



TRANS EUROPE HALLES

GET RESEARCH: LITERATURE REVIEW & INTERVIEWS

OCAD UNIVERSITY • MACLURE, S. & SUDDICK, J.

**THE GOOD ENOUGH
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1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis can be considered as one of the most devastating emergencies of the 21st century. The world is experiencing severe rises in temperature, extreme weather events, disruption to ecosystems, poor air quality, and mass biodiversity loss. These new conditions heighten pre-existing social and economic inequities and are affecting vulnerable communities worldwide. The call for a green transition is important now more than ever. This refers to the social, political, ecological, and technological transformation to environmentally sustainable practices. It is an interdisciplinary phenomenon that extends beyond the physical and requires innovation, changes in attitudes, local engagement, national efforts, and inter-governmental collaboration (Bennett, 2017).

The Good Enough Transformation (GET) is on a mission to uncover immediately accessible green transformations for communities around the globe through local engagement, public programming, grassroots initiatives, urban planning, art, landscape and architectural design, as well as other socially and ecologically conscious practices. Supported by the Nordisk Kulturfond, GET is a community of practice made up of academics, architects, designers, cultural institutions, and grassroots organizations from around the world. This includes Culturans (Mexico), RTDA Studio (France and Morocco), Tamadia (Burkina Faso), Gardens of the Future (Cyprus), Borneo Laboratory (Malaysia), OCAD U Global Centre for Climate Action (Canada), Institute for (X) (Denmark), and Le Plus Petit Cirque Du Monde (France). These 9 participating organizations around the globe are joining forces to achieve this common goal.

Current nationally-led climate efforts are proving to be insufficient in the ecological transition (see appendix). Given this reality, GET recognizes the power of community-based initiatives as influential catalysts for change. The existing literature indicates that local communities stand out as significant agents able to generate tremendous impact. Essential for the green transition at the micro level, communities are home to an indispensable archive of local knowledge specific to their geographies and heritage. These

alternative knowledge systems that have been notoriously overlooked in the past are indispensable for ensuring a sustainable future. Although they lack the capabilities of spreading large-scale transition, the culmination of local efforts across the globe enacts what is considered a ‘good enough transformation.’ This involves engaging local communities, providing low-cost resolutions, and adopting creativity and traditional knowledge to transform the environment into resilient spaces.

The following literature review draws on academic and peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, NGO reports, and grey literature when appropriate. This literature review is deigned overview of practices being adopted around the globe. It is divided into the following sections; (1) Environmental Policy, (2) Community-Based Initiative & Grassroots Organization, (3) Arts & Culture For Affective Impact, (4) Indigenous Knowledge, Local Knowledge & Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and (5) Vernacular Architecture & Design.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental Policy

On December 12th 2015, 196 parties met in Le Bourget, France at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to sign the Paris Climate Agreement. It is the most recent legally binding international treaty on climate change put into effect on November 4th 2016. The treaty calls for countries to hold the increase in global average temperature well below 2°C and pursue efforts to cap warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (Hafdaoui et al., 2024). To accomplish this, governments must submit Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) outlining their post-2020 climate action. Nevertheless, current international trajectories, as reported by the INDCs, are not on track to meet the below 2°C requirement. Rogelj et al. (2016) find that although the INDCs collectively lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to where current policies stand, it still implies a median warning of 2.6°C - 3.1°C by 2100. To stay below the 2°C target, further national, sub-national and non-state action is desperately needed in the coming decade to prepare for a worldwide transformation of development pathways (Climate Change Performance Index, 2022; Rogelj et al., 2016).

The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an independent tracking tool for monitoring countries’ environmental policies and actions. The CCPI publishes a publicly available annual report detailing each country’s sustainability standing. It is a powerful device to hold governments accountable, provide transparency, and encourage greater climate efforts (Climate Change Performance Index, 2022). 63 countries plus the EU are evaluated through 14 indicators to determine their climate action performance. The CCPI finds that even if all countries performed as well as the current global leaders, efforts would still be insufficient to avert the disconcerting impacts of climate change. The first three overall positions in the CCPI ranking remain empty as no country is performing well enough to achieve the common goal of net neutrality by 2050. All countries involved in the GET project, except Burkina Faso, are included in the CCPI’s evaluation and rank as follows:

Denmark 4th, Morocco 9th, European Union (27) 16th, France 37th, Mexico 38th, Cypress 42nd, Malaysia 59th, and Canada 62nd.

Community-Based Initiative & Grassroots Organization

The Role of Communities

The GET recognizes community-based initiatives (CBIs) and grassroots organizations as key players in climate change adaptation and the green transition. There is overwhelming consensus throughout the literature that bottom-up and community-led efforts play an indispensable role in environmental action and sustainable development. Scholars consistently agree that we must improve engagement with communities (Simon et al., 2019) and further encourage their ability to mobilize and be leaders of sustainability. Simon et al. (2019) investigated Common Unity Project Aotearoa, a community engagement project for climate change adaptation in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The goal of the project is to “enable people to engage with climate adaptation and mitigation in simple and everyday ways that promote holistic and collective well-being.” Participants described that learning how to reduce consumption and waste found to be an overall positive experience and empowered them to try other sustainable habits. Similarly, Forino et al. (2018) find from their interviews with representatives from community-based initiatives in New South Wales, Australia, that local sustainability action promotes greater climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Rudge (2021) finds through a survey of 57 community-based organizations in New York City that they are an integral part of climate change adaptation planning and play an important role in spreading knowledge, increasing awareness, advocating during interactions with governments, and building grassroots coalitions. McNamara et al.’s evaluation of 32 community-based adaptation initiatives across 20 rural communities in the Pacific Islands finds that locally-led adaptation strategies are crucial for climate change adaptation and notes the need for a praxis shift whereby adaptation is locally driven. There is uncertainty surrounding whether such initiatives possess long-term capacities, but it is identified that through the integration of local knowledge and resources, community-based approaches may be

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better “future-proofed” (McNamara et al., 2020) given that climate change impacts are highly context-specific (Archer et al., 2014). Simon et al. (2019) and Reid and Huq (2014) argue that while not as influential as a single large initiative, these types of small changes can be recognized as customs that reshape social and economic structure within communities and the environment. If similar local efforts are replicated globally, there is potential to sanction a more successful green transition than the current status quo.

