



ECONOMY

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CREATING DIFFERENTLY IN PARIS REGION: THE CIRCULAR TURN IN CULTURE

310,000

JOB S IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR
IN PARIS REGION (2021)

2%

SHARE OF CULTURE IN THE
GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (GHG)
REPORT FOR FRANCE - EXCLUDING
TRANSPORT AND DIGITAL
(MINISTRY OF CULTURE)

8.5 M tons

GHG EMISSIONS OF THE ARTISTIC
CREATION SECTOR

THE CHALLENGES OF THE CIRCULAR TRANSITION OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR ARE PARTICULARLY STRONG IN PARIS REGION, THE FOREMOST REGION FOR CULTURE IN FRANCE. THE POOLING OF RESOURCES, THE REUSE OF SCENERY, THE ECO-DESIGN OF SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS, RESPONSIBLE LOGISTICS, WASTE REDUCTION, DIGITAL SOBRIETY, RETHOUGHT MOBILITY... THE CULTURAL SECTOR, A POWERFUL DRIVER OF IMAGINATION AND INNOVATION, IS ENGAGED IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY. INSPIRING INITIATIVES ARE BEING DEVELOPED IN PARIS REGION AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. AN OVERVIEW.

The circular economy aims to limit resource consumption and reduce waste by promoting reuse, repair, recycling, and more restrained patterns of use.¹ All sectors of the economy are concerned, including that of culture. From the performing arts to music, from the cinema-audiovisual field to publishing, by way of design, architecture and the visual arts,² it mobilizes a great diversity of resources and sometimes generates a significant yet often underestimated amount of waste. However, it is hardly ever associated, in the public imagination, with its environmental impact.

Long dominated by a logic of competition and unlimited growth, artistic creation is still based on a heavy consumption of resources, sometimes to the detriment of their sustainability. This model is changing. The cultural production has never been as abundant, accessible and diversified.

This profusion makes it essential to rethink in-depth how we create, produce and disseminate by integrating the entire life cycle of works and events, from design to dissemination, including scenography, logistics, dismantling, reuse and recycling. It is a question not only of preserving creative diversity, but also of minimizing ecological impacts at each stage, by revisiting our relationship with time, formats, places and audiences. This implies accompanying professions faced with the complexity of the challenges: an upgrading of skills, legal constraints and the transformation of practices. Historically, cultural actors have always been part of major social transformations.

On the cover

The social economy structure Écoscène, in Montreal, Canada, designs and builds scenery that integrates recycled or reused materials, and production techniques that feature resource sobriety.

REINVENTING CULTURE THROUGH THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In France, as well as elsewhere in the world, the professionals of the cultural sector – actors, technicians, producers – are becoming aware of their ecological footprint and the need to reduce it. The greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the artistic creation sector are estimated at 8.5 million tons of CO₂ per year.³ The performing arts produce nearly 40,000 tons of waste per year in France (scenery, costumes, technical equipment). The cinema and audiovisual sector generated 1.7 million tons of CO₂ in 2019. A single feature film shot in France emits about 200 tons of CO₂ – equivalent to eight years of emissions from a French household.⁴ As for museums, the main impact is linked to visitor travel, building operations, and the transport of artworks.

The challenge is particularly acute in Paris Region, a territory with a very dense cultural network. The region has 310 movie theaters, 1,030 libraries, 230 museums, 375 theaters, 450 concert halls and 360 festivals. It accounts for 45% of all cultural jobs in France – 310,000 – representing 6% of the working population in the Paris Region and over 20,000 companies. This dynamic sector closely interacts with other key fields such as transportation, tourism and the digital sector, consequently placing culture at the heart of emerging ecological transitions.

The circular economy is a systemic model that aims at limiting waste production and the consumption of resources while reducing environmental impacts, from the extraction of raw materials to the end of life of products. By favoring sobriety in the use of materials, water and energy, this model also makes it possible to decrease the carbon footprint, because reusing and recycling emit a smaller quantity of GHG than producing something new. Applying these

principles to the cultural sector consists in integrating the ecological impact at every stage of the life of a project (design, production, distribution, dissemination) in order to minimize negative impacts as much as possible.

Concretely, this is done through the eco-design of scenery, costumes and signage, through a more efficient energy supply management, through the transformation of organic waste, sorting and optimized logistics of production elements, as well as the elimination of single-use plastics in restaurants and catering.

Three main fields of action structure this approach, adapted to the specific features of the cultural sector (see graph below).

