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## Introduction

Ecostage is an initiative founded by industry professionals to share practical and creative approaches to greening up the performing arts. A catalyst for individual and collective transformation, offering a roadmap for everyone at all stages of their eco-journey, it provides multiple routes for change-making.

### Who are Ecostage?

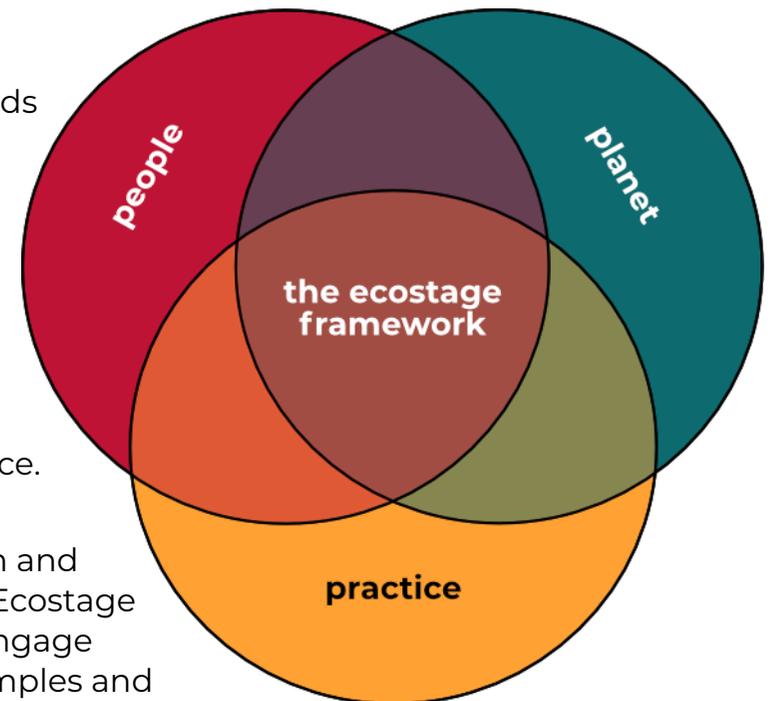
The core team are individually and collectively involved in exploring and promoting sustainable practices. Since launching at COP26, we have been involved in national and international conversations and workshops, including World Stage Design (2022), Prague Quadrennial (2023) and Climate Dramaturgy in the Performing Arts (Thailand, 2024).

Ecostage team members have also been frequent guest lecturers at colleges and universities across the UK, and contributors to the Theatre Green Book and Society of British Theatre Designers Sustainable Materials Guide.

### Spirit of our age

Working alongside existing assessment methods such as the Theatre Green Book or Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools, we offer the Ecostage Framework, rooted in the Seven Ecostage Principles of ecological thinking, which support sustainability, wellbeing and creativity. A planning tool for your projects and/or practice that is both bespoke and holistic, it sits within a new 'triple bottom line' for the arts: people, planet and (creative) practice.

We all have different learning styles, ways of engaging and processing information. To reach and connect with as many people as possible, this Ecostage Framework aims to provide multiple ways to engage with the material, including visualisations, examples and inspiring quotes.



# What does Ecostage offer?

Support for implementing ecological arts practice for creatives	✓
Frameworks to apply sustainable planning to a creative project	✓
Ecological frameworks for the rehearsal room (discussion and implementation)	✓
A social responsibility framework	✓
Wellbeing advice	✓
Quantitative sustainability assessment tools, eg carbon calculators	✗
Qualitative social, environmental and creative assessment of ecological practice	✓
Sustainability assessment certification	✗
Certificate of attendance for Ecostage workshops	✓
The Ecostage Pledge and Stamp to use on your literature	✓
Multiple ways of engaging with greener practices	✓

# How to use the Ecostage framework

The Ecostage framework helps you place ecological thinking at the heart of creative practices by applying user-friendly tools.

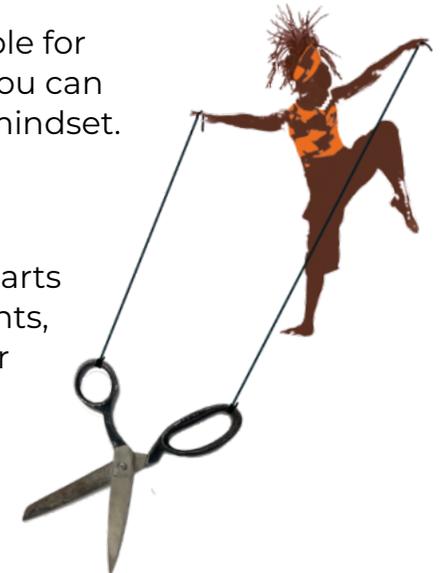
- Learn about the Seven Ecostage Principles and the 7 Rs
- Find the gaps and how the principles support each other.
- Find new opportunities for holistic thinking you might have missed
- Discover how you and your project intersect with your social, cultural and political contexts.
- Discover your spheres of influence

It is most effective if you use it before you start your project, to make sure ecological ideas are embedded throughout. It can, however, also be used to assess a completed project.

Each frame has a scribble-on version suitable for printing at home. Feel free to be creative. You can use the visualisations to get into the right mindset.

## Who is it for?

Ideal for everyone involved in a performing arts production to do together, as well as students, creative practitioners and others. From your studio practice through to large-scale group organisations.



# The Seven Intersecting Ecostage Principles

A set of shared principles that can be used as a framework for a greener practice from the outset, by the whole production team and for personal practice. These interconnected principles highlight the importance of taking collective action to radically reposition the performing arts sector for our ongoing sustainable journey.

*Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.*

- Arundhati Roy, writer



## 1. Implement the 7 Rs

### Principle: Sustainability

*The 7 Rs - A commitment to Reuse, Refuse, Reduce, and Recycle sparks transformative, creative opportunities for the performing arts to Rethink, Reimagine and Regenerate for the collective sustainable journey.*

- Ecostage

- Embed ecological thinking and the 7 Rs from the outset (see diagram on page 8)
- Work towards zero waste (see diagram on page 9)
- Audit usage, track impacts, take action
- Listen to what materials have to say
- Recognise no decision stands on its own

#### A note on language:

'Sustainability' is often used in ways that are unhelpfully broad and ill-defined. The word has also rightfully been criticised for implying there is no need systemic change. We, however, use it to mean the first step towards systemic change; a state of minimal harm from which to build.



## 2. Run the Marathon Not the Sprint

### Principle: Wellbeing

*To slow time down, practice enjoying the moment. It is where we spend our entire lives.*

- Wu Wei, Taoist philosopher, I Ching

- Care for yourself and the team
- Uphold the right to fair pay, safety at work and universal rights
- Go slow to go fast
- Optimise access, inclusivity and equal opportunities for everyone
- Find what makes your eco-heart sing

## 3. Nurture Nature

### Principle: Interconnectivity

*Of all the dangers we face, from climate chaos to nuclear war, none is so great as the deadening of our response.*

- Joanna Macy, activist & scholar of deep ecology

- Acknowledge that humans are inextricably part of Nature's deep 'web of life'
- Recognise environmental personhood, which designates Nature the status of a legal person
- Let Nature nurture, inspire and teach us
- Value co-dwelling on Earth with 'the more than human world'
- Become a custodian of the Living Planet



## 4. Cultivate Co-Creation

### Principle: Creativity

*You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.*

- Maya Angelou, author

- Value creativity and imagination in all forms.
- Engage creativity and play as tools for change, and dream up new possibilities together
- Co-create with Place
- Connect with communities and explore participatory, interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches
- Nurture curiosity, a beginner's mind, joy, awe and wonder



#### A note on language:

Co-creation is often used as a synonym for collaboration but for us it means meaningful engagement with and inclusion of not only artists, participants and audiences, but also Place, and the human and more-than-human communities within which you are working.