CBIs have realized that climate change concerns need to be integrated with other pressing everyday issues. Climate change and related activities have become less about specific targets and more about drawing the link to other areas of concern (Forino et al., 2018). This is especially true in the African context given the accelerated rate of threats of global warming (Mannke, 2011) combined with the high level of developmental challenges. Community-based initiatives in global south countries must, in tandem with the ecological transition, tackle widespread social and economic issues (Mannke, 2011). In addition, poor countries are often beginning at a disadvantage including low GDP, lack of education, poor infrastructure & technology, weak healthcare, political/armed conflicts, gender violence etc. These nations are faced with the dilemma of reconciling sustainability goals with developmental challenges which often require an increased use of resources and energy. The use of sources that enhance development without generating pollution appears to be one of the appropriate responses to these conflicting interests (Dalelo, 2011). For instance, Dalelo recognizes the tremendous renewable energy potential in Ethiopia that is greatly underused. In a pilot project in 2004, solar panels were introduced in 11 schools to address climate change and development issues. In addition to tapping into the country’s bountiful solar energy, the schools were able to increase the quality of education, including climate change education. The newfound electricity allowed teachers to work past sunset and create lesson plans and enabled greater access to educational media. It further acted as a central hub for social gathering and became a reliable phone and electronic device charging station. A big challenge, however, was the high turnover rate among teachers due to unfavourable working conditions. Although this was an overall successful project, it still does not bring climate change education to the

public in a way that will cause influential systemic change (Dalelo, 2011). Nevertheless, it provides a strong example of a diversity of issues that can be addressed through environmentally sustainable methods.

The Role of Governments

In their review of 128 publications on community-based climate change adaptations, McNamara et al. (2016) find that such local efforts need to be supported through a coordinated response by all levels of government. Forino et al.'s (2018) research finds that community-government relationships are usually judged as positive, given these initiatives find it difficult to operate without City Council's support. Although these relationships are broadly seen as positive, they are not conflict with some research participants noting the disputes that emerged with local governments (Forino et al., 2018). Similarly, Rudge's (2021) study of community-based organizations in New York City finds that numerous examples were offered outlining the relationship with government agencies as both antagonistic and collaborative. All organizations interviewed were able to describe municipal, state, and federal programs that provide physical resources and legislative support for their work. City Councils is found to sometimes underestimate the value that local communities and the informal institutions they create can bring to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (Forino et al., 2018). Rudge (2021) agrees that community-based organizations are an integral part of climate adaptation planning, and governments need to ameliorate their engagement pathways to improve the inclusivity of participatory processes.

Arts & Culture for Affective Impact

There is overwhelming consensus among scholars that people must amass affective knowledge to achieve behavioural changes. This refers to the knowledge that organically occurs through feelings and emotions. Cognitive understanding simply does not suffice to make the drastic transformations that are needed to socially mobilize and address the climate crisis. Affective knowledge and emotions in climate change communication play an indispensable role in shaping perception, decision-making and inspiring action. Affective knowledge is, without

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question, a necessary mechanism for changes in pro-environmental behaviour (Sommer et al., 2019). It is impossible to alter cultural attitudes and adopt the required sustainable practices for the green transition without being personally engaged (Dalelo, 2011). Art and creative practices hold a tremendous capacity to break down complicated scientific information into more comprehensible ideas which subsequently provoke both cognition and emotion, thereby catalyzing individual behaviour and grassroots movements (Sommer et al., 2019). The use of art fosters the necessary motivation that triggers relational and behavioural changes towards sustainability (Rodriguez-Labajos, 2022) otherwise known as affective knowledge.

Xavier Cortada's "The Underwater" in Miami, Florida is one of many public art projects that catalyze environmental conversation and social change. It is a permanent interactive art installation that began as "The Underwater Homeowners Association" where residents used an app developed by Florida International University's GIS Center to find their home's elevation above sea level and installed a site-specific banner with the according number. The success of The Underwater HOA granted its expansion across all 287 parks in Miami-Dade County with the implementation of 3D elevated concrete sculpture indicating the potential sea level rise. This public art installation along with projects such as Olafur Eliasson's and Minik Rosing's "Ice Watch" in Copenhagen from 2014 and Michael Pinsky's "Plunge" in London from 2012 are all examples of creative interventions that facilitate change, by disrupting the urban landscape to offer a space of reflection and strengthen a sense of group identity among the visitors of the artwork (Sommer et al., 2019). Emphasizing and promoting arts and culture is an effective and important strategy to increase awareness and engagement with the climate crisis among communities and needs to be more commonly adopted as an education tool with the demonstrated ability to effect change.

Indigenous Knowledge, Local Knowledge & Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Definitions

There is no internationally accepted definition of

indigenous people (Petzold et al., 2020) despite the term being widely used in various social, political and economic discussions. The fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identifies indigenous groups' characteristics including region or geography, culture and social identity, common ancestors, or institutions separate from the dominant society (Petzold et al., 2020). The United Nations defines Indigenous people as “descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived” (United Nations, n.d.). Given the diversity of Indigenous people, the UN outlines a criteria through which these communities can be better understood: “(1) Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member, (2) Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, (3) Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources, (4) Distinct social, economic or political systems, (5) Distinct language, culture and beliefs, (6) Form non-dominant groups of society, (7) Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.”

Indigenous Knowledge, as defined by the United States National Park Services, is a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed by Tribes and Indigenous Peoples through interaction and experience with the environment (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2024). It is a vehicle through which the principles of Indigenous worldviews, beliefs, traditions, practices, and institutions are transmitted and put into practice. It is characteristically local in scale, transmitted orally, collectively owned, holistic in perspective, and adaptive in nature (Philip, 2015).

Traditional Ecological Knowledge is a subset of Indigenous knowledge that refers to the ongoing accumulation of knowledge, practice and belief about the relationship of living beings with one another, the environment, and its ecosystems as a result of direct contact with nature (Alexander et al., 2011; Dudgeon & Berkes, 2003). It is constantly developing and has been passed down generationally over hundreds and thousands of years. This knowledge includes the relationships between people, plants, animals, spirituality, the timing of natural events, agriculture, hunting, fishing, and all to do with life-sustaining

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practices (Alexander et al., 2011; U.S. Department of the Interior, 2024). The definition often cited in literature is that of Firket Berkes who describes it as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (1999).

Similarly, *Local Knowledge* is the aggregation of a group of peoples' individual experiences demonstrating a clear trajectory but not yet tested over time. The time-testing of local knowledge eventually evolves into Traditional Ecological Knowledge (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2024). Although it has now been acknowledged by international organizations such as the UN and the IPCC, Archer et al. (2014) indicate that community-based adaptation is very relevant given that climate change impacts are highly context-specific and should therefore be informed by local knowledge and experience.