ECO-DESIGN:

AT THE HEART OF THE CULTURAL TRANSITION

Support policies are emerging, such as Circul'Art (see inspiring initiatives, p. 3), initiated by Film Paris Region, to promote good eco-design practices for scenery and waste management, in close collaboration with professionals. In cinema, efforts focused on the main budget items responsible for the highest GHG emissions: transport, scenery and energy. The company Les Films du Fleuve consequently set up an eco-production approach on Jeunes Mères, by the Dardenne brothers, which received the Ecoprod prize in Cannes, in 2025. The shooting, concentrated on the same place, made it possible to reduce travel, energy and waste. The sets were designed for reuse and the props given to a daycare center and the Maison maternelle, an association.

In the performing arts, the logistics of overproduction and unsustainable tours exacerbate environmental and social impacts. The Théâtre de l'Aquarium (see p. 3) is working on reducing these effects via eco-design, the recycling of stage sets and the development of an eco-responsible network in Paris Region.

The principles of the circular economy applied to the cultural sector



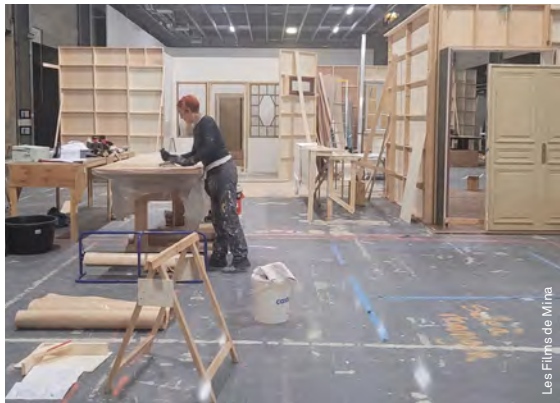
REUSE AND CREATION: A NEW MOMENTUM

Reuse is an essential driver of circular models, largely influenced by the choice of service providers. Paris Musées (see p. 3) integrates a reuse logic in the design of its temporary exhibitions.

Inspiring initiatives are emerging, such as the Réserve des arts (see p. 3), the first cultural recycling center in France, which accompanies professionals in the eco-design and reuse of materials for artistic productions and events. Another example is the RESSAC network, that collects, each year, about 2,000 tons of materials, of which 70% are reinjected into the production chain. The actors of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) are organized to provide a model based on sobriety, local distribution networks, solidarity and awareness-raising on changes in behavior.

Inspiring initiatives

To reduce their environmental impact, many cultural actors are adopting the principles of the circular economy, demonstrating a change in direction. Applied to cultural projects (shows, exhibitions, films...), these levers make it possible to act at each stage of the life cycle: choice of materials, logistics, energy consumption, waste treatment, catering on set, and more.



Les Films de Mira

Circul'Art, toward eco-designed sets in the audiovisual sector

Launched in 2017 by Film Paris Region, Circul'Art is a project that aims to integrate the principles of the circular economy in its image sector, by first targeting sets. With the support of the ADEME, the French Agency for Ecological Transition, the Paris Region and Ecoprod, the project was structured into several segments. Starting in 2021, a pilot studio has been experimenting waste collection and sorting on film sets with the company Fin de déchets. A resource guide in Paris Region lists local solutions: material libraries, reuse and recycling centers, service providers... Then, a study of professional practices highlights 15 recommendations to be applied in the field. In 2025, a new cycle opened with EcoDéco-MAD and the Association des décoratrices et décorateurs du cinéma (ADC). Four structuring actions were launched: practical sheets of eco-responsible sets, a comparative experiment between traditionally designed and eco-designed sets, a study on the studios of tomorrow and professional encounters. Circul'Art is consequently establishing a dynamic transition collective, by providing concrete tools to the sector's actors.



Leslie Parthenay

The Théâtre de l'Aquarium, at the cutting edge of eco-design in the performing arts

Since 2022, the La vie brève company has been involved in the management of the Théâtre de l'Aquarium (the Cartoucherie), in an eco-design and reuse approach, with the creation of a 450 m² scenery recycling center. Scenery, costumes and props are sorted there, repaired or reused, significantly reducing the environmental impact of productions. This space is accessible to resident companies, which are accompanied in the practices and methods of the eco-production of scenery. The theater is also developing a pedagogic mission by organizing training sessions and workshops on the eco-design of scenery and the analysis of its life cycle, working with organizations such as the Augures Lab Scénographie, the RESSAC and ARVIVA. Each year, it hosts the "Événements spectaculaires" with the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs (ENSAD), combining performance, reuse and eco-scenography. A genuine ecological transition laboratory in the performing arts, it creates concrete tools, structures the sector's dynamics and pools good practices.