## 5. Be a Changemaker

### Principle: Transformation

*Be the change that you wish to see in the world.*  
- Mahatma Gandhi, anti-colonial activist

- Challenge the status quo, and inspire systemic change through advocacy, activism, kindness and a spirit of generosity
- Embrace regenerative culture and create new narratives
- Work towards decentralisation, and celebrate regional and cultural diversity
- Team up to explore collaborative leadership, cross-pollinate ideas, embrace the spirit of learning, and take creative action
- Recognise our spheres of influence are greater than we think

## 6. Grow a Deeper Democracy

### Principle: Inclusivity

I am in the business of narratives and storytelling that counter violent dehumanisation, that build community. My medium for this rehumanisation is the arts – as a space for dialogue, for envisioning, re-imagining, focus.

- Zena Edwards, poet & performer



- Welcome everyone and all parts of everyone, and engage with the complexity of our stories, feelings and dreams
- Foster different styles of engagement, enabling us all to turn up as we are
- Facilitate awareness of the intersectionality of social, climate and environmental justice
- Be proactively inclusive, from making space for quieter voices in the room to inviting in voices that are missing
- Acknowledge the bigger picture and appreciate the small steps

## 7. Build Positive Legacy

### Principle: Regeneration

*Becoming an eco-ancestor brings powerful opportunities to express shared humanity, challenge assumptions, and inspire joy and wonder, dreaming and building solutions for a fair, flourishing, greener future.*

- Ecostage

- *Recognise that, whatever art form, whatever communities we serve, we can shape ecological thinking and contribute to regenerative culture beyond projects*
- *Acknowledge our unique position to take meaningful action at this tipping point in history*
- *Support climate justice and work towards decolonising the arts*
- *Embrace the 'Seventh Generation Principle' and welcome indigenous knowledge*
- *Become an eco-ancestor*



# Follow the three Rs: how green can you go?

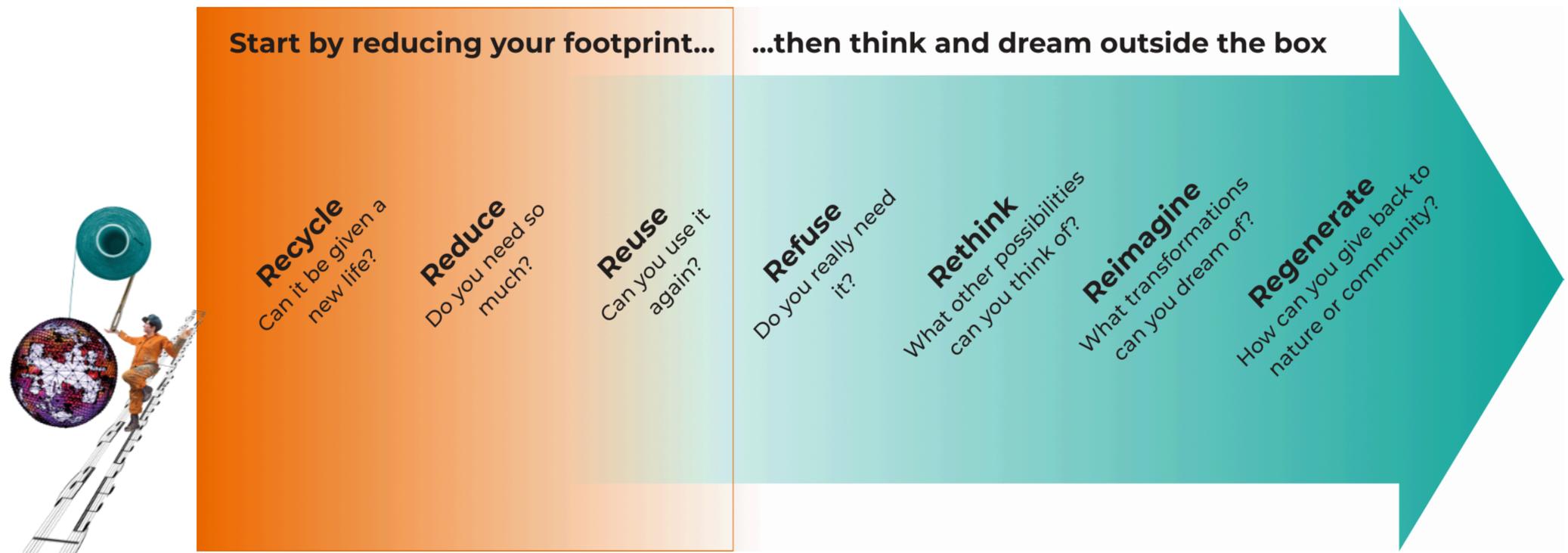
Starting with more familiar actions like Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, and progressing towards more transformative approaches like Refuse, Rethink, Reimagine, and Regenerate, ultimately aiming for a systemic shift towards a greener future.

Use this diagram as a reference and a reminder of the 7Rs, to plot, question and discuss ideas, and to consider next steps.

Think and dream outside the box.

Example: Exploring the reuse of a sleeping bag into a re-imagined garment ([see case study](#))

*"Our house is on fire" - Greta Thunberg*



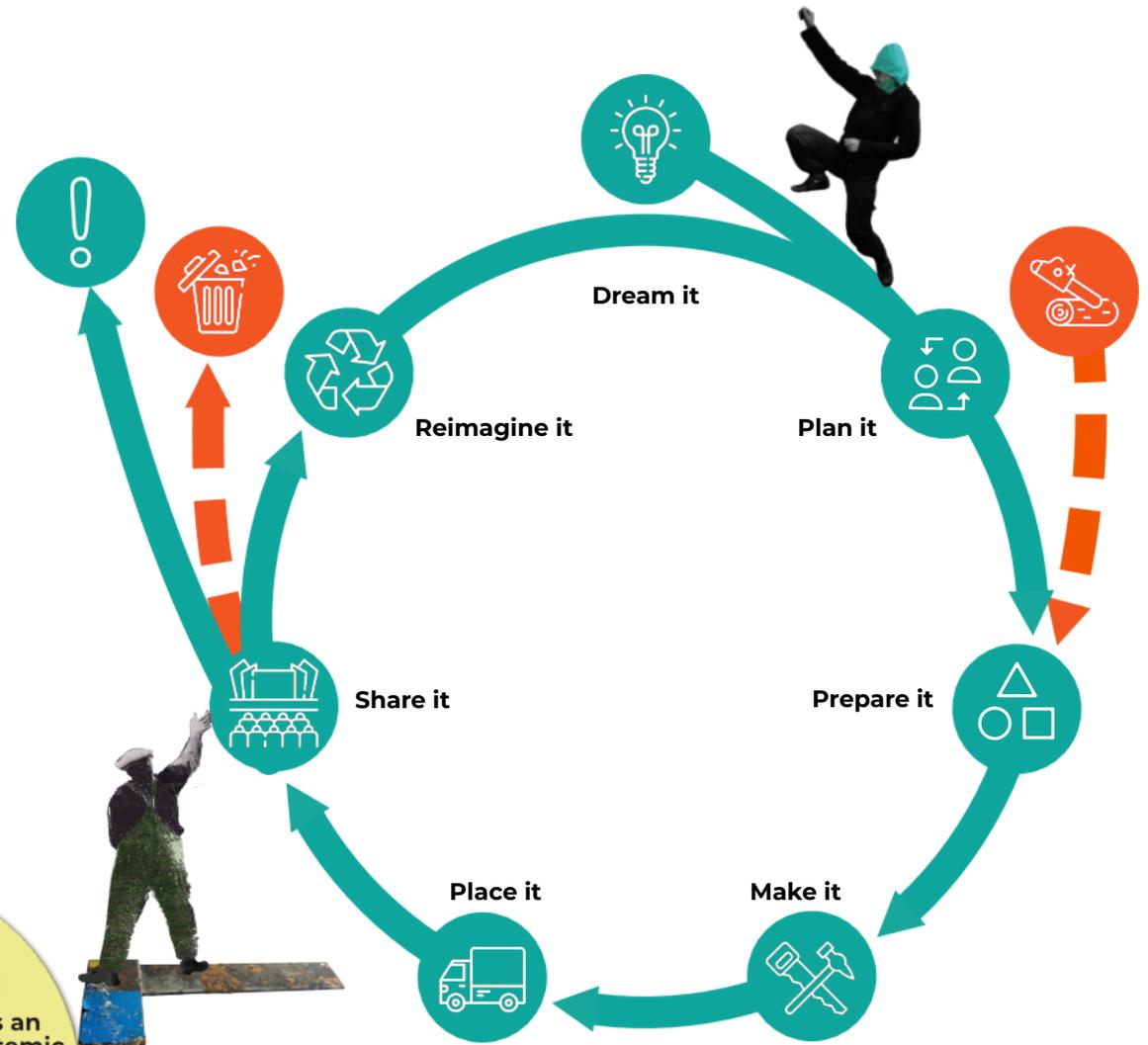
# Embrace circular design

The circular economy sits at the heart of environmental responsibility, and this diagram shows its application to design for performance. The graph illustrates the importance of this underlying approach.

