfragen.

Ganz oft vermischt sich im BUZZ viel, da es ja nicht nur Kompanien sind sondern auch Häuser, Festivals und dann ist das erste Thema oft das Haus an sich, die Dämmung, die Heizkosten und vor allem wie die Besucher zur Show kommen. In Berlin nehme ich war (das ist natürlich einfacher in der Metropole als im ländlichen Raum) dass man sagt, bitte kommt mit Öffis, oder es werden carsharing Angebote geschaffen, Angebote für die Öffis mit dem Ticket kombiniert, weil es eben schon einen riesen Faktor ausmacht. Und da kommt es ein bisschen von der Häuserseite. In Gesprächen mit den paar Agenturen die es gibt, Aurora Nova in Berlin und Ute Classen in Aachen, merkt man schon dass ein Umdenken stattfindet, mehr kollaborativ zu denken. Wenn man zum Beispiel total davon überzeugt ist, ein bestimmtes Stück aus Asien nach Europa zu holen um eine Plattform zu bieten, dass man dann versucht auch die Spielorte in der Nachbarschaft anzuschreiben und anfragt, ob wenn die Show schon mal da ist ob es dann im Rahmen der Nachhaltigkeit auch dort spielen könnte. Aber für die tracking tools entsteht es in Deutschland eher aus der Musikbranche und jetzt auch durch Aurora Nova mit der toolbox. Aber die Übersetzung von der Seite von Julie's Bicycle kommt, aber das dauert noch ein bisschen. Da gibt es eine bundesweite Aktion. Der BUZZ ist noch nicht so weit, dass er Checklisten oder so herausgeben könnte. Ich fand es nicht so wichtig, da es das ja auf Englisch gibt, aber bei dem treffen im Januar habe ich schon gemerkt, dass viele Veranstalter eine Sprachbarriere haben und deswegen der Zugang fehlt. Auf der anderen Seite haben sie es auch in

ihren Netzwerken, dass man sich z.B. von Techniker[:in] zu Techniker[:in] austauscht über nachhaltige Praxis.

Mei.: Hast du Beispiele von Kompanien und Artist:innen die konkret Maßnahmen ergreifen?

Ma.: Ich selbst bin gerade natürlich in Schweden. Da gibt es das Baltic Nordic Circus Network und New Horizons, dadurch bin ich zum Beispiel mit Acting for Climate in Austausch gekommen. Die machen zum Beispiel eine Tour mit Fahrrädern und spielen "Bark" outdoor. Dadurch fallen natürlich manche Faktoren weg und statistisch gesehen hat die Show dadurch einen geringeren CO² Ausstoß.

Riksteatern ist ein (halb) staatliches Konstrukt, eine Art touring Dachverband, der aus vielen verschiedenen Vereinen besteht. Die haben auch Maßnahmen getroffen, dass sie, weil sie eben einen nationalen Auftrag haben auch in den nördlichen Regionen trotzdem spielen, das ist ja nicht wirtschaftlich, wird aber durch das solidarische Netzwerk ermöglicht. Dass Produktionen an einem Ort für 20 Leute gezeigt werden und am anderen für 200. Die tracken ihr Touringsystem und sie haben Gastspiele und Eigenproduktionen.

Manche der Maßnahmen sind vielleicht nicht direkt ausreichend, wie zum Beispiel, dass sie Milch durch Hafermilch ersetzt haben, aber sie haben z.B. einen Tourbus der Produktionen zur Verfügung gestellt wird, damit sie nicht innerhalb Schwedens fliegen. Sie haben einen Handlungsplan, der sich durch die verschiedenen Gremien auf das Konstrukt ableitet.

Durch Corona ist natürlich auch das Gefühl fürs digitale gestiegen. Recovery laboratory ist ein multi-art Kollektiv in Helsinki, sie arbeiten mit site specific Stadtspaziergängen. Die Leute kriegen zum Beispiel einen Treffpunkt und eine Karte und entdecken verschiedene Orte oder es wird ein Haus bespielt. Sie machen sich viele Gedanken über die STGs, auch darüber wie sie als Kollektiv arbeiten. Sie passen die Rahmen und Vorgaben an die Menschen an, die im Kollektiv aktiv sind. Dass man z.B. sagen kann "ich brauche das und das" oder "meine Bedürfnisse sind so und so". Dann läuft man nicht so stark die Gefahr zu denken, weil man ein Unternehmen ist müsse man marktwirtschaftlich denken.

Mei.: Weil du eben das mit der Hafermilch angesprochen hast. Es gibt ja ganz viele kleine Sachen, die man machen kann, aber sie sind vielleicht auch nur ein Pflaster auf der Wunde. Deswegen würde mich interessieren, was sind die wichtigsten Schritte die im zeitgenössischen Circus passieren müssten?

Ma.: Persönlich sehe ich es kritisch, die großen Klimawandelfragen auf das Individuum umzulasten. Es isoliert und es regt die Konkurrenz an. Ich mach das, du machst was? Und du noch nicht, du bist schlecht. Das bringt uns nicht weiter. Das 1.5 Grad Ziel zu erreichen erfordert gewaltige Sektoränderungen, die ich eher im strukturellen politischen Machtbereich sehe. Was Änderungen sind, wo ich die Kompetenz des BUZZ durch die Allianzen und solidarischen Netzwerke wachsen sehe sind vor allem die Förderhebel. Wenn in der Förderung Bedingungen stehen, wann Ausgaben abrechenbar sind, vor Reisen muss man sich an Regularien halten, die irgendwann festgelegt wurden, das billigste Angebot, die schnellste Reise, zwischendurch private Aufenthalte sind schwierig. Wenn man da die ökologische Schablone darüberlegt, passt das nicht. Im Ministerium ist es vielleicht so dass das aus der Perspektive noch nie beleuchtet wurde. Durch die Schaffung von neuen Förderstrukturen haben die Akteure selber ein besseres Sprachrohr und werden mehr gehört.