Musée Carnavalet - Paris Musées (Crédit: Fotogramma)

Paris Musées, pioneer in reuse of the scenographies in its exhibitions

Paris Musées, comprised of the 14 museums of the Ville de Paris, has undertaken an ambitious approach to the circular economy. Reuse is at the heart of its strategy: furniture, bases, display cases and scenographic elements are recovered and shared from one exhibition or museum to another, in this way avoiding new constructions. This pooling, integrated into the writing of public contracts with the scenographers, makes it possible to design reusable exhibitions. Consequently, three exhibitions were created using the same scenography. The impact is both ecological and economic, with savings of 10 to 30% according to the projects. At the same time, Paris Musées raises the awareness of all its teams on environmental issues and includes eco-responsible criteria in the selection of its service providers: means of transportation, logistics, pooling, reuse... A comprehensive and structured policy, exemplary for heritage institutions.



Lucie Bonafant - LA RÉSERVE DES ARTS

The Réserve des arts, first cultural reuse and recycling center in France

The Réserve des arts is an association involved in the social and solidarity economy (SSE), based in Montreuil, that has been working since 2008 for an SSE in the cultural, creative and craft sector. It collects, sorts and recycles materials from cultural activities in order to give them a second life through reuse. The association offers a complete logistical solution to organizations wishing to dispose of their materials while reducing their ecological impact. It develops a specific know-how on recycling for reuse, supports professionals through training programs and raises awareness on the challenges of the circular economy. It also measures the impact of its actions in terms of environmental performance. A true resource actor, the Réserve des arts is a key lever in including cultural practices in a responsible, sustainable and local approach, while experimenting with new virtuous models of resource management.

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM

PARIS REGION

The cities of the World Cities Culture Forum are engaged in the circular economy

L'Institut Paris Region, a founding member of the World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF), represents Paris Region in this network of over 40 world metropolises. The WCCF brings together decision-makers and experts on cultural, social, economic and environmental issues. Confronted with climate challenges member cities are innovating through culture: Stockholm, with Material Magasinet, a reuse and recycling structure for cultural materials; Montreal and its Écoscène on the eco-design of stage sets; New York City and the Materials for the Arts, the first municipal reuse center dedicated to the arts; Oslo and the Green Producers Tool, a carbon footprint calculator adapted for use by cultural organizations; Buenos Aires, through its public cultural center Centro Metropolitano de Diseño, which promotes the circular economy by combining heritage preservation, sustainable innovation and training in circular professions applied to culture...



Vincent Kuyvenhoven

De Ceuvél, a third place dedicated to creativity and organizations engaged in the circular economy

In Amsterdam (Netherlands), De Ceuvél is an urban playground dedicated to innovation, experimentation and creativity, whose aim is to make sustainability tangible, accessible and playful. De Ceuvél is the fruit of the work of a group of architects who won a call for tenders for the creation of a "regenerative urban oasis" in a former naval shipyard in the northern part of the city. The site was transformed into a third place oriented toward creative and social activities. Old houseboats were placed on the ground and connected to each other by wooden footbridges. The place now offers workspaces for cultural organizations engaged in the circular economy, workshops, a café and a hotel. It therefore serves as a showcase for low-tech companies and circular economy approaches.



Reedijk Arts

The National Theatre Green Store, a new reuse warehouse for the theater

In 2024, the National Theatre of Great Britain opened the National Theatre Green Store, a circular initiative aimed at transforming its production practices. Installed in a new 1,260 m² warehouse in Bermondsey, in south London, it brings together some 130,000 costumes and 22,000 props, facilitating their reuse in over 400 theaters, 200 schools and creative industries. This approach is one of the aims of the Theatre Green Book, an initiative requiring 50% of materials to be reused and 65% to be able to be repurposed. By facilitating access to resources and adopting low-emission transportation vehicles, the National Theatre Green Store is part of the framework of ambitious goals for the theater to reach net zero in carbon emissions as an organization. Since 2024, all its productions follow the basic standards of the Green Book. This ecological transition is based on close collaboration between designers, creators and technicians, highlighting the possibility of a more circular, responsible and innovative theater.



