

A DYNAMIC MODEL FOR AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO POLICY DESIGN FOR FINNISH CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS



ECOCRIN

SUSTAINABLE AND
INNOVATIVE CREATIVE
ECOSYSTEMS

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Foreword

ECOCRIN project addresses the need to ‘unleash’ the potential of creative ecosystems for growth and innovation.

We acknowledge the myriad of local, regional and national policymakers, intermediaries, and creative actors, but recognise a need for collaboration between them in developing creative ecosystems.

We propose a dynamic model for an ecological approach to policy design for Finnish creative ecosystems. The model is a structured approach to understand the needs of grassroots creative actors, identify key aspects of creative ecosystems, and to design policy means to effectively address those needs. The model is freely available and intended as a living tool for policymakers, intermediaries, and creative actors to inspire their thinking about creative ecosystems and related policy design.

The model is an important outcome of the ECOCRIN project, funded by Business Finland (2023–2025). The model draws empirically from three locally diverse ecosystem examples (Kuhmo, Pori, Turku & Paimio) but is applicable also to other places, particularly for those outside the metropolitan area.

We thank all the numerous individuals who have invested their time and effort to ECOCRIN interviews, workshops, and discussions and made it possible for the research team to accomplish its task. We invite the readers to visit the ECOCRIN webpage sites.utu.fi/ecocrin to find all the deliverables and publications of the ECOCRIN project.

We hope that the model will inspire and encourage the design of innovative policies that will benefit the creative ecosystems and Finland.

Turku, 29 September 2025

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Professor, PI of ECOCRIN

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1. Introduction





'A Dynamic Model for an Ecological Approach to Policy Design for Finnish Creative Ecosystems'

is designed to inspire new ways of thinking about policy design that strengthen creative ecosystems. It encourages policymakers, intermediaries, and creative actors to explore how value is generated within these ecosystems both in the present and towards desirable futures. The model provides a structured approach to understand the needs of grassroots creative actors, identify key aspects of creative ecosystems, and to design policy means that effectively address those needs (Hytönen, Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024).

The model is intended as a living tool. It invites users to reflect on present realities in relation to imagined, new, and surprising futures. Based on this, they design desired futures of creative ecosystems by considering current and future creative actors, their value creation, innovative networks, resources, and ecological values.

The model emphasises bottom-up and dialogical policy design. Creative actors envision their desirable futures and what is needed to achieve it. Intermediaries help communicate these needs, and policymakers use these insights to design effective policies. Depending on the situation, creative actors and policymakers can also take the role of intermediaries. The model encourages dialogue on three levels: among creative actors themselves, between creative actors, intermediaries, and policymakers, and among policymakers across cultural and innovation policy domains.

For the User

2. How to Use Dynamic Model



The Model as a Living Tool

The Roadmap
is available
on the ECOCRIN website:
sites.utu.fi/ecocrin

This model is intended as a living tool **for the cultural and creative actors, policy actors and intermediaries** to analyse the current state of their own activities and define their aims and visions, that are often in the context of glocal (deeply intertwined global and local) activities.

The model is aimed to help to understand the different key aspects of the creative ecosystem e.g., resources and innovative networks that are highly interrelated and changing. In the dynamic process of ecosystem development, users can more broadly identify the key aspects, explore their relationships in more concrete terms and set goals for the strategy process. We recommend you to use the **'Roadmap for Strengthening Creative Ecosystems'** alongside the Model.

The model is flexible, enabling users to examine a specific part of an ecosystem or conduct a thorough analysis of the entire creative ecosystem. The model includes the concept of Futures Literacy, which is an invitation to reflect on how to use imagination to bring the non-existent future into the present, to think how the imagined future affects the present and, conversely, how the decisions and actions in the present affect the future. (Ahvenharju & Poursu-Mikkola, 2022; Miller, 2018.)