Non-Western Knowledge Systems & The Green Transition

Over the past decade, evidence consistently indicates that local and indigenous knowledge greatly contributes to climate change adaptation (Alexander et al., 2011; Naess, 2012; Petzold et al., 2020) find that indigenous knowledge supplies complementary details about global warming and the ecological crisis and has value in identifying patterns in areas with limited records. The contribution of local and indigenous knowledge provides a multidimensional sense of the impacts of global warming by contextualizing these changes in the human landscape, particularly in vulnerable groups (Alexander et al., 2011; Naess, 2012). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic were recognized in the early literature as possessing local adaptation expertise, as a result of having adapted to changes in their ecological systems. This local expertise was acknowledged as an integral component for informing future adaptation efforts in the context of climate change (Berkes & Jolly, 2001; Riedlinger & Berkes, 2001). It has been understood for decades that local knowledge should be better integrated with Western scientific understandings of climate change. This has, for a long

time, been reiterated and reinforced by several other authors, drawing from studies in diverse communities across the globe (Berkes & Jolly, 2001; Riedlinger & Berkes, 2001) but has only recently been established in the fifth assessment report (AR5) of the IPCC (Petzold et al., 2020).

Indigenous knowledge is an indispensable resource for the success of the ecological transition. For centuries, local and indigenous communities have accumulated knowledge of medicine, meteorology, ecology, and agriculture. These ideas are heavily embedded in language and are often transmitted orally through storytelling (United Nations, 2019). For instance, Bemba spoken in North-East Zambia names all 12 months after climactic and livelihood events to ensure that the environmental knowledge and human relationship to nature is passed down. February is called “Kabengelekakalamba,” which implies heavy rains when water courses begin to overflow, while May, “Kapepo kanono,” denotes a period of mild coldness (Kasali, 2011). Similarly, the people of Luapula province known for their prowess as fishermen depend on their astrological knowledge embedded in language. Stars are used to navigate the journey from the main camp to the location where nets are dropped and back. Each star appears at a different time of night and is given a local name and used as a clock (Kasali, 2011). It is critical to preserve indigenous and local languages as it carries information essential for the green transition, especially since there is seldom a written record of these accounts. In recognition of this threat of erasure, there has been recent scientific evidence corroborating the indigenous knowledge that has been accumulated over the generations which grants it greater legitimacy for Western ideologies that have infamously ignored indigenous methods. For instance, outbreaks of flying insects in Tanzania have always signaled a poor harvest due to erratic rainfall or drought. While this has been a widely known phenomenon in the community for generations, science has recently confirmed that migratory birds and insects have genetic triggers that respond to photoperiod and weather patterns. Scientists now understand there is a high possibility that plants and insects have reproduction cycles that are closely linked to climatic episodes (Kasali, 2011). In a sacred site called Ngombe Ilede in Zambia, elders will touch the rock formation to check its temperature and forecast the drought or normal rainfall for the

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coming season. Currently, scientists are using sea-surface temperature levels to predict El Niño (Kasali, 2011). Similarly, the local indicators of the visibility of stars used in the Andes to predict El Niño can also be scientifically proven in more recent years (Naess, 2012).

Impact of Colonialism on Indigenous People & Culture

Historically, there have been notorious colonial efforts to erase indigenous language and culture, particularly in North America with the introduction of residential and government schools. As a result, there is an entire generation who lacks this pivotal knowledge and will be ill-equipped to pass it down the oral traditions. In preparing for the great environmental challenges ahead, fostering a better understanding of traditional methods and find ways to strengthen Indigenous people and culture to avoid the risk of losing this knowledge forever is imperative. Indigenous Peoples must be empowered to lead and inform the development and implementation of social and physical devices taking place on their land. It is also important to recognize that there is tremendous diversity within the word “Indigenous,” and can look drastically different across a single country. In Canada alone, there are 93 First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities spread across 6 geographic areas. In addition, contemporary Indigenous peoples may live far from their ancestral homelands and indeed may form new communities rooted in urban centres rather than traditional lands (Parrott, 2007). Reflecting this nuance and diversity when engaging with Indigenous people is crucially required when applying such traditional knowledge systems and methods in community-based adaptation for the green transition.

Vernacular Architecture & Design

Vernacular architecture is closely related to traditional and indigenous knowledge and is correspondingly a vital tool for sustainability and the green transition. It is built on practices that have been used for centuries and are deeply embedded in a community's culture and identity. Vernacular architecture provides sustainability and resilience by using local materials, traditional construction methods, and centuries of knowledge. Structures are built to withstand and thrive in the condition of the local climate resulting in the lowest levels of emissions and high energy

efficiency (UNDP, 2023). There is further consensus among researchers that vernacular architecture is a proven model for sustainability and essential to the green transition. Ozorhon and Ozorhon (2020) and Songel (2020) add that because the architecture is heavily dependent on the land and its materials, nearly every milieu has developed building techniques suited to the local conditions and available resources. As a result, there is a strong emphasis on making the most out of a limited number of materials. The sustainable practices of vernacular architecture arise from the need of human beings to survive with the available resources in their environment and make wise use of materials to reach optimal performance (Mahmoud, 2016; Songel, 2020). Vegas et al. (2022) state that vernacular architecture is “the result of knowledge developed over centuries seeking to adapt to natural surroundings, geographical conditions and the climate of a specific location while optimizing available resources to satisfy specific needs.” As such, architecture will look vastly different from one region to another not only due to the differing climates and accessibility to resources, but the cultural diversity that exists across the globe. There is a powerful social component embedded in the process that extends beyond the advantages of the physical infrastructure. It fosters collective decision-making and social cohesion empowering the preservation of heritage and cultural identity (UNDP, 2023). Mahmoud (2016) and Vegas et al. (2022) find that vernacular architecture represents the human impulse to establish a cultural connection to the environment and contributes to the formation of the identity of a country, region or place.

One of the most recognizable forms of vernacular architecture is the igloo which has been used by arctic communities for centuries and is so closely tied to culture and identity. Although it is no longer a common dwelling, Inuit communities in northern Canada have a long history of building igloos as temporary dwellings while travelling (Zhen et al., 2021) and are known to use whalebone or metal to construct the large blocks of snow (Gadacz, 2020). Zhen et al. (2021) conducted a study in Harbin, China evaluating the igloo's parameters as an arctic shelter. The study finds that the median indoor temperature is around 4°C higher than the ambient temperature because the properties of ice allow the cold air to fall to the ground and hot air to rise thus maintaining a stable temperature within the chamber. Ice is a

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powerful insulator and the walls promote the storage of heat while also acting as a solid wind barrier. In contrast, hot arid regions have been using brick as a primary construction material. As outlined by Salman (2019), this ancient resource was set to fit a human being's hand and was convenient for constructing walls and piers. To address the roofing problem, builders often complied with the brick's characteristics by forming domes and arches. Since then, these shapes have gained symbolic meaning beyond their function and serve as a regional cultural identity (Salman, 2019).