While acknowledging that there will also be some input of new materials, and a limitation of how many times some things can be reused, the aim is always to reuse, with minimal new material inputs and minimal waste.

Instead, the outputs we seek are things like inspiration, community, joy, Nature connection, thoughtfulness and meaning.

**Example:** how can you design a set to be disassembled so that its constituents parts can be reused with minimal waste?



**A note on language:**  
The circular economy is an economic model and systemic approach designed to eliminate waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use at their highest value for as long as possible, while regenerating nature.

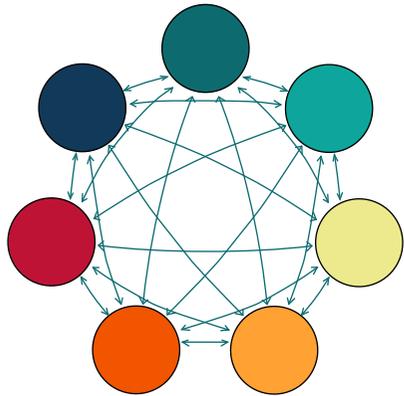
*There is no such things as "away", when we throw something away it must go somewhere.*

- Annie Leonard

# The four frames at a glance

The four frames comprise a project planning tool, although you can also use them for reflection and evaluation, They allow you to put ecological thinking at the heart of the project, right from the very outset.

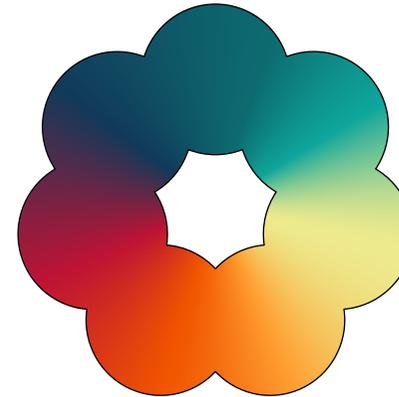
The numbering of the frames is our suggested working order but you don't have to follow it; doing them all at once works well too.



## Frame 1: Intersecting Principles

**Visualisation:** a diverse ecosystem

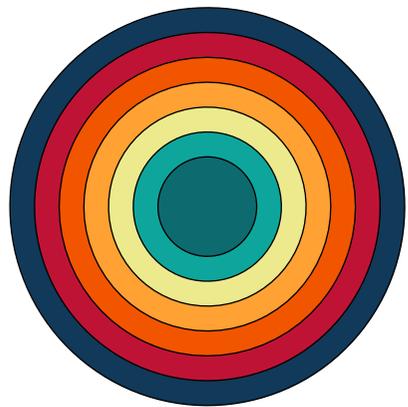
**Aim:** to map how the Seven Ecostage Principles could be present in the project and how they could interconnect



## Frame 3: The Co-creative Cycle

**Visualisation:** the changing seasons

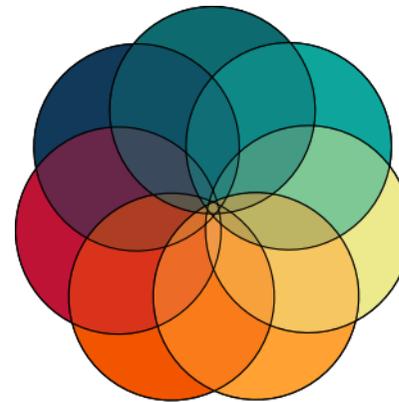
**Aims:** to map your ecological goals against the project's stages of work



## Frame 2: Spheres of Influence

**Visualisation:** a pebble in a pond

**Aim:** to map what influence you could have through the project



## Frame 4: Bringing it together

**Visualisation:** the petals of a flower

**Aims:** to create a statement that sums up your aims and vision



# Frame One: Map your project's ecosystem

*It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.*

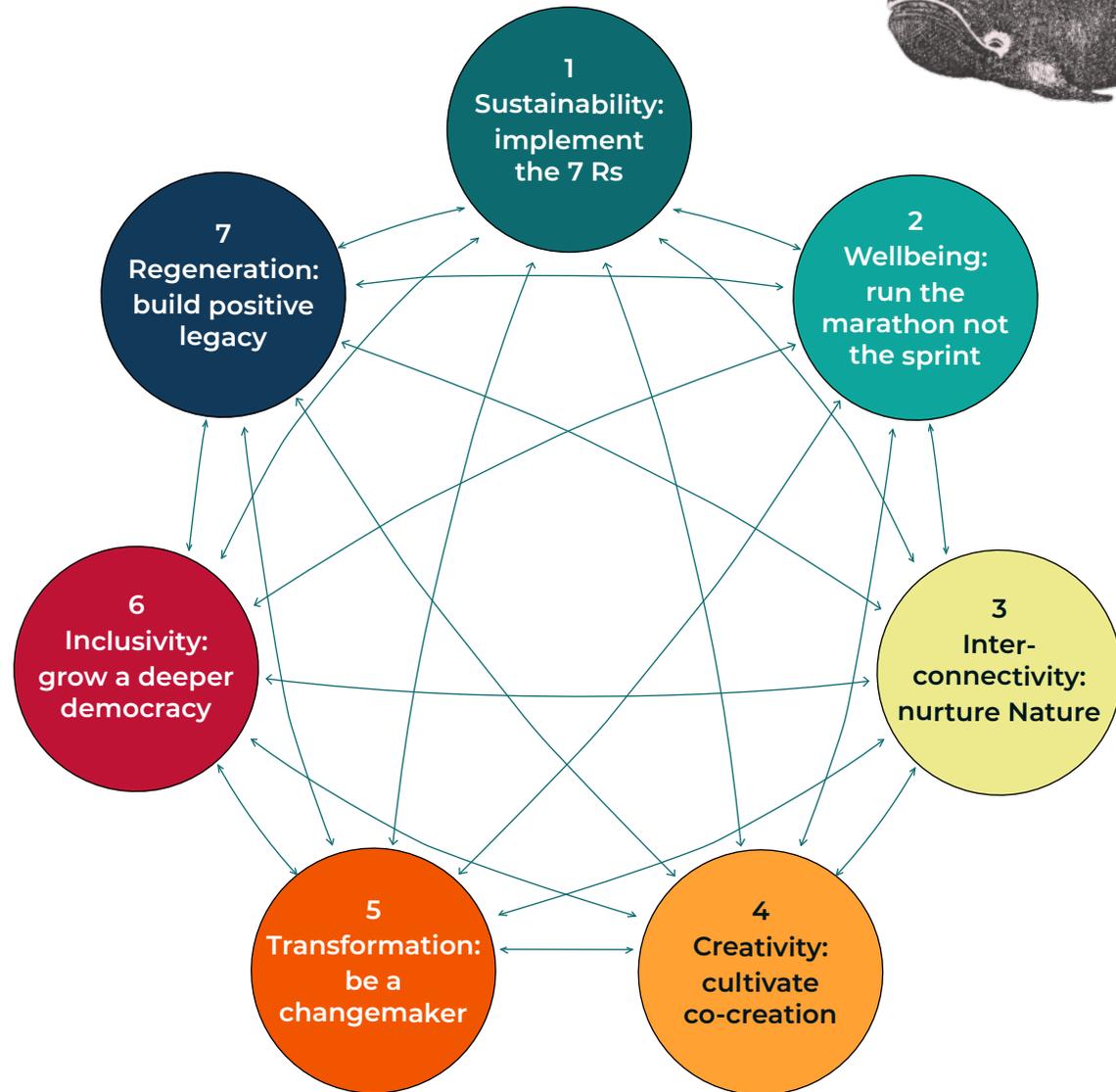
— Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*



## Visualisation exercise:

Imagine a forest bathed in dappled light with branches that reach out, some touching other trees, and with roots that grow deep underground, connecting with mycelium and forming networks. There are many networks, insect and animal trails in the forest and everything is in process of flow/change. Some we can see, feel, hear, smell and touch. Now take a few deep breaths - place yourself in the scene and notice what you notice, and how you and everything is connected.