Furthermore, the model is aimed to help users to develop meaningful cooperation beyond the cultural and creative sectors and to support the development of convergences between innovation and cultural policy. The Appendix provides a policy design canvas as a practical tool for ideation related to the key aspects of the model.



The background features a vibrant, abstract composition of light trails and glowing spheres. The color palette transitions from a bright, almost white light on the left to deep blues and purples on the right. Numerous translucent, glowing spheres of various sizes are scattered throughout, some appearing to trail behind as if moving through space. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and digital or scientific exploration.

3. Dynamic Model

Description of Dynamic Model

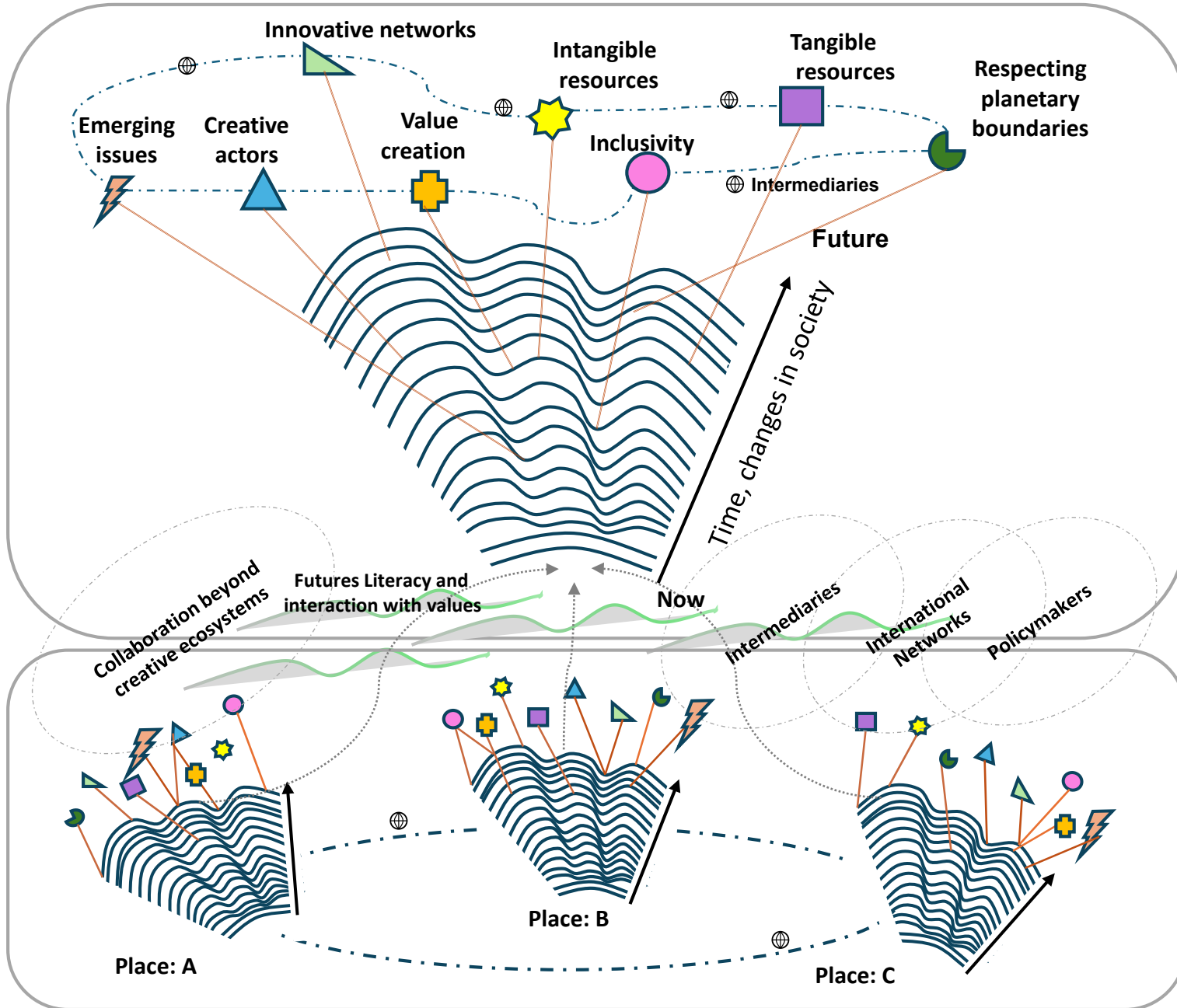
The model covers key aspects, actors, and geographical levels of creative ecosystems, and illustrates how these ecosystems evolve over time, and how different actors communicate.