Écoscène

Écoscène, a new philosophy of scenographic practices

Écoscène, a social economy enterprise in Montreal (Quebec), focuses on eco-responsible scenography in the performing arts. It develops design and construction practices for scenery that integrate recycled or reused materials, as well as production techniques that favor resource sobriety. Écoscène raises awareness among professionals about the environmental impact of their technical and artistic choices and proposes tools and training programs to favor the reuse of materials through its warehouse-store. Moreover, the project encourages the pooling of resources and collaboration between companies to optimize scenery management, making Montreal a major actor in ecological transition in the theater arts.

Fashion and fine crafts, through their focus to materials and practices such as reuse, recycling and upcycling,⁵ illustrate this circular logic, drawing on local and ecological resources like certified timber, vegetable dyes, local clays and recycled textiles.

ENERGY SUPPLY: A CHALLENGE FOR CULTURAL VENUES

The circular economy requires more efficient management of cultural buildings, with increased vigilance on resource consumption. Confronted with the rise in energy prices, a collective of four independent cultural venues in Seine-Saint-Denis (Le 6B, Mains d'Œuvres, the Villa Mais d'ici and Les Poussières) launched Green Kommon. The aim of this project is to produce solar energy by equipping their spaces with photovoltaic panels. It is part of a model of collective self-consumption for their own use and plans for the creation of a cultural energy fund to support local artistic initiatives while decreasing the venues' energy bill.

In the events sector, many major sports (the Olympic and Paralympic Games, for example) or cultural events (the Rock en Seine music festival) turn to alternatives to diesel generators (batteries or hydrogen) or are connected to the public electricity grid (to benefit from low-carbon electricity).

TOWARD A ZERO-WASTE CULTURE?

In the cinema-audiovisual sector, aid from the Centre national du cinéma (CNC) is now subject to an eco-conditions: productions must provide a double carbon report, one projected and one final. This requirement aims at encouraging more sustainable practices, notably on waste management and recycling. To accompany this transition, the SME Fin de déchets directly intervenes on shooting locations

to collect and manage waste, consequently facilitating the implementation of practical and responsible solutions.

Sectors like publishing have also started to institute a transition: if the use of certified paper is now commonplace, the challenge remains significant regarding waste and the reduction of unsold publications, as the involvement of certain publishing companies shows, like Rue de l'Échiquier, in Paris, with local printing and sustainable paper, gifts to solidarity structures (Emmaüs, for example) as well as a committed editorial stance.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW PROFESSIONS

The ecological transition of the cultural sector has created new professions and is transforming expected competencies. Positions such as head of CSR, cultural eco-consultant, eco-production representative, waste management consultant and renewable energy manager are developing, highlighting the need to strengthen training opportunities.

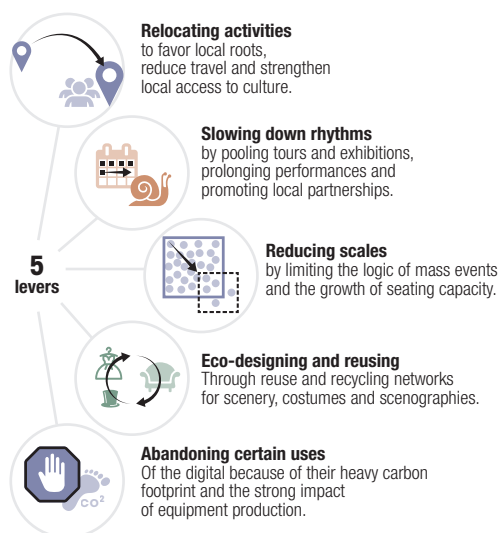
At the same time, new support structures have emerged in Paris Region to support this transformation. The ARVIVA association acts for more sustainable performing arts, by providing professionals with tools (environmental report, observatory, promotion of initiatives) and advocating for a fairer model for the sector. Les Augures association supports cultural actors in their ecological redirection, by mobilizing artistic communities on adaptation and innovation. Lastly, the 104 Factory, the incubator of cultural and creative industries of the Centquatre-Paris, with its "Culture Impact" program, explores innovative solutions and practices to reduce culture's ecological footprint through an urban laboratory dedicated to transition.

CULTURAL AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY POLICIES IN PARIS REGION

Public policies play a major role in bringing together and supporting cultural actors in the ecological transition, notably through awareness-raising and training. In Paris Region, the Stratégie régionale d'économie circulaire (Srec), adopted in 2020, integrates culture into its actions: support for actors, support for specialized reuse and recycling centers and incentives like the "ecological bonus" for engaged audiovisual productions.

On the national scale, with "Alternatives vertes 2" invitations to tender, France 2030 is financing innovative projects that favor the ecological transition in all cultural fields. The goal is to generalize the measurement of environmental impacts, develop tailored tools and strengthen the training of professionals to accelerate this sustainable transformation.