Note down or draw what you discover.



# Frame One Worksheet: Map your project's ecosystem

## Nurture the interconnections

### How to use this frame

Map out existing and potential networks, and uncover ways for the principles to support and strengthen each other.

Place the existing elements of your project in relation to the principles. Draw connections. Look for nodes where two or more principles connect.

Then think about how to develop the project. What would make it more resilient? Make it flourish? Enable mutual benefit with its wider community? How many more trails, networks and synergies\* can you and your project nurture?

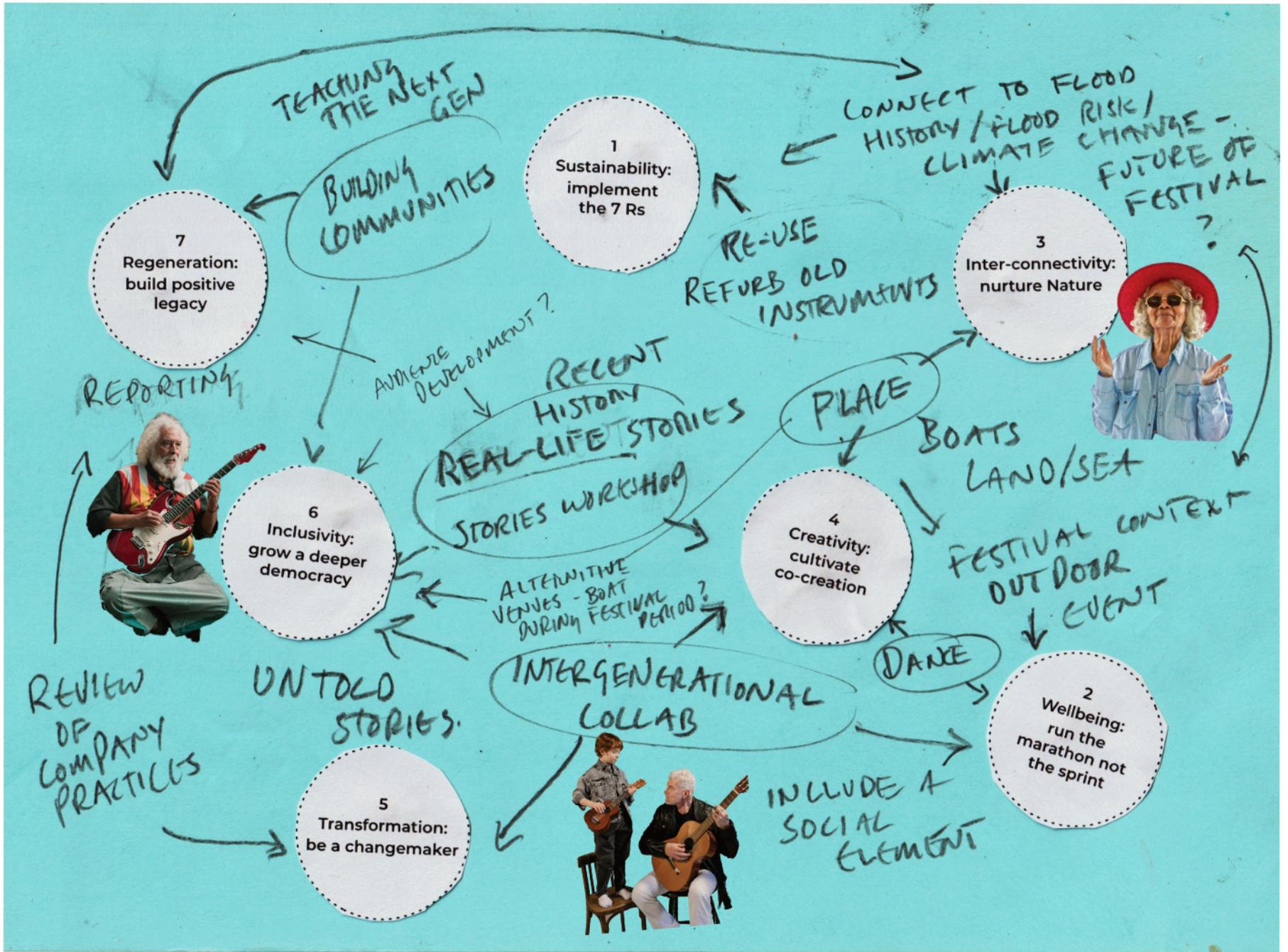
The aim is to ensure all seven principles are part of your project. If any aren't how can you bring them in?

**Example:** Missing principle 6 but lots of connections to principle 3? Develop a strategy to ensure the project's interactions with Nature leave the local community with long-term benefits.

\*The interaction or cooperation of two or more organisations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.



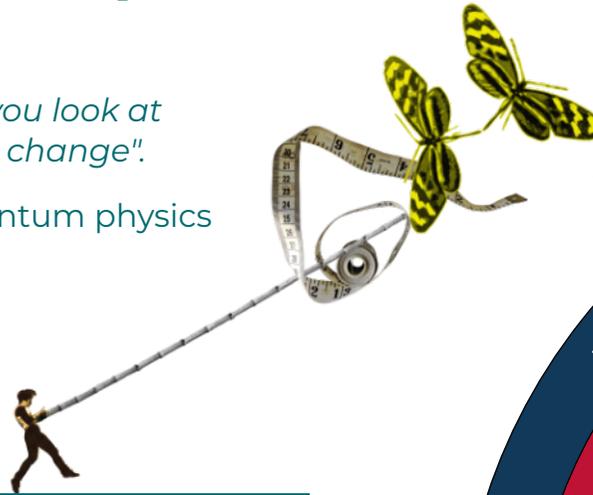
# Frame One Worksheet Example: Map your project's ecosystem



# Frame Two: Our spheres of influence are greater than we think

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change".