The Kaline House on Læsø an island off the mainland of Denmark, is another strong example of vernacular architecture. Built in 1865 (Brownell, 2013), the roof is constructed of the seaweed found in the area which is renewable, non-flammable, resistant to insect attacks, absorbs carbon dioxide and only little energy is used for extraction and processing. The timber obtained to build these types of homes were often related to shipwrecks and is described as a “very poor and simple dwelling, built of locally available materials” (Eybye, 2020). Kaline House, as a result, has an extremely low ecological footprint and provides suitable living conditions.

The success and continued implementation of vernacular architecture is unquestionably dependent on the transmission of indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge. There has been an increasing decline in vernacular architecture (Ozorhon & Ozorhon, 2020) which is certainly correlated to the deterioration of these aforementioned alternative knowledge systems. Vegas et al. (2022) argue that the heritage of vernacular architecture is “under threat from possible natural, social and anthropic disasters which could result in material loss and a process of abandonment, as well as a loss of associated knowledge and of valorization, as observed for many decades.” Continued efforts to preserve and promote the use of vernacular architecture is a keystone to the green transition and a sustainable future.

Conclusion

Climate change, global warming, and the ecological crisis are among the most urgent challenges facing the world today. Without significant change, the future promises worsening climate impacts, including extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and mass displacement. Achieving carbon neutrality by

2050, as set by the Paris Agreement, is essential—yet no country is currently on track. Research, though limited, increasingly points to the power of arts and culture—including participatory and community-based practices—as effective tools in driving climate action. These practices can inform, inspire, and mobilize change. Governments must support, not hinder, local and creative climate initiatives, working alongside communities that bring crucial, place-based knowledge. Indigenous perspectives and traditional practices, such as vernacular architecture, must also be included for a more holistic and resilient transition. Community engagement plays a key role in awareness, adaptation, and disaster-risk reduction.

This literature review highlights the urgent need for more research into the cultural dimensions of the green transition. Still, the current lack of scholarship should not prevent communities from acting. Creative, grassroots initiatives can be quickly mobilized and may offer more agility than government-led responses. The GET Project sees impact not in a single effort, but in the collective momentum of many small actions. Through collaboration, creativity, and shared commitment, a sustainable future is within reach.

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3. METHODOLOGY

Phase one of the research (desk research before the test beds) was conducted at OCAD University's Global Centre for Climate. Guided by the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), the study emphasizes collaborative learning and knowledge exchange with communities directly impacted by the issues at hand. Specifically, it follows the cyclical model of PAR, which views knowledge production as an iterative process rather than a linear one (Common Good Awareness Project, 2015). This approach fosters reciprocal dialogue between researchers and participants, allowing for more nuanced insights to emerge through shared reflection and discussion.

All participants involved hold leadership roles within their respective organizations. Although the original research design aimed to include broader community voices, time constraints imposed by the TEH initiative limited our ability to conduct interviews beyond organizational representatives. Nevertheless, the collaborative nature of PAR positions these participants as co-researchers, recognizing the value of their lived experience and contributions. True to the action-oriented aims of PAR, this study seeks to surface practical responses and alternative approaches informed by those actively working to address environmental and social (European Council Council of the European Union, 2024c).

To understand how GET partner organizations are tackling the ecological crisis, we conducted virtual interviews ranging from 60 to 90 minutes. These interviews prioritized participants' personal experiences and perspectives while seeking concrete strategies and responses. A semi-structured interview format allowed for both consistency and adaptability, with guiding questions shared ahead of time. Participants were encouraged to expand on these prompts and introduce additional themes they found relevant, allowing for a more holistic and layered understanding of their work. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed. This paper presents findings from the first phase of the broader GET research project, which unfolds in three stages: (1) interviews, (2) site visits, and (3)

a roundtable discussion. As of fall 2024, this report marks the completion of Phase 1 and serves as a midpoint reflection that will inform the subsequent stages still in progress.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The initiatives undertaken by the GET consortium highlight the impactful role of creative approaches in advancing climate action and fostering environmental resilience. These locally rooted projects illustrate how arts and culture can serve as powerful platforms for resistance and collective mobilization toward change. The participating organizations have produced notable outcomes, effectively bridging divides between tradition and innovation, grassroots communities and global frameworks, as well as artistic expression and pragmatic intervention. These achievements are evident in a range of outcomes including artistic installations, performances, urban space transformations, and meaningful community engagement.

Mobilization of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Sector

Borneo Laboratory (Malaysia), founded and directed by architect, curator, and researcher Wendy Teo, functions as a creative agency described as a “mind factory” that fosters both critical reflection and decisive action (Borneo Laboratory, 2024). Rooted in ancestral knowledge and indigenous cultural practices, the Lab employs regenerative methodologies to establish a “multidisciplinary platform for the experimentation of aesthetics that emphasizes collaboration and open dialogue” through both research and curatorial work (Borneo Laboratory, 2024). While the organization initially faced obstacles, it has since cultivated a more cooperative dynamic with governmental bodies, positioning itself as a key advocate for the public good. Teo has remarked that their engagement with traditional and ancestral knowledge systems has gained increasing recognition at the local level, highlighting its cultural and intellectual significance. Moreover, the Lab emphasizes the broader applicability of its work, particularly in illustrating the global significance of local issues within post-colonial tropical contexts (W. Teo, personal communication, July 25, 2024).

Culturans (Mexico) is a non-profit organization

committed to safeguarding cultural heritage while simultaneously advancing creativity and environmental sustainability. In response to contemporary ecological challenges, the organization seeks to bridge tradition and innovation, promoting artistic practices that are deeply rooted in cultural identity (Culturans, 2024). Central to its work is a distinctive methodology known as the “creative citizens approach,” which Fran Erazo, Head of Development, defines as “a way to take the tools of arts and culture and offer them to local communities so they can not only understand the challenges they face, but also co-create solutions, and test, show, inspire, and advocate for [local] sustainable change” (F. Erazo, personal communication, July 8, 2024). According to Erazo, this approach has successfully engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including scientific institutions, grassroots communities, governmental bodies, and international partners (F. Erazo, personal communication, July 8, 2024). Through these collaborations, Culturans has contributed to the strengthening of global cooperation networks, notably through its involvement with transnational initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus Laboratory (NEB Lab) in the Americas.

RTDA Studio is a multidisciplinary studio specializing in architecture, scenography, and design, founded by Amine Slimani and operating between Paris and Casablanca. The studio centers its practice on sustainable urban regeneration, with a strong emphasis on community involvement and the preservation of architectural heritage (RTDA STUDIO, 2024). According to Slimani, the lasting impact of their work depends on the capacity of local communities to take ownership of and maintain the projects over time (A. Slimani, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Rather than delivering externally imposed solutions, RTDA positions itself as a facilitator of long-term, community-driven change. Slimani notes that the studio’s involvement intentionally diminishes as local stakeholders assume full responsibility, thereby reinforcing the sustainability and resilience of the initiatives (A. Slimani, personal communication, July 11, 2024).

Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde PPCM (France) functions as both a circus school and a community-based laboratory, integrating artistic, urban, and social initiatives to foster collective well-being and cultural enrichment. According to Director

Eleférios Kechagioglou, the organization’s 28-meter circus tents exemplify sustainable construction practices, serving as a “manifest[ation]” of ecological responsibility: “no cement, there is no concrete” and the structures are built using “very simple material” (E. Kechagioglou, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Another illustration of this commitment is the “High School Before the High School” project, which creatively repurposes shipping containers as building elements. Kechagioglou highlights how these unconventional architectural choices aim to provoke critical dialogue around public housing and the reuse of overlooked urban spaces (E. Kechagioglou, personal communication, July 11, 2024). In terms of programming, Mathilde Lajarrige, responsible for artistic development, cites the “Out of the Blue” circus production as a notable example. The show extended its impact beyond the performance itself, prompting conversations about sustainability and water conservation (M. Lajarrige, personal communication, July 4, 2024). Lajarrige explains that “[PPCM] did a lot of cultural action outside of the show. [They] worked with professors in schools, [who] really developed the thematics in their classes afterwards” (M. Lajarrige, personal communication, July 4, 2024). As a result of these initiatives, PPCM has formally integrated sustainability into its mission, reinforcing its dedication to environmentally conscious cultural practice.

Tamadia (Burkina Faso) actively contests the perception of culture as a dispensable component of national development. By convening artists, musicians, dancers, and storytellers, the organization facilitates cultural exchange on both local and international levels. Founder and choreographer Aguibou Bougobali Sanou highlights the innovative nature and achievements of their farm initiative, which has successfully cultivated 30,000 pineapple trees. This project exemplifies the integration of agriculture, ecological stewardship, and the arts within a multifunctional space that supports research, sustainability, and the potential for eco-tourism (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). Tamadia’s most prominent initiative, the *In and Out Dance Festival*, has attracted more than 10,000 participants. The festival not only gathers artists and policymakers but also employs dance as a medium for promoting social transformation and strengthening community bonds. Through this platform, Tamadia underscores the critical role of culture as a vital

repository of knowledge and a catalyst for societal resilience (Compagnie TAMADIA, n.d.).

Institut for X (Denmark) actively pursues the development of green neighborhoods by drawing on diverse fields such as event management, cultural entrepreneurship, landscape gardening, and engineering. One of the organization's most notable achievements is its flourishing food garden. Independent artist, researcher, and herbalist Liene Jurgelane remarks, "We have a beautiful food garden that actually makes a lot of food that I think is a huge success. It's the 4th season of that garden." The garden not only yields substantial produce but also incorporates sustainable techniques, including composting. Jurgelane highlights the garden's impact on the urban landscape, describing it as a "green lung" amidst surrounding concrete structures (L. Jurgelane, personal communication, September 23, 2024). This tangible embodiment of ecological practice has contributed to heightened community involvement and awareness, inspiring residents to engage in additional sustainability efforts, such as building a greenhouse for seed propagation. According to Jurgelane, a key element of the organization's effectiveness lies in its responsiveness to community needs, enabling it to adapt and grow alongside those it serves—an approach that has been essential to the enduring success of its initiatives (L. Jurgelane, personal communication, September 23, 2024).

Gardens of the Future (Cyprus) redefines traditional gardening by transforming it into a dynamic platform for innovation, social cohesion, and environmental engagement. Through the creative use of upcycled materials and the design of individualized garden spaces, the initiative encourages communities to reimagine urban environments with a focus on sustainability and meaningful social interaction. Lead architect Natasa Christou characterizes the gardens as "a place where people can gather, share a meal, share a conversation, share a laugh, and maybe even share a life." These spaces function as inclusive environments that transcend socio-economic and cultural divisions, fostering interaction between often disconnected groups, including parliamentarians and individuals experiencing homelessness (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024). The organization's innovative model has received national and international acclaim, with support from prominent institutions such as the United Nations

and the World Bank Group. Christou reflects that such recognition has elevated their profile, stating it has positioned them as "pioneers of the country on sustainable development," thereby expanding their influence and reach on a global level (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

OCAD University, Canada's oldest and largest art and design institution, contributes to the green transition through its research projects, including *DESIGNwith Lab* and the *Global Centre for Climate Action (GCCA)*. Led by researcher and designer Rane Lee, DESIGNwith "cultivates a space where innovation, creativity, and collaboration thrive" (DESIGNwith, 2024). The lab creates sustainable, zero-waste solutions by transforming found materials into commercial, sellable products in museums, galleries, and shopping malls. Through their hands-on workshops, the lab teaches participants to adopt circular design principles in their personal and professional lives. The Lab works with women in Regent Park, an immigrant and low-income neighbourhood in Toronto, who are incredible designers and craftspeople. Lee notes the profound impact of this collaboration, "I saw how proud the women were[...] to see their work displayed in a gallery," revealing a symbiosis between empowering marginalized communities and environmental resilience (R. Lee, personal communication, July 9, 2024).

The Global Centre for Climate Action (GCCA) serves as a dynamic hub for artists, designers, and scholars committed to fostering cultural communities, developing artistic projects, curating exhibitions, and advancing a global network dedicated to creative climate engagement. Founding Director Sarita Srivastava underscores the significance of the Centre's very formation, stating that "simply the act of creating a space, a forum, or a moment for people to think about how art and design and other kinds of research can come together with climate action is a powerful statement all on its own." She further explains that "the most powerful thing that we've done so far is simply to assert that [art and design for climate action] is a thing, because people don't think of those things in the same sentence." For Srivastava, the value of art lies in its unique capacity to engage the imagination and emotions, arguing that "the imagination, the visual, the emotional can move people in more dramatic ways. [...] Art has a really important role,

whether that's literature, whether that's film. In the first wave of the environmental movement that people were really moved by things like books, and actors, things that they connect to" (S. Srivastava, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

Associate Director Ian Clarke similarly highlights the transformative power of the arts, asserting that art and visual culture can be "more transformative to people than all the data, and the evidence, and the studies" (I. Clarke, personal communication, July 4, 2024). He also draws attention to the broader systemic changes required to support meaningful climate action, stating, "we really have to start talking about things like restructuring our economy completely to be a zero-growth economy for consumption and focus on human well-being and happiness and not economic throughput." Clarke's remarks underscore the necessity of aligning creative climate approaches with structural economic reform and the principles of a circular economy (I. Clarke, personal communication, July 4, 2024).