The model highlights the following key aspects: emerging issues, creative actors, value creation, innovative networks, intangible resources, tangible resources, inclusivity, and respecting planetary boundaries. Primary ecosystem actors include creative actors, intermediaries and policymakers. These operate across local/regional, national, and international levels.

Ecosystem evolution is visualised through a series of ascending waves that symbolise continuous societal change as we need to be prepared that the future will be something very different from today. The waves also refer to the dynamic nature of creative ecosystems.



CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS



Key aspects & needs

Creative ecosystems & other converging sectors:
National, top-down perspective



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Dialogue:
Communication between
creative actors,
intermediaries and
policymakers to create
synergies for policy design

Creative ecosystems & other converging sectors: Regional, local bottom-up perspective

Different sets of icons imply place-based diversity.

ECOCRIN cases in Finland were Turku & Paimio, Pori, Kuhmo, but you may identify your own places.

Inspired by Bennett et al., 2021 and Lin et al., 2021

Identify Possible Emerging Issues



Definition	<p>The ways in which we understand the future today shapes our ability to plan for it. In reality, the future often unfolds in unexpected ways and differs from the expectations. Planning and strategising for the future is one approach, the other is to embrace emergence and discover novel potential future states (Miller, 2018).</p> <p>Being able to emerge yourself in highly unfamiliar and more distant futures offers the opportunity to better understand what those futures may hold and what insights we all could understand and utilise today. This allows you to better use these different approaches to futures when using the model. Keep in mind these surprising futures when analysing the key aspects of the model and planning for long-term (15 and 30 years).</p> <p>Small signs (weak signals) inform us about emerging issues. They may become single events or clusters of a small number of events, usually not widely known in their earliest phase. Although often overlooked, they have potential to become significant in the future. (Dator, 2018; Hiltunen, 2010.) These weak signals can be used to help understand and explore futures.</p>
Creative actors, intermediaries, policymakers consider...	<p>Surprising changes: What kinds of small signs of surprising changes do you recognise today? In what kind of futures do these small signs become dominant features? How does this change your understanding of what a different future could be in the long term e.g., in 50 years?</p> <p>Proactive use of surprising futures: How can you utilise these different futures today when using the model?</p>

Identify Creative Actors



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Creative content providers comprises ecosystem actors and innovative networks at local and regional, national and international level. Ecosystem actors can be <i>individuals, companies and organisations</i> who initiate, maintain and develop cultural and creative content.</p>
<p>Creative actor, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of creative actors... i) provide creative content today? who are missing? ii) are needed to reach desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed creative actors? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate your needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Intermediary, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): To be effective intermediary between creative actors and policymakers, what kinds of creative actors and policymakers you... i) recognise today? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solutions): How can you learn about who are the current and future creative actors and policymakers? How can you effectively communicate their existence to policymakers?</p>
<p>Policy maker, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of creative actors current policies recognise? What are the target groups of current policies? Means (solution): How can policy effectively learn who are the current and future creative actors? Through which means policy can effectively support the existence of current and future creative actors? How can different policy domains collaborate on this?</p>