Action levers for a circular transition in the cultural sector



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Source : The Shift Project ; L'Institut Paris Region



RECONCILING PROTECTION OF HERITAGE AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

With over 4,000 historic monuments, five sites inscribed at UNESCO and 230 museums, the heritage of the Paris Region is dense. To meet ecological challenges, conservation practices are evolving: use of less harmful preservation products and techniques, review of lending protocols and the transport of works, prioritization of restoration operations... The building of the Archives nationales in Saint-Denis, for example, illustrates these good practices. Its architectural design preserved as many trees as possible and expanded planted areas, with a diverse range of plant species. Well-insulated, it is supplied by urban heating (geothermal energy, wood, gas/biogas).

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF DIGITAL SOBRIETY

Closely linked to digital technologies, culture is the leading sector worldwide in online data consumption,⁶ generating 4.4% of national GHG emissions.⁷ In France, in 2020, there were over 631 million digital

devices, or 11 per user,⁸ illustrating the scope of the challenge. The ecological transition of the cultural sector requires digital sobriety at every stage: creation, dissemination, conservation, archiving.⁹ Beyond the 2021 REEN (Reduction of Environmental and Digital Footprint) law, tailored strategies must be developed. Initiatives like Qarnot Computing, which recycles the servers' heat, point the way forward. Limiting energy consumption and extending the life span of equipment are essential.

RETHINKING AUDIENCE MOBILITY FOR A CULTURE THAT REMAINS ACCESSIBLE

The mobility of audiences is the principal source of GHG emissions of the cultural sector: it accounts for 45% of theaters' carbon footprint, up to 75% for festivals, 90% for movie theaters, and even 99% for a museum such as the Louvre.¹⁰ To meet this challenge, the question is one of promoting sustainable mobility practices: local anchoring with a nearby cultural offer, traveling shows, coordinated tours or exhibitions outdoors. Adapting public transportation schedules to cultural time slots is a key tool, requiring cooperation between cultural stakeholders, communities, and funders.¹¹ Raising the public's awareness is also vital, as has been shown by the festival We Love Green, which provides information and offers "eco-mobile" solutions.

CULTURAL CIRCULARITY: BETWEEN THE POWER OF IMAGINATION AND MARKET TRANSFORMATION

Artists, and their capacity to mobilize the imagination and to involve publics in shared narratives, play a critical role in the circular transition of the cultural sector. By providing meaning and encouraging engagement, they help forge new collective performances capable of supporting transformations. At the same time, adopting circular practices becomes a strategic imperative for the creative industries: what was once a matter of proactive engagement is becoming a prerequisite for market access, as the growing requirements of streaming platforms illustrate. Circularity thus emerges both as a symbolic horizon and as a structuring driver of market access. ■

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1. The circular economy breaks with the classic linear model ("extract, produce, consume, throw away") to adopt strategies that aim at extending the life span of products and recycling resources in closed loops. According to the ADEME, the French Agency for Ecological Transition, it is based on seven essential pillars: a sustainable supply, eco-design, industrial and territorial ecology, the functional economy, responsible consumption, the prolongation of the duration of use (by reuse, repairs...) and recycling.
2. The economic field of culture was established by the statistics department of the Ministry of Culture, using a European definition. Cultural, artistic and creative activities, grouped under the term "cultural and creative industries," is organized around eight major fields: visual arts, performing arts, cinema-audiovisual, publishing (books and the press), heritage, amateur artistic education, architecture and advertising. Design, fashion and fine crafts are also added to this list, although these fields are not taken into account in public statistics.
3. "Étude sur le bilan carbone de la création artistique," Ministry of Culture, July 2025.
4. Film Paris Region.
5. Upcycling is a creative practice that promotes a circular and ecological mode through the recuperation of clothing, fabric scraps, curtains or any other textile that is not or no longer used, to give them a new life.
6. "Décarbonons la culture !," The Shift Project, November 2021.
7. Ecological Transition in Culture, guidance and inspiration document, Ministry of Culture, December 2023.
8. "Impacts environnementaux du numérique en France," greenit.fr, 2020.
9. "Déployer la sobriété numérique," The Shift Project, 2020.
10. "Quel impact carbone pour les lieux et les festivals de jazz ?," Périscope-Footprints, Association Jazzé Croisé (AJC).
11. "La mutation écologique du spectacle vivant. Des défis, une volonté," Syndeac, March 2023.

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