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Circular economy practices emerged as a prominent and recurring theme across the interviews, revealing the integral role creative industries can play in fostering sustainable production and consumption models. *DESIGNwith Lab*, located in a repurposed storefront within Toronto's Eaton Centre, exemplifies this commitment. The space itself is constructed using salvaged materials—doors and windows sourced from a former Ann Taylor store and lighting fixtures recovered from The Disney Store. Among its key initiatives is a sneaker workshop where participants are guided through the process of constructing custom sneaker prototypes using reclaimed fabrics and soles. This hands-on experience offers the public a tangible introduction to circular economy principles. Lab founder Ranee Lee explains that the goal is to "Come in and learn, to make [something] themselves, and be able to upcycle it. [...] People can't really understand what circular economy is until they actually make things and learn it on a hands-on level." She further describes this pedagogical model as "democratizing design" (R. Lee, personal communication, July 9, 2024). In collaboration with the Power Plant, a contemporary art museum in Toronto, *DESIGNwith Lab* also transformed obsolete

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marketing banners into functional products—such as bags, wallets, and pouches—available for sale in the museum's gift shop. This initiative exemplifies how discarded materials can be reimaged as commercial and aesthetic objects, reinforcing circular principles in unconventional spaces.

Similarly, *Gardens of the Future* (Cyprus) advances ecological sustainability through its focus on urban agriculture, emphasizing water conservation, composting, and energy efficiency. The initiative fosters a local food-sharing community and continuously develops new methods to upcycle materials, even in the face of resource scarcity. For Natasa Christou, this scarcity becomes a catalyst for innovation: "the essence of sustainability is to make something from nothing. I think the fact that we lack resources [makes] us very resourceful and sustainable. So, I don't consider it a bad thing to lack resources" (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024). By prioritizing a "recycle-reuse-reduce" approach, the organization underscores the creative potential embedded in material constraints, consistently turning organic and non-organic waste into productive resources, such as compost.

Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (France) also shared its attempt to incorporate circular economy practices into artistic production through its performance *Out of the Blue*, an aquatic circus show. The project aimed to recycle the water used during the performance and donate it to municipal services such as the fire department or city hall. However, logistical and financial barriers—particularly the high costs of transporting and treating the water—ultimately prevented collaboration, and the water was discarded. Despite the outcome, this effort reflects the organization's commitment to sustainability and highlights the critical need for adequate infrastructure and institutional support to make such circular systems viable.

Collectively, these examples demonstrate how creative industries are not only sites of cultural production but also laboratories for sustainable innovation. Even when faced with operational limitations, these initiatives underscore the potential of artistic and design practices to lead systemic change through adaptive reuse, community engagement, and the imaginative reconfiguration of waste.

Funding, Resources, and Structural Configuration

A recurring theme across all interviews is the critical shortage of resources, with financial constraints emerging as the most commonly cited obstacle to organizational success. Sarita Srivastava (Canada) plainly states that “[the GCCA] doesn’t have enough money” (S. Srivastava, personal communication, July 29, 2024), while Rane Lee from DESIGNwith (Canada) echoes this sentiment, remarking, “I need another generous donor” (R. Lee, personal communication, July 9, 2024). Fran Erazo of Culturans (Mexico) similarly identifies funding as the principal challenge: “the most significant barrier is for sure the economic one” (F. Erazo, personal communication, July 8, 2024). At Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (France), Director Eleférios Kechagioglou observes, “we need stronger financial resources, we fundraise every day almost” (E. Kechagioglou, personal communication, July 11, 2024), while Mathilde Lajarrige elaborates on the organization’s dependence on grants and external contributions. She highlights the time-intensive nature of writing grant proposals and pursuing funders, noting the lack of certainty around securing ongoing support (M. Lajarrige, personal communication, July 4, 2024).

One major repercussion of these financial limitations is the scarcity of human resources. Lajarrige explains that in such underfunded environments, staff are often required to fulfill multiple roles, with one individual performing the work of two or three people. This model, while born of necessity, results in overextension, burnout, and a compromised ability to deliver on organizational missions (M. Lajarrige, personal communication, July 4, 2024).

The dependency on external funding sources also introduces challenges to organizational autonomy. Ian Clarke (Canada) expresses concern over the influence donors and grant-making bodies may exert, often advancing their own priorities. He notes, “those who have money tend to want to protect the structures that provided them with their wealth, which is generally what climate advocacy and projects are actively trying to destroy” (I. Clarke, personal communication, July 4, 2024). This tension underscores the complexity of sustaining climate-related cultural work in systems not fully aligned with transformative goals.

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Given the extensive financial, temporal, and human resources required for climate-oriented creative initiatives, several interviewees emphasize the need for broader systemic change and collective engagement. Clarke cautions against searching for a singular solution, suggesting instead that “there might be universal values that could be applied or methodologies or approaches more than things” (I. Clarke, personal communication, July 4, 2024). Aguibou Bougobali Sanou (Burkina Faso) emphasizes the ethical foundations of climate action—grounded in humanity, civility, and care for others and the planet (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). Srivastava (Canada) advocates for a renewed “collective spirit,” while Natasa Christou (Cyprus) stresses the need to shift perspectives and learn from the natural world: “allow nature to become our teacher” (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

Though the political, economic, and environmental contexts differ, all interviewees converge on a shared understanding: there is no single path forward. However, an urgent recognition of the climate crisis, and a coordinated response rooted in creativity, respect, and mutual care, is essential for achieving a just and sustainable future.

Government, Policy, and Bureaucratic Barriers

A persistent challenge identified across the GET consortium is the absence of robust policy and governmental support for creative, community-driven, and grassroots climate initiatives. Although interviewees did not reference any specific policies or regulations, there is a widespread perception that both local and national policy environments are largely unsupportive. The experimental and imaginative practices at the core of many of these initiatives often stand in contrast to static bureaucratic structures, creating friction that hinders progress. As a result, considerable time and energy must be diverted away from project development and redirected toward overcoming institutional barriers. Srivastava (GCCA, Canada) captures this strain, noting, “a lot of our resources are going simply towards navigating the regulations of the city” (S. Srivastava, personal communication, July 29, 2024). Similarly, Liene Jurgelane from Institut for X (Denmark) reflects on the burden of engaging with policy processes: “it

requires a lot of unpaid political lobbying work. We are not politicians, lawyers, not even scholars. We come from different educational backgrounds and so it's actually quite demanding to keep the finger on the pulse, to make sure that we are not bulldozed under the mainstream ideas of how things should be" (L. Jurgelane, personal communication, September 23, 2024).