Identify Value Creation of Creative Actors



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Value proposition responds to the question why someone should choose an offering over other options. Value creation is about making something desirable or useful for others. Value capture refers to how those creating value benefit from the value they create. (Carter & Carter, 2020; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010). Accordingly, it is highly relevant to identify various values – economic, social, recognition, and enjoyment – that creative actors generate for themselves and others (e.g., Stenholm et al., under review).</p>
<p>Creative actor, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): Who are your customers/audience to whom you create value/benefits... i) currently? ii) to achieve desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? iii) who is missing? What kind of value/benefits do you create to your customers/audience... i) currently? ii) to achieve desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? iii) what would you like to change? How do you make your income (sources of income)... i) currently? ii) to achieve desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? iii) what would you like to change? Means (solutions): How can you develop missing/lacking/needed customers/audience, offerings, and income sources? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate your needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Intermediary, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): To be an effective intermediary, identify who your customers/audience are (who do you serve), what value/benefits do you provide and how can you support creative actors to better understand their customers/audience, and develop their offerings and income sources... i) what is missing now? ii) how to reach/achieve desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solutions): How can you effectively identify, understand, and serve your customers/audience? How can you effectively communicate the needs of your customers/audience to policymakers?</p>
<p>Policymaker, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of current and future needs, related to customers/audiences, offerings, and income sources of creative actors, are recognised and addressed by current policies? i) what is missing now? ii) how to reach/achieve desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solution): How can policies be directed to help creative actors to identify, understand, and serve their customers/audience now and in future? How can policymakers effectively learn about current and future needs of creative actors concerning their customers/audience, offerings, and income? Through which means can policy be used to effectively address these current and future needs? What would be the economic and non-economic costs and benefits for the society for addressing the needs? How can different policy domains collaborate in this?</p>

Identify Innovative Networks



Definition	<p>Innovative networks refer to active new forms of collaboration that develops within and beyond creative ecosystem and enable new value creation. These connect individuals, companies, communities, and organisations, but innovative networks do not exist without active building and maintaining. (Van der Borgh et al., 2012.)</p>
Creative actor, consider...	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of innovative networks... i) provide creative content today? which are missing? ii) are needed to reach desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed innovative networks? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate these needs to policymakers?</p>
Intermediary, consider...	<p>Needs (problems): To be an effective intermediary, what kinds of innovative networks you... i) recognise today and what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you learn about who are the current and future innovative networks in creative ecosystems? How can you effectively communicate their needs to policymakers?</p>
Policymaker, consider...	<p>Needs (problems): Which kinds of innovative networks in creative ecosystems are recognised by current policies? Who are the target groups of these policies?</p> <p>Means (solution): How can policy effectively learn which are the current and future innovative networks? Through which means can policy effectively support the existence of current and future innovative networks? How can different policy domains collaborate on this?</p>

Identify Tangible Resources



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Tangible resources comprises materials, tools and work equipment, e.g., ecosystem actors' own objects, instruments, stage sets, costume stores, supplies and technological tools. Tangible resources include free or low-cost venues, workspaces and equipment provided by municipalities as well as funding at local/regional, national and international levels in forms of sponsorships and grants provided by companies, state, municipalities, foundations, institutions, associations or other organisations. (Stenholm & Hytönen, 2024.)</p>
<p>Creative actor, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of tangible resources do you... i) recognise today? what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed tangible resources? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate your needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Intermediary, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): To be an effective intermediary, what kinds of tangible resources do you... i) recognise in your work today and what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed tangible resources? How can you effectively learn about the needs of creative actors? How can you effectively communicate their needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Policymaker, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of current and future tangible resource of creative actors, does policy recognise and address? Means (solution): How can policy effectively learn about these current and future needs? Through which means can policy strengthen the tangible resources needed currently and in the future? What would be the economic and non-economic costs and benefits for the society for addressing the needs? How can different policy domains collaborate on this?</p>