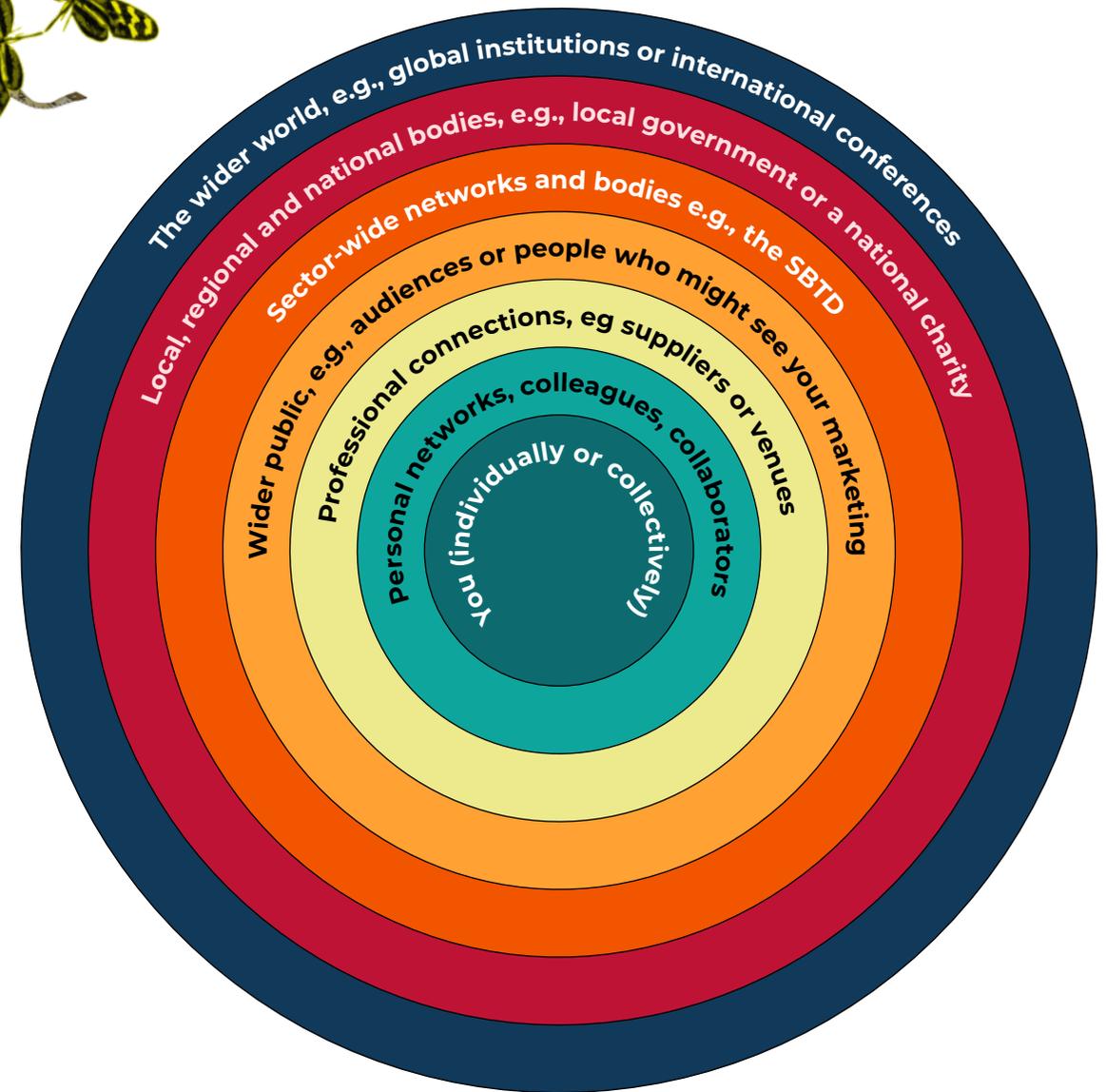
- Max Planck, founder of quantum physics



## Visualisation exercise:

Imagine throwing a pebble into a still pool of water and watching all the ripples flow out from one single action. How does it affect the plants and creatures on the surface? How does it interact with other ripples - perhaps from the wind, perhaps from someone else's stone. And what happens to the stone as it sinks through water. What does it touch on the way down? How does it land on the bottom of the pool? How does it settle? What does it disrupt?

Note down or draw what you discover.



# Frame Two Worksheet: Our spheres of influence are greater than we think

## What are your spheres?

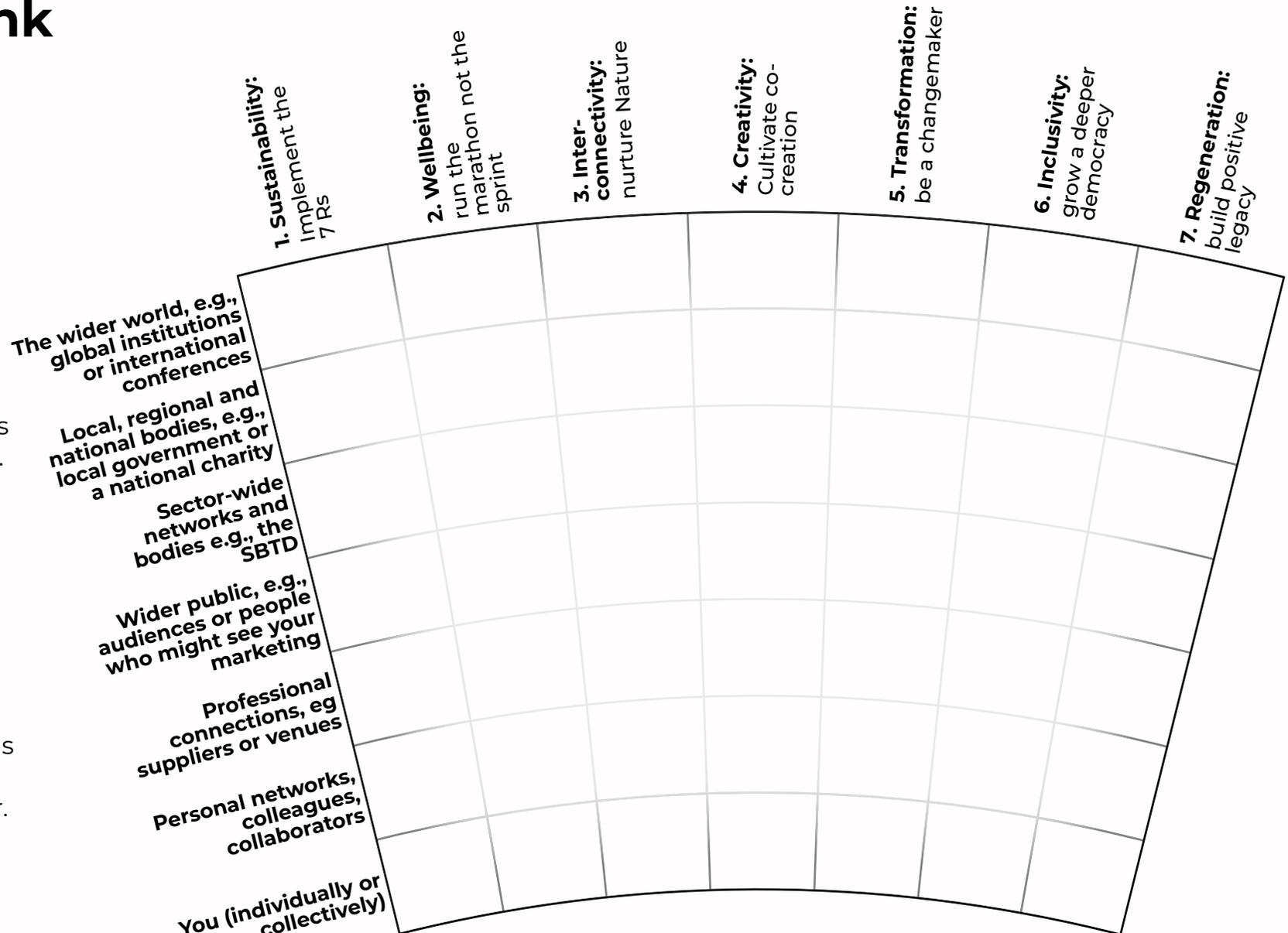
### How to use this frame

Use this frame to map your impact and influence politically, ecologically and socially, and unpack the project's potential positive and negative effects in.

Start by placing elements from Frame 1 on the grid. Add connections and propose new actions to pick up your agency, and make your influence considered and deliberate.

**Example:** share the backstory of how you sourced sustainable items with colleagues, audiences and the sector.

**Suggestion:** In the 'You' row, think about how what you do might change you, too.



Who is the 'pebble'? You, your team? You can do different sheets for different 'pebbles'.

Name of pebble: \_\_\_\_\_

# Frame Two Worksheet Example: Our spheres of influence are greater than we think

**1. Sustainability:** Implement the 7 Rs

**2. Wellbeing:** run the marathon not the sprint

**3. Inter-connectivity:** nurture Nature

**4. Creativity:** Cultivate co-creation

**5. Transformator** be a changemaker

**6. Inclusivity:** grow a deeper democracy

**7. Regeneration:** build positive legacy

The wider world, e.g., global institutions or international conferences

Local, regional and national bodies, e.g., local government or a national charity

Sector-wide networks and bodies e.g., the SBTD

Wider public, e.g., audiences or people who might see your marketing

Professional connections, eg suppliers or venues

Personal networks, colleagues, collaborators

You (individually or collectively)

REPORTING INSTRUMENTS

REAL-LIFE STORIES + CLIMATE AWARDS

MARKETING / CONNECTING AUDIENCES - INTERGEN.