This disconnect between creative communities and government frameworks is further echoed by Erazo (Mexico), who observes that "the green transition is too reliant on government intervention" (F. Erazo, personal communication, July 8, 2024). Amine Slimani (Morocco) articulates a similar detachment, stating that in Casablanca, "the link between politics and our work is totally inexistent [and so] we prefer being under the radar, for example, we never ask for anything" (A. Slimani, personal communication, July 11, 2024). This sentiment is embodied by Institut for X's informal motto: "do, and then ask for permission." As Jurgelane explains, "if we ask permission first, the answer will always be no. The policies in place are mainly unfavourable for these kinds of practices" (L. Jurgelane, personal communication, September 23, 2024).

Among the few exceptions, GET organizations based in Paris reported comparatively more positive experiences. Mathilde Lajarrige from PPCM credits a relatively supportive municipal environment under the city's communist leadership, yet also emphasizes that such support overlooks the extensive, often invisible demands placed on small organizations: "it's not taking into account the reality of what it cost us. It's forgetting about the hidden parts of the iceberg" (M. Lajarrige, personal communication, July 4, 2024). Slimani, while acknowledging the strength of France's heritage preservation policies, points to the sluggish pace of policy execution. "Once we are connected, things are very long. We have to prove that we're doing things the way they want it to be done," he explains, emphasizing the compromises necessary to navigate bureaucratic systems (A. Slimani, personal communication, July 11, 2024).

Only two organizations, Tamadia (Burkina Faso) and Gardens of the Future (Cyprus), offered fully positive reflections on governmental policy. Bougobali Sanou (Burkina Faso) praised recent shifts under President Captain Ibrahim Traoré, noting that "the

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"The current lack of integration between governmental frameworks and creative grassroots efforts continues to pose a significant obstacle to the green transition."

government, for the first time, [has] made some action" in support of cultural and environmental efforts (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). Likewise, Christou highlighted successful collaborations with the European Union and international partners as instrumental to Gardens of the Future's operations (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

However, broader environmental performance metrics cast doubt on the long-term efficacy of these policy frameworks. In Cyprus, experts describe existing strategies as lacking ambition, with continued dependence on fossil fuels and inadequate planning for future climate scenarios (Climate Change Performance Index, 2024). Burkina Faso, while experiencing a shift in political will, remains among the world's most climate-vulnerable nations. Although responsible for only 0.08% of global emissions, it ranks extremely high on climate risk indicators (Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, 2021). This discrepancy between local policy progress and global climate projections suggests that the isolated successes of some GET organizations are unlikely to offset the broader structural deficiencies.

Taken together, these findings highlight the urgent need for more adaptive and responsive policy environments. The current lack of integration between governmental frameworks and creative grassroots efforts continues to pose a significant obstacle to the green transition. While isolated examples of positive collaboration exist, they remain exceptions rather than the rule. For community-based climate innovation to thrive, greater institutional recognition, policy flexibility, and long-term investment are required. Only through coordinated, context-sensitive approaches can the full potential of the creative industries be mobilized to confront the climate emergency.

Indigenous and Intergenerational Knowledge

Insights from interviews with representatives of the *GCCA* (Canada), *Tamadia* (Burkina Faso), *Culturans* (Mexico), and *Borneo Laboratory* (Malaysia) underscore the foundational role of Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems in advancing sustainable futures. Rather than being viewed as antiquated or peripheral, these knowledge systems

offer dynamic, context-specific approaches to ecological and social challenges that contemporary Western models often struggle to address.

Importantly, Indigenous knowledge constitutes a form of social innovation—not because it is newly created, but because it remains largely unrecognized or undervalued within dominant Western paradigms. Its perceived novelty stems from the disruption it poses to colonial epistemologies. Ian Clarke (Canada) articulates this clearly, noting that many of these approaches are “actually not new, but they seem new because we haven’t been doing them for 150 years in the Global North” (I. Clarke, personal communication, July 4, 2024). Embedded in centuries of lived experience, these practices encompass deep understandings of medicine, agriculture, ecology, and meteorology—systems that have endured precisely because of their relevance and adaptability.

Colonial histories, however, have systematically attempted to erase Indigenous languages, traditions, and forms of knowledge. This erasure has not only weakened cultural identity in many communities but also disrupted the intergenerational transfer of ecological wisdom—often passed down orally. Wendy Teo, founder of *Borneo Laboratory* (Malaysia), emphasizes that the country is still working to overcome the long-term impacts of colonialism, which include a significant disconnection from ancestral knowledge. In response, Borneo Laboratory centers its work on designing immersive, creative experiences that help to reintegrate traditional wisdom into contemporary life (W. Teo, personal communication, July 25, 2024). One of their key projects, *The Lain Lain Project*, foregrounds the crafts and practices of Bornean communities, aiming “to preserve ancestral wisdom in the face of eroding traditions” and to explore how these rooted practices can establish wider global connections (Borneo Laboratory, 2024). The concept of *Berjalai*, a cultural notion of engaging with the land and world, underpins their work and reinforces the idea of knowledge as relational, place-based, and spiritually embedded.

Similarly, *Culturans* (Mexico) draws on local agricultural traditions to envision more sustainable urban futures. Their *Chinampas project* engages with the ancient Aztec system of floating gardens in Xochimilco, offering a powerful example of how traditional ecological knowledge can inform

“...cultural heritage becomes both a tool and a lens for future-oriented thinking.”

contemporary urban sustainability strategies. These methods, still practiced by local farmers, serve as living proof of ecological ingenuity and resilience. As the organization notes, its mission is to “imagin[e] sustainable cities and green solutions based on community and nature—using tradition, art and science together with a local and global community of practice” (Culturans, 2024). In this way, cultural heritage becomes both a tool and a lens for future-oriented thinking.

The role of oral and intergenerational knowledge is also emphasized by Aguibou Bougobali Sanou (Burkina Faso), who stresses that, despite external pressures, Indigenous knowledge remains “deeply, deeply, deeply rooted [in Burkinabe culture]” (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). In a country deeply affected by climate vulnerability, such knowledge represents a vital resource for resilience, particularly when formal scientific infrastructure is limited. These cultural epistemologies offer nuanced understandings of local ecologies, rhythms, and needs, many of which are absent from written or institutional sources.

Collectively, these perspectives affirm that Indigenous and intergenerational knowledge systems are not only vital to cultural preservation but also critical to developing climate resilience and sustainable practices. As climate-related challenges intensify globally, integrating these knowledge forms into contemporary frameworks represents both a moral and practical imperative. This integration requires not only recognition but also institutional and structural support to ensure that these systems are preserved, respected, and allowed to evolve. In this sense, Indigenous knowledge emerges not as a relic of the past, but as an innovative, forward-looking resource for environmental and social transformation.