Identify Intangible Resources



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Intangible resources comprises e.g., creative freedom, time, expertise and advice, training and education, various skills (creative/artistic, entrepreneurial, business), knowledge and best practices, collaboration (skills) for example in communication, cultural services, production and branding, and IPR. Interaction between and beyond creative ecosystems is an essential resource. (e.g., Latvala-Harvilahti & Siivonen, 2025; Stenholm & Hytönen, 2024; Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024.)</p>
<p>Creative actor, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of intangible resources do you... i) recognise today? what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed intangible resources? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate your needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Intermediary consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): To be an effective intermediary, what kinds of intangible resources do you... i) recognise in your work today? what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed intangible resources? How can you effectively learn about the needs of creative actors? How can you effectively communicate their needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Policymaker, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of current and future intangible resource of creative actors, does policy recognise and address?</p> <p>Means (solution): How can policy effectively learn about these current and future needs? Through which means can policy strengthen the intangible resources needed currently and in the future? What would be the economic and non-economic costs and benefits for the society for addressing the needs? How can different policy domains collaborate on this?</p>

Understand How to Enable Inclusivity



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Inclusivity is often understood as involvement. It thus refers to activities that increase the inclusion and equality of people despite their differences. It is also about changing exclusionary and unequal structures. (Rask et al., 2021). On the other hand, the core of inclusion can be seen how people experience it. Then inclusion can involve an individual or group experience; a set of behaviours; a set of collective norms and practices; or a personal, group, organisational, or social value (Feldman, 2013). Inclusivity also refers to participatory co-creation in policy-making.</p>
<p>Creative actor, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of forms of inclusivity there exists today? Describe them. What are the forms of inclusivity that match your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years? What kind of inclusivity do you... i) recognise today? what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed aspects of inclusivity? How can policy support/help you in this? How can you effectively communicate your needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Intermediary, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): To be an effective intermediary, what kinds of inclusivity do you... i) recognise in your work today? what is missing? ii) need to reach/achieve your desirable futures in 15 and 30 years?</p> <p>Means (solutions): How can you develop/acquire missing/lacking/needed aspects of inclusivity? How can you effectively learn about the needs of creative actors? How can you effectively communicate their needs to policymakers?</p>
<p>Policymaker, consider...</p>	<p>Needs (problems): What kinds of current and future inclusivity needs of creative actors policy recognises and addresses?</p> <p>Means (solution): How can policy effectively learn about these current and future needs? Through which means policy can strengthen the inclusivity needed currently and in the future? What would be the economic and non-economic costs and benefits for the society for addressing the needs? How can different policy domains collaborate on this?</p>