CONNECTIONS THROUGH DANCE ESP INTER-GENERATION

DANCE + SOCIALISING + COMMUNITY

CROSS-CULTURAL ELEMENTS

DEVELOPING AN ECOLOGICAL PRACTICE

DESIGN-NATURAL MATERIAL

OLDER VOICES AT A CITY-WIDE EVENT

Who is the 'pebble'? You, your team? You can do different sheets for different 'pebbles'.  
Name of pebble: CORE CREATIVE TEAM

# Frame Three: The Co-creative Cycle

*What would a practice look like that was daily and carried with it an intention to bring about change in the world? That allowed the stories and the narratives we bring from our lives and the way we see the world together with others, that affected change, and that was ultimately a creative practice?"*

- Lucy Neal, theatre maker, writer and community activist

## Visualisation exercise:

Picture the seasons, turning through the year. Winter may be still, inwards and generative. Perhaps we gain movement as the weather warms. Is it time for your project to hibernate, or is time for planting seeds, for pruning, for sharing the bounty.

What do you take with as you move from year to year? What do you leave behind?

Note down or draw what you discover.



# Frame Three Worksheet: The Co-creative Cycle

## Map the small steps and large leaps

### How to use this frame:

Consider how the Ecostage Principles can be applied at each stage of the project, as you work with your colleagues, your community and the natural world.

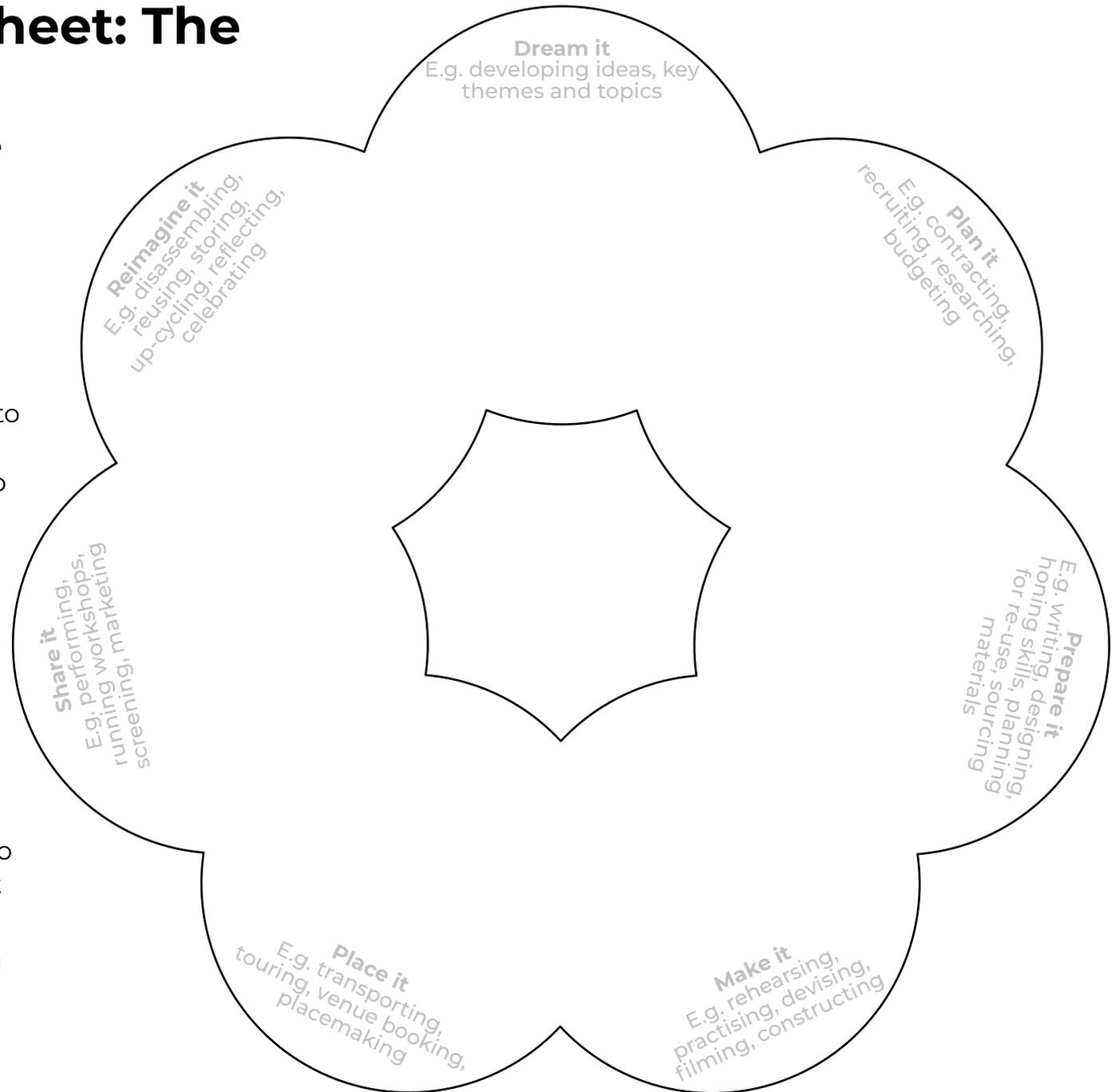
This frame is for planning and dreaming, to structure a creative process, and to work out where to focus energy. You may like to add the months or seasons when each stage will take place.

While some of the cycle won't follow the order shown, dreaming and planning holistically from the outset is key.

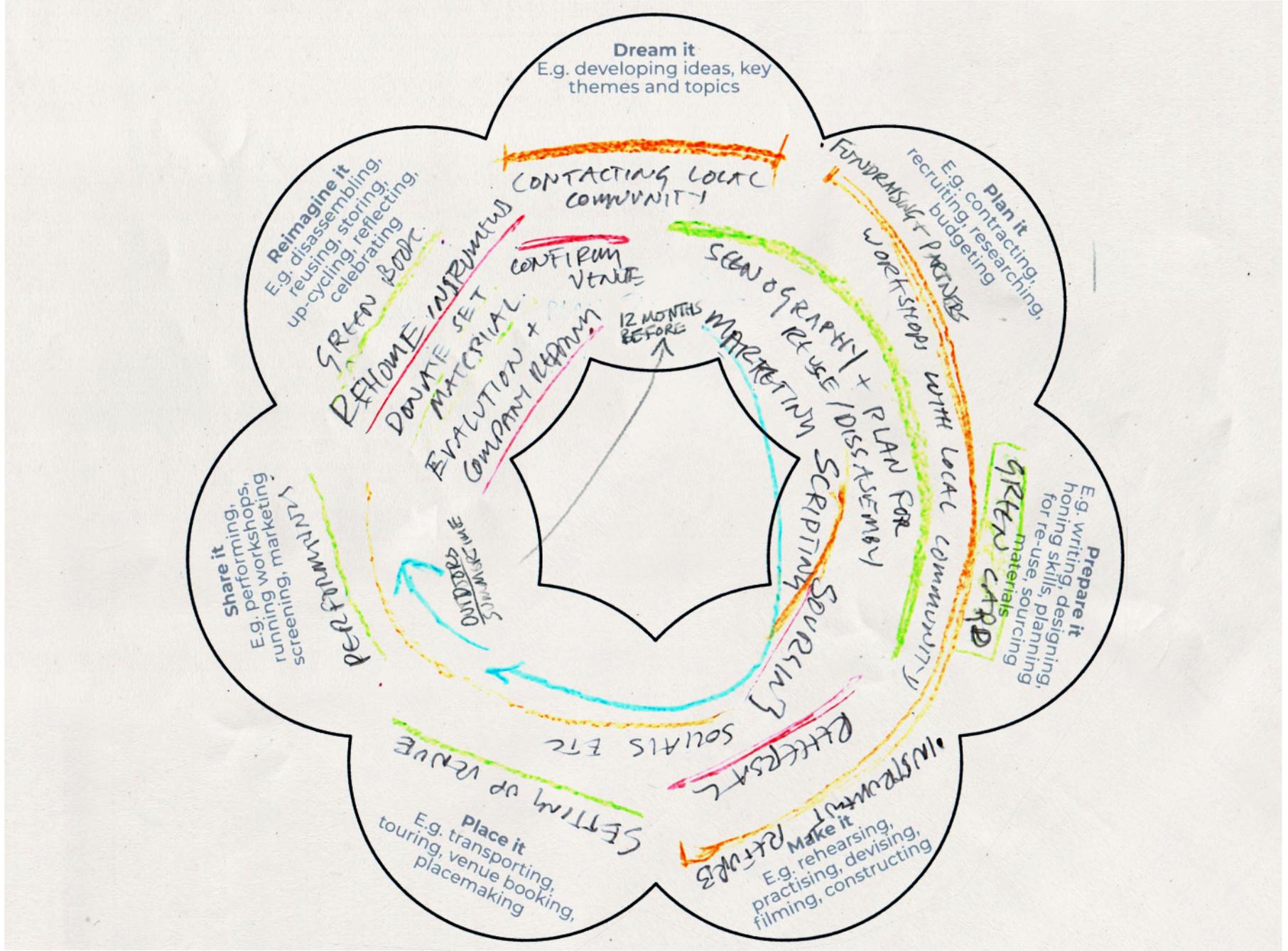
Take the elements from the previous frames, and integrate them into the project lifecycle, the patterns of life and community, and the cycles of nature.