Social Inequities and Limitations of the Global South

Interviews with GET consortium members revealed that organizations operating in the Global South encounter systemic obstacles that significantly impede their ability to pursue sustainable development when compared to their counterparts in the Global North. These challenges span across multiple sectors, including but not

limited to low gross domestic product (GDP), limited educational opportunities, underdeveloped infrastructure, restricted access to technology, fragile healthcare systems, and ongoing political instability or conflict. The “Global South” is a socio-economic and geopolitical term used to describe regions characterized by lower levels of economic development and common challenges such as poverty, inequality, and political marginalization (Dados & Connell, 2012). As a result, these areas must confront the dual challenge of tackling entrenched social and economic disparities while simultaneously pursuing ecological transformation (Mannke, 2011).

Although a comprehensive historical analysis lies beyond the scope of this study, it is essential to recognize that many of the present-day structural limitations in the Global South are a direct legacy of colonialism. The Global North’s hegemonic domination over centuries has left enduring imprints on political, economic, and cultural institutions. These effects remain visible today in the form of persistent developmental inequities. Bougobali Sanou (Burkina Faso) addressed the acute pressures faced by many in his community, emphasizing that basic survival needs frequently outweigh broader environmental objectives. As he explains, “people do not face the same struggle because many are fighting for food. The priority is to be able to eat and take care of themselves” (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). Slimani (Morocco) echoes this reality, stating that “[Moroccans] have other things to think about,” pointing to the difficulty of mobilizing around sustainability when confronted by more immediate socioeconomic threats (A. Slimani, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Similar dynamics are present in Mexico, where Fran Erazo from Culturans highlights entrenched sociopolitical barriers to sustainable development. He cites weak institutional governance, systemic corruption, and the ongoing social transformations following Mexico’s postcolonial transition as significant impediments to long-term ecological planning (F. Erazo, personal communication, July 8, 2024). These structural complexities undermine the implementation of coherent environmental policies and limit the capacity for community-based sustainability efforts to gain institutional traction.

Cyprus presents a distinct yet related case. Christou illustrates how external geopolitical crises—

“...people do not face the same struggle because many are fighting for food. The priority is to be able to eat and take care of themselves.”

such as the wars in Ukraine and between Israel and Palestine—have cascading effects on local sustainability efforts. She noted that Cyprus imports 70% of its cow feed from Ukraine, and the disruption of this supply chain due to war has led to significant food insecurity, further complicating the country’s ability to promote sustainable agricultural practices (L. Christou, personal communication, September 17, 2024). These examples underscore how external and internal pressures—be they political, economic, or environmental—disproportionately impact countries in the Global South and conflict-affected regions, further limiting their ability to innovate and implement sustainable solutions. Such burdens are often less pronounced in Global North contexts, where foundational stability allows for more consistent progress toward climate goals.

Nevertheless, despite these substantial challenges, creative and community-based initiatives across the Global South are forging innovative ways to engage with climate action while addressing the everyday realities of their populations. *Tamadia’s In and Out Dance Festival* in Burkina Faso exemplifies this integration. Operating for over ten years, the festival stages performances in unconventional spaces—including prisons, military camps, public markets, streets, hospitals, and mosques—with the aim of “democrati[zing] dance and mak[ing] it accessible” (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024). These performances function as public platforms to raise awareness about pressing social and environmental issues, often prompting reflective community dialogue. Bougobali Sanou recounted a performance that incorporated a personal conversation with his mother about the 2016 U.S. presidential election to explore wider global implications and the interconnectedness of political events (A. Bougobali Sanou, personal communication, July 23, 2024).

In these contexts, creative expression becomes a conduit for dialogue and reflection on sustainability, particularly where political or social systems may inhibit direct civic engagement. Artistic interventions, such as *Tamadia’s*, allow communities to bridge the tension between immediate survival and long-term sustainability through culturally resonant, participatory practices. This approach reflects the unique potential of arts-based initiatives in the Global South to navigate and negotiate complex social

terrains, demonstrating how creativity can catalyze both individual and collective agency in the face of global ecological challenges.

5. CONCLUSION

The Good Enough Transformation (GET) consortium exemplifies the intersection of creativity, community engagement, and sustainability amidst the global ecological crisis. As the world faces the urgent and growing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and mass displacement, the role of grassroots, community-driven initiatives becomes increasingly vital. While the Paris Agreement aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, no country is currently on track to meet this goal, underscoring the inadequacy of current policies and government actions. These shortfalls highlight the importance of alternative, bottom-up solutions informed by local knowledge systems and creative methodologies.

The GET consortium’s diverse members, spanning regions in the Global North and South, showcase the potential of community-based approaches to tackling climate change and fostering resilience. Particularly in the Global South, where poverty, food insecurity, political instability, and limited resources often impede prioritization of long-term sustainability, creative industries—such as art, design, and cultural practices—are proving essential in addressing both immediate survival needs and broader ecological challenges. While government policies in many regions remain slow, insufficient, and often incompatible with local green initiatives, grassroots projects persist in developing innovative solutions. These initiatives bridge the gap between top-down strategies and local actions, driven by the invaluable knowledge embedded in Indigenous and traditional practices.

The importance of preserving and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems cannot be overstated. These knowledge systems, often suppressed by colonial forces, hold critical insights into environmental management and climate adaptation. In countries like Burkina Faso, Mexico, Malaysia, and Morocco, Indigenous and local practices are playing a central role in creative, culturally rooted sustainability efforts. The GET consortium has consistently called for the recognition of Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems in climate change adaptation and

“The GET consortium has consistently called for the recognition of Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems in climate change adaptation and environmental stewardship.”

environmental stewardship, as these practices offer vital, place-based solutions that complement more conventional strategies.

Research on the cultural dimensions of the green transition is still limited, but the growing body of evidence points to the effectiveness of arts and culture in driving climate action. Participatory and community-based practices can inspire, mobilize, and inform climate solutions, making them invaluable tools in the fight against the climate crisis. However, these efforts need greater recognition, support, and funding from governments and international organizations. Policymakers must integrate arts, culture, and creative approaches into climate action plans, working alongside communities to co-create solutions that draw on local knowledge and cultural heritage.

The GET consortium's experiences underscore the need for increased funding, policy integration, cross-sector collaboration, and the scaling up of successful local initiatives. Governments must support, not hinder, the efforts of creative industries in driving sustainability, recognizing their potential to foster innovation and resilience in the face of global challenges. The collective momentum of many small, community-driven actions can catalyze meaningful change, illustrating the transformative power of creativity, culture, and collaboration in the green transition.

As we move forward, the urgency of the climate crisis demands that we rethink our approaches and place greater emphasis on community-based and creative solutions. By embracing the wisdom of Indigenous and local knowledge, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and providing the necessary support for creative industries, we can create a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

“Participatory and community-based practices can inspire, mobilize, and inform climate solutions, making them invaluable tools in the fight against the climate crisis.”

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