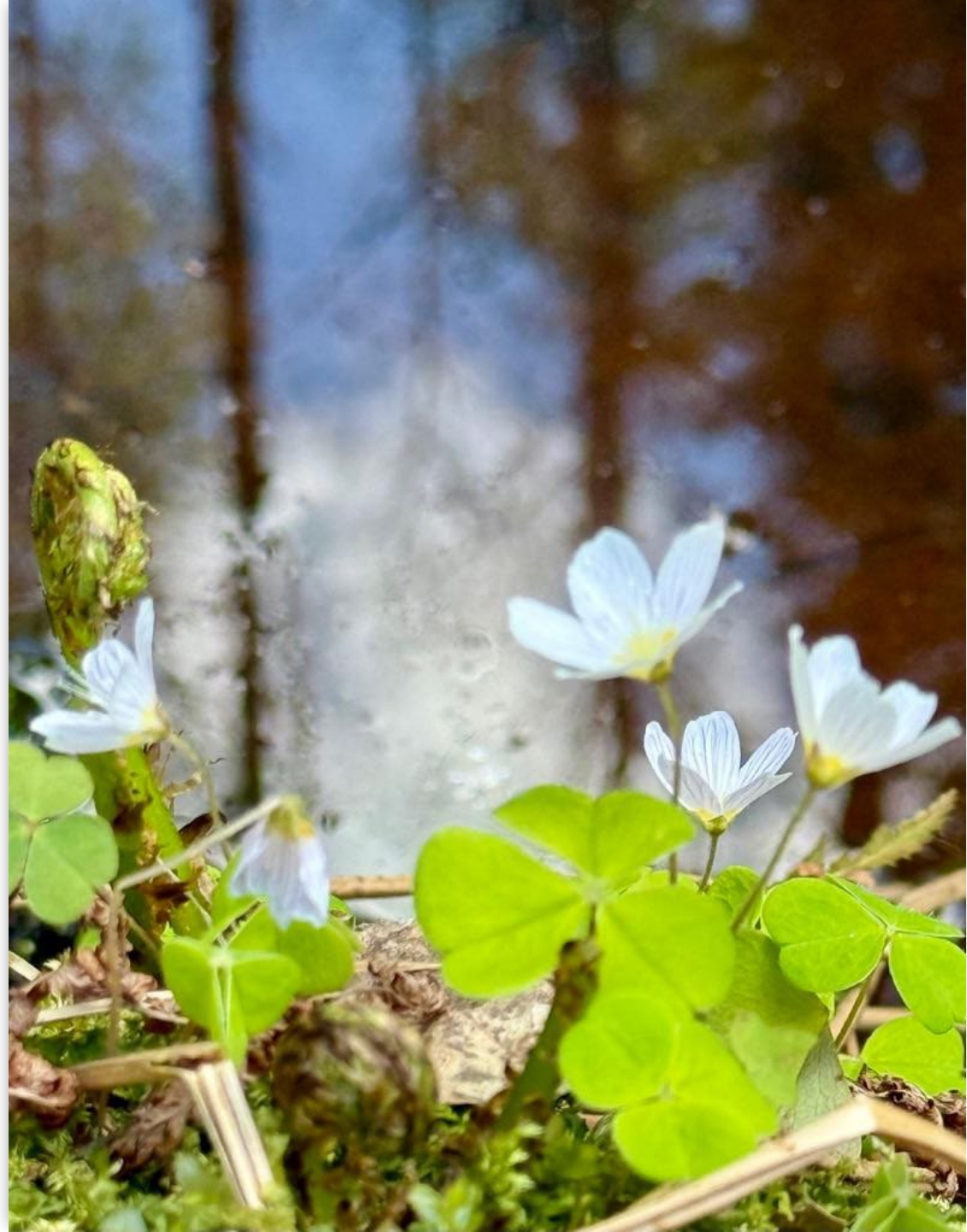
Understand How to Respect Planetary Boundaries



Definition	<p>Planetary boundaries define the environmental limits within which humanity and all life on Earth can safely operate. Human activities threaten to heavily cross these boundaries e.g., by causing climate change and biodiversity loss, and by overusing freshwater reserves and land areas (Richardson et al., 2023). As humans cause this threat, it is important to understand how changes in use of natural resources and energy for instance in cultural and creative production could be made to reduce environmental harm. Through culture and creative actions, it is also possible to develop practices that encourage transforming toward new ways that more strongly respect planetary boundaries. (Siivonen et al., 2024, see also e.g., Korpela, 2025.) This also has deep meaning for many creative actors to play a vital part in positively impacting the future direction (Latvala-Harvilahti, 2021).</p>
Creative actors, intermediaries, policymakers consider...	<p>Changes toward well-being of the planet</p> <p>How does your professional actions affect the environment, and how are you already affected by environmental changes? What impacts do you notice?</p> <p>How could you mitigate the threat caused by humans to the environment in your professional activities?</p> <p>In what ways could policies together with cultural and creative ecosystems support current and future ways of understanding and respecting planetary boundaries?</p>