**Example 1:** At which points do you need to review your environmental impact so that you can still make changes?

**Example 2:** Essential values like wellbeing and environmental responsibility rarely work as afterthoughts; how can they be upheld at the most pressured moments?



# Frame Three Worksheet Example: The Co-creative Cycle



# Frame Four: Bringing it all together

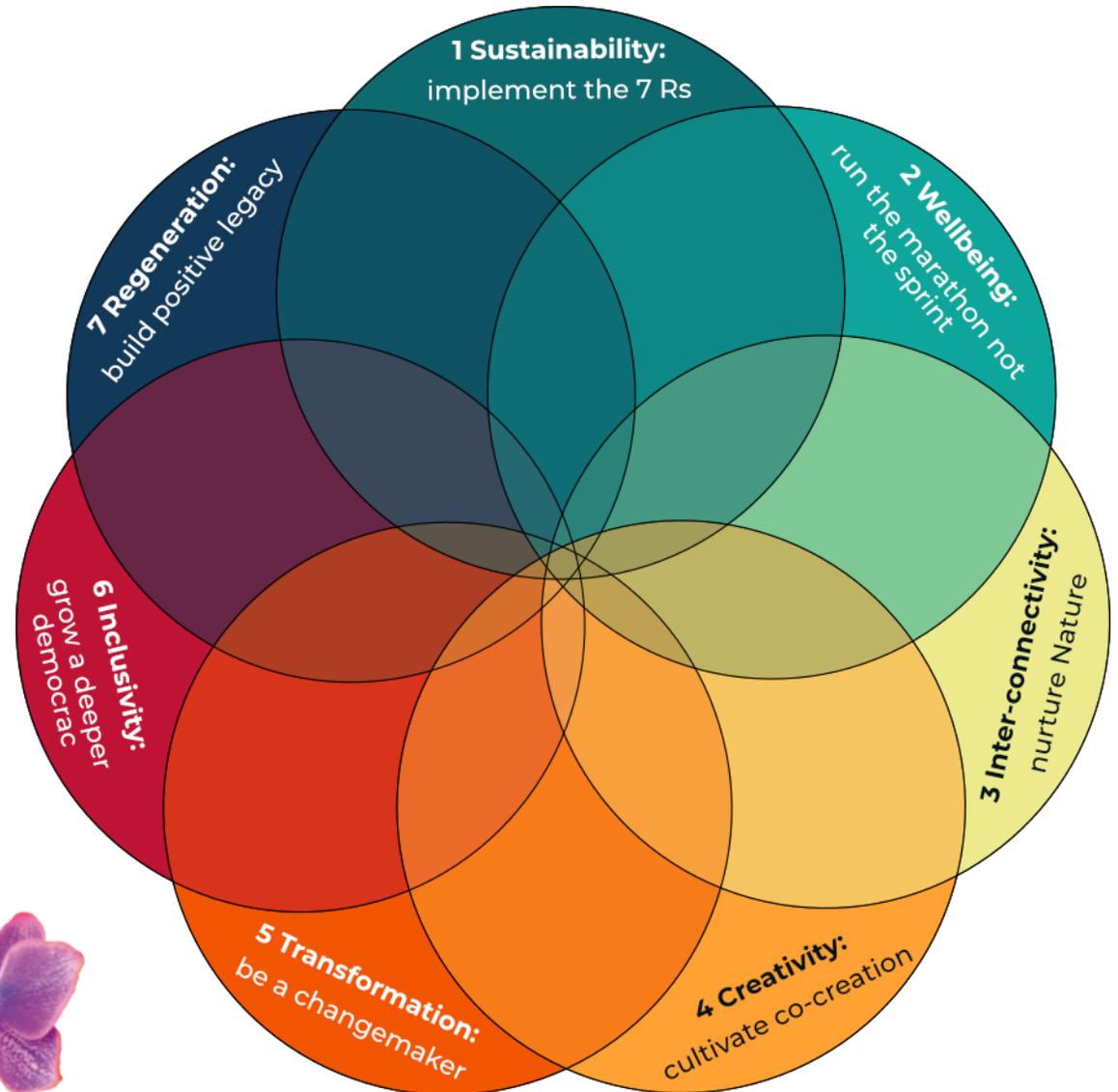
"When we speak of Nature it is wrong to forget that we are ourselves a part of Nature. We ought to view ourselves with the same curiosity and openness with which we study a tree, the sky or a thought, because we too are linked to the entire universe."

Henri Matisse - French artist

## Visualisation exercise:

Imagine a flower with outermost, leaf-like structures that protect the developing bud before the flower opens and then the many colourful petals linked by a central centre receptacle where all the parts are attached to the plant's stalk, which supports the entire flower. Each part of the flower and each petal is both unique and part of the whole.

Note down or draw what you discover. And grow your project!



# Frame Four Worksheet: Bringing it all together

## Your vision

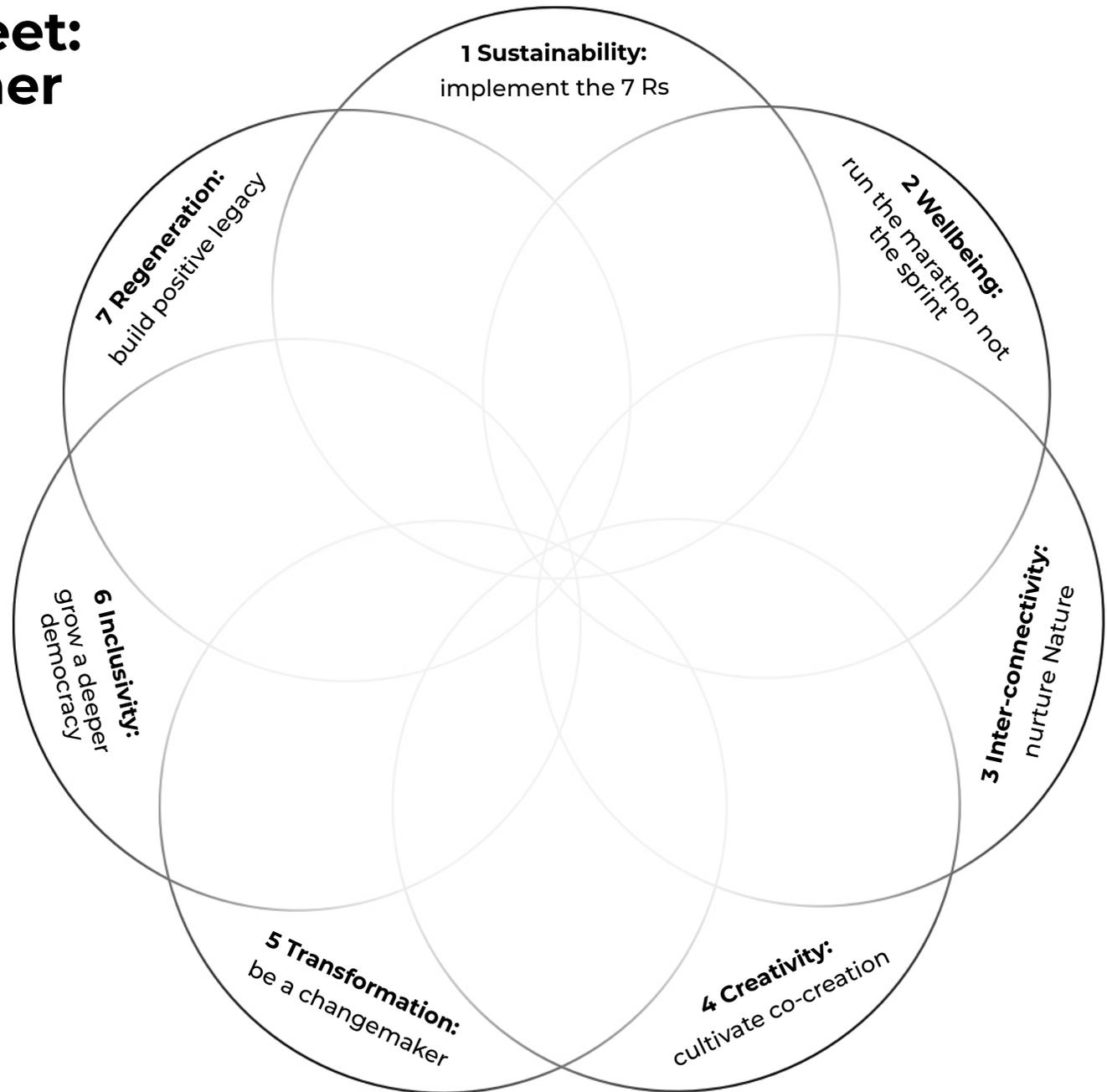
### How to use this frame:

Write a statement of intent that summarises your vision and approach. What questions do you want your project to answer? How should the successful project look?

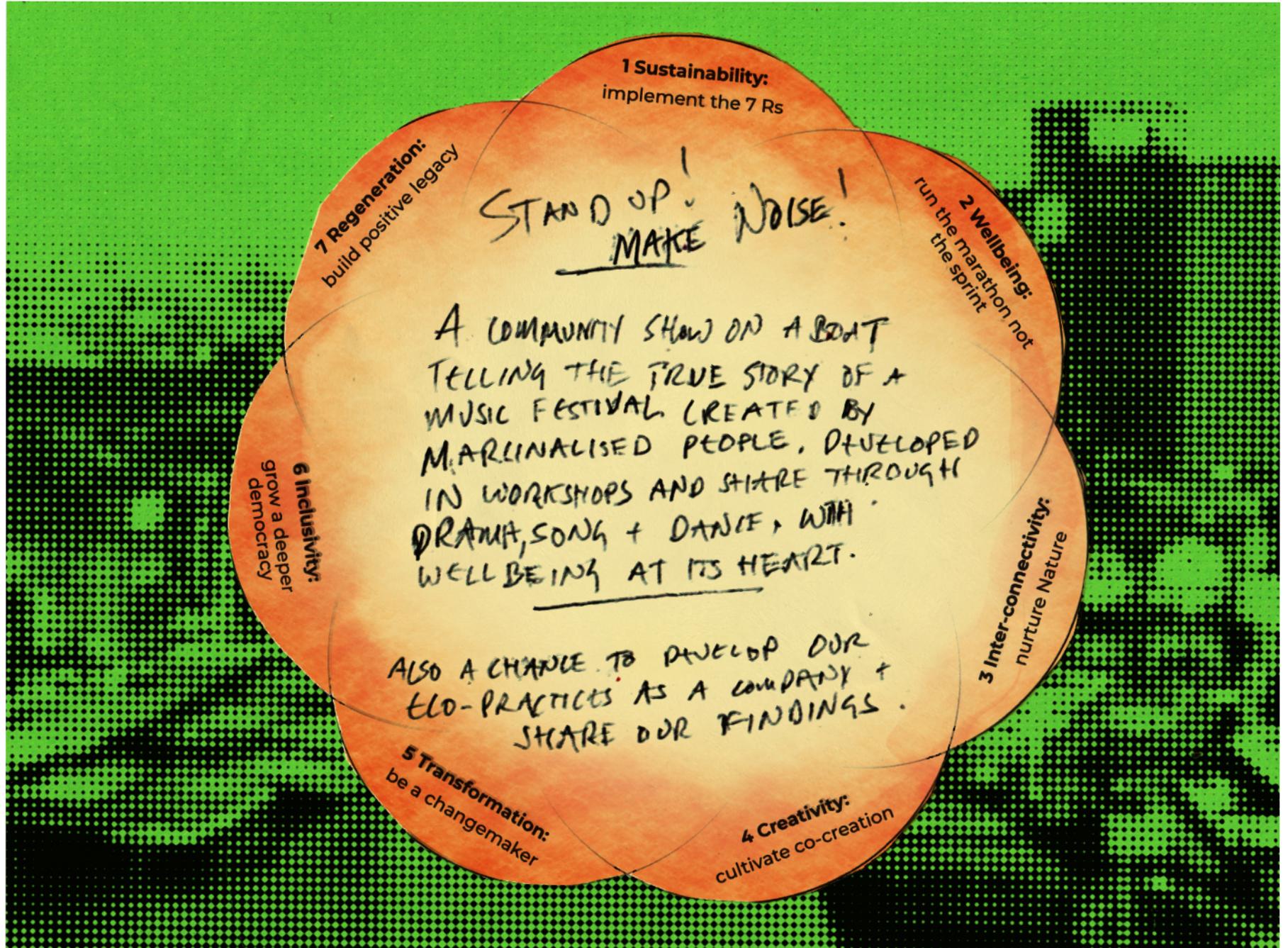
Let it serve as reminder of your purpose as an artist, your commitment to people, planet and practice, and how the seven Ecostage Principles can support your journey. What do you want to be reminded of at the most challenging stages of the project and the most joyful ones?

You can write it in the heart of the Ecostage flower or you can give it a totally different form - a collage, a video, a song... as long as it makes your eco-heart sing!

You should refer back to the other worksheets at the key stages in the project defined in Frame 3, but keep this statement somewhere where you see it (or hear it, feel it, smell it or taste it) often.



# Frame Four Worksheet Example: Bringing it all together



# Suggested next steps

- Join the [Ecostage community](#) to share your knowledge through case studies, videos and links.
- [Book one of our talks or workshops](#), either for practitioners or students.
- Take the [Ecostage Pledge](#).
- Browse our [Case Studies](#), including the [Global Voices video archive](#), and find resources to help you on your journey to greener creativity.
- Use the [Theatre Green Book](#) to assess your production's sustainability, moving from basic to advanced.
- Explore Zoe Svendson's work on [climate dramaturgy](#).
- Read Tanja Beer's [work on Ecoscenography](#).
- Explore the many resources provided by [Julie's Bicycle](#).
- Join the Society of British Theatre Designers [Sustainable Design Working Group](#).
- Download the Society of Society of British Theatre Designers [Sustainable Materials Guide](#).
- Use ReStage's [Re-use Network map](#) to find re-use hubs near you.
- [Organise Carbon Literacy Training](#) for your team or attend a session for freelancers.
- Follow [Freelancers Make Theatre Work](#) to keep up with campaigning for freelance working conditions in the sector.
- Make use of advice and support from trade unions like [Equity](#).



# Get in touch

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Threads: [@ecostage.online](https://@ecostage.online)



## Credits

The seven principles and original Ecostage Pledge were created by Tanja Beer, Andrea Carr and Alice Houlton (Malia).

Ecostage is currently run by Andrea Carr, Ruth Stringer and Paul Burgess (directors) and Kira Curtis (associate). Mona Kastell (director) is on sabbatical.

Framework lead: Paul Burgess ([paul@ecostage.online](mailto:paul@ecostage.online)) - please get in touch with suggestions and feedback. It's an ongoing project.

Thanks to Geraldine O'Reilly and all at the workshop UAL Wimbledon, Alex Brook and all at the Hull University workshop, all the speakers and participants at the Ecostage Lab at St Margarets House, along with the staff, Sarah Taylor, and everyone else who has helped road test and develop this framework.

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