Hier sehe ich eher den Handlungsbedarf. Im Kulturfördersektor allgemein. Ganz oft beschäftigt mich, woher der Zwang zum Konsum kommt und wie man die Suchthebel umschalten oder neu anpassen könnte.

Mei.: Z.B. Förderungen müssten den Erfolg eines Projekts nach anderen Kriterien bewerten?

Ma.: Zum Beispiel. Ganz oft bei Projektförderungen muss das Ergebnis eine fertige Produktion sein. Dass heißt von null bis tourfertig und weltweit gebucht werden möchten. Das sind Vorgaben die oft für Theater im öffentlichen Raum und besonders Circus nicht passen. Sie entsprechen dem Duktus aus dem Stadt- und Staatstheater. Dort hat man eine Bühne, acht Wochen Probe und in der neunten ist Premiere. Dann geht das nächste Stück los. Theater will natürlich auch gerne touren, aber das ist nicht genau das strukturelle Format. Also die qualitativen Kriterien und was förderfähig ist. Wie hoch man wertet wenn jemand sagt ich toure ganz bewusst viel langsamer, mache dazwischen Pausen, aber das ist trotzdem Tourzeit! Es gibt Formate die jetzt miterfunden werden, Publikumsgespräche, vor-Ort-Kooperationen, das lässt sich integrieren. (es ist natürlich zwischen Deutschland und Schweden ein bisschen unterschiedlich).

Mei.: Bei meinem Praktikum beim Circus Fährway in der Schweiz wurde die Theorie geäußert, dass vor allem Kreation gefördert wird, aber kein Touring, was dazu führt dass ganz viele Sachen kreiert werden und dann kaum gespielt. Stimmt das mit deiner Erfahrung überein?

Ma.: In Deutschland gibt es ja kein Kulturministerium, sondern das ist bei Wirtschaft untergeordnet, zusammen mit Medien und Games. Das ist natürlich ein komisches Mischverhältnis mit unterschiedlichen Anforderungen, die dann natürlich in Konkurrenz stehen um den plan der gefördert wird. Ich würde schon sagen, dass es neuerdings, vor allem vom Dachverband Tanz, Kreativtransfer Förderungen gibt. Das fördert ganz bewusst Distribution. Touring, nicht die Tour an sich, aber was dahin führt: Präsenz auf Messen, Zu Festivals zu fahren um Kontakte zu knüpfen... Das ist Arbeit, die monetär nie abgleichbar war. Diese Förderung gibt es jetzt und es wird auch explizit zeitgenössischer Circus genannt. Die Festivals auch Relevanz auf dem internationalen Festivalkalender haben, auch wenn es sehr kleine Festivals und Messen sind im Vergleich. Das deutsche System, dass Kultur Ländersache ist, ist total gemein für Touring. Du brauchst immer Geld von der Stadt, dem Bundesland in dem du eine Show spielst. Dafür bräuchten wir mehr Agenturen und Producer. Das sind ganz oft die Sachen die wenn Kompanien es selber machen... Woher soll die Kompetenz kommen wenn nicht aus Erfahrung. In Schweden wird Touring schon mitgefördert, vor allem durch das Riksteater-System. Dadurch dass sie ganz stark kulturellen Zugang für Kinder und Erwachsene fördern, wird viel produziert mit dem man dann viel touren kann, für junges Publikum. Das spielt dann viel vor Schulen. In Deutschland gibt es sehr viel Stadt- und Staatstheater, die wollen aber keine Gastspiele. Dann denkst du dir "oh, das ist so schwierig, ich komm nie ins Theater in München". Aber man muss sichtbar machen dass die Freie Szene eigentlich in anderen Netzwerken arbeitet.

Ich habe vom BNCM Meeting mitgenommen, es war ein Bisschen ein Generationenclash. Viele junge, aufstrebende Künstler und die Hosts/ Producer sind eher etablierte 40/ 50ger Generation. Wir haben darüber gesprochen dass Künstler oft das Gefühl haben, sie müssen gnädig und dankbar sein, dass sie gebucht wurden. Man möchte ja nicht die pingelige Kompanie sein die ganz viele Bedingungen stellt, denn dann landet man gleich auf der schwarzen Liste. Wir haben uns gefragt was es da braucht? Einen Kriterienkatalog oder eine eigene Checkliste? Aber dass man eben auch an die Festivals die fragen stellt: welche ökologischen, nachhaltigen Werte gelten bei euch, bei eurer Spielstätte? Vielleicht ist man die erste Kompanie die fragt, habt ihr schon mal überlegt beim Ticketverkauf Anreise mit dem ÖPNV zu bewerben. Das sind die Andockmomente die man als Kompanie nutzen sollte, aber im Gruppengespräch ging hervor, dass man sich oft vielleicht nicht traut das zu sagen oder Anforderungen zu stellen. Dabei weiß man ja gar nicht, ob das Festival nicht vielleicht schon so arbeitet. Beim Berlin Circus Festival merke ich, ganz viel ist nicht so explizit. Das hat auch Vorteile dann kommt nicht das Gefühl von Greenwashing auf. Aber sie sind mit dem Ort verankert, sind aber sensibel dafür, dass sie Teil der Bookingstrategie sind und wie sie aufbrechen können das manche Stücke und Kreierenden nicht sichtbar sind. Ich finde es cool, dass sie sich Gedanken machen, anstatt das einfach mitzumachen.