Use the Dynamic Model Regularly

1. Examine the relationships between the key aspects to each other and to creative ecosystem, both in the present and in the future.
2. Relate your findings to the surprising, long-term future, e.g., in 50 years, and consider whether you understand the ecosystem differently by doing so.
3. Pay attention to values and changes in society as well as the different roles and possibilities of creative actors, intermediaries, and policymakers.
4. Perceive how different parts of the ecosystem are connected to and have an impact on each other, and what kind of existing and potential mutual support there is and could be in the ecosystem.
5. Move towards strategic thinking by adding your findings about desirable futures for 15 and 30 years.
6. By using different available strategic tools, create a strategy that is based on these model analysis findings.
7. Communicate your development and/or strategy to stakeholders beyond your own sector.
8. Think how to regularly use this model and follow your development.



Appendixes

Ecosystem Intermediaries

Intermediaries are essential key actors who play a vital role in creative ecosystems. They possess a deep understanding of both the circumstances of cultural and creative work as well as the needs of the companies and actors beyond the creative ecosystem. In some cases, creative actors and policymakers can also have the role of an intermediary. It is essential to recognise and further develop the role of intermediaries.

Through the implementation of the model, intermediaries can help both policy actors and creative actors to align the model with the desired next level of ambition and to develop their activities in relation to their imagined or newly faced futures.

Intermediaries can be public and private actors, organisations of different sizes, e.g., entrepreneurs and companies, educational organisations, cultural and creative professionals, other active individuals, communities, municipalities, associations and various networks.

This following list refers to situation during the analysis in creative ecosystem mapping 2024–2025 in ECOCRIN project.

Entrepreneurs/Companies play an active role in creating connections between professionals and funders.

Cultural and creative third-sector institutions distribute new cultural content, ideas, innovations and new ways of doing, act as intermediaries between cultural and creative professionals and clients, for example between jobs and the public.

Cultural and creative professionals and other individual key players are proactive in networking at grassroots level.

Educational organisations (such as universities) produce research knowledge and train students to be skilled professionals.

Cultural and creative associations do advocacy work, share know-how, embrace local success stories and strengthen networks at local and national level.

Communities engage people to action and are open to newcomers.

Foundations fund, engage and develop innovative ways to connect actors locally and nationally.

Municipalities create and maintain links and networks between third sector actors and cultural and creative professionals and audiences e.g., by providing events and venues.

At the national level, intermediaries also maintain networks between associations.

POLICY DESIGN CANVAS

INNOVATIVE NETWORKS

Ecosystem needs related to collaboration within and beyond creative sectors.
Policy means for solving the needs.

EMERGING ISSUES

Signals of changes influencing the activities of creative actors in the future.
The role of policy in alternative futures.

VALUE CREATION

Ecosystem needs related to customers/audience, offerings and income.
Policy means for solving the needs.

CREATIVE ACTORS

Policy target groups.
Means for learning about the needs of the target groups.

DIALOGUE

How to enhance dialogue between and among policymakers, creative actors, and intermediaries.

TANGIBLE RESOURCES

Ecosystem needs related to tangible resources.
Policy means for solving the needs.

INTANGIBLE RESOURCES

Ecosystem needs related to intangible resources.
Policy means for solving the needs.

INCLUSIVITY

Ecosystem needs related to inclusivity.
Policy means for solving the needs.

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Ecosystem needs related to planetary boundaries.
Policy means for solving the needs.

DESIGNED FOR:

DESIGNED BY:

DATE:

VERSION:

Literature

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ECOCRIN Project

Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Ecological Approach to Policy Innovation for Creative Sectors in Finland.

ECOCRIN provides an ecological approach to policy innovation for creative sectors in Finland.

It is conducted by University of Turku, Turku School of Economics, and it contributes to the policy design of cultural and innovation policies.

ECOCRIN project is implemented in multidisciplinary collaboration of three research teams and departments at the University of Turku: Management and Entrepreneurship team (Entre), the Pori Campus Team and the Finland Futures Research Centre team (FFRC).

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