

# Sustainability Vision



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# Thinking Big at Arcola

*Economy of dramatic expression fits well with the Arcola's new policy of "ecologically sustainable" production. With a staff of just nine, and a 40 percent increase in Arts Council grant, the Arcola certainly looks like a mean, lean machine revving up for new challenges.*

Michael Coveney, What's On Stage

In 2000, Mehmet Ergen and Leyla Nazli converted a textile factory in Dalston, Hackney into a community theatre, using personal savings and credit cards.

Early shows were often lit by candles because of a shortage of stage lights. Productions rested on sweat and dedication. There were no feasibility studies, no consultants, no two-stage funding applications: just black paint, and a lot of volunteers accomplishing the highly improbable. Our early successes were fuelled by the belief that anything is possible.



*In 2005, a production of Lysistata required cars on stage. Solution: cars entered through the front lobby, dragged by volunteers. We didn't even scratch the paint.*

From these humble beginnings, Arcola has grown to become one of the UK's most renowned independent theatres with a distinct and powerful identity, both within in the local community and within British theatre. Arcola Theatre has won the *Peter Brook Empty Space Award* two years in a row, and has received the *Time Out Live Award* twice: for *Inventive Programming on a Shoestring* in 2003, and for *Favourite Fringe Venue* in 2005-6. Many of our productions have been selected as Critics' Choice in *Time Out* and the national papers.

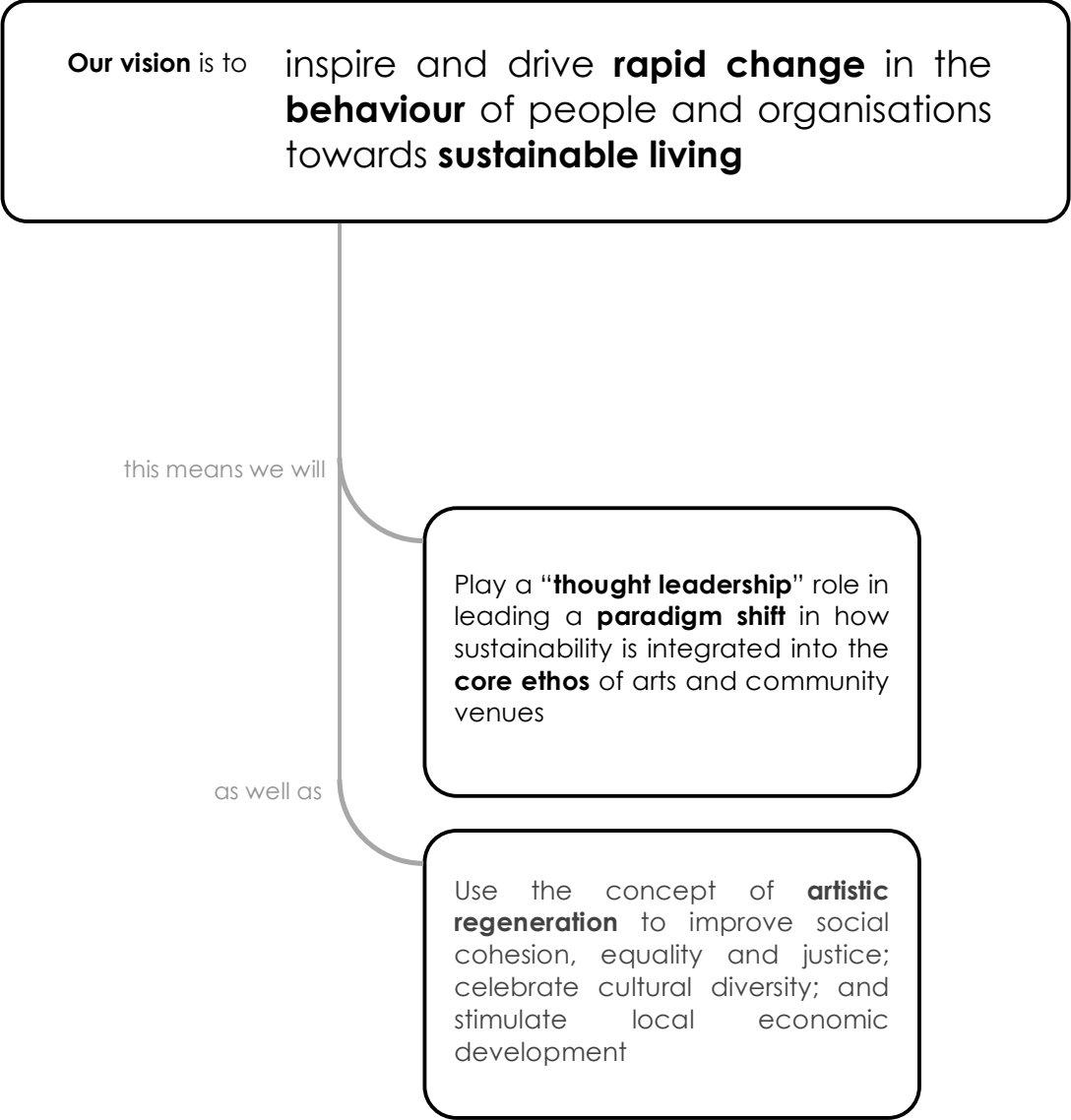
Arcola Theatre exists because our founders dared to think big. We've never shied away from big, bold ideas, and we're not afraid of punching above our weight.

Now, with the founding of Arcola Energy, we are prepared to turn our ethos of "an open door and endless possibilities" to the pressing need for **sustainability in the arts**: first with the London theatre sector, then the UK, and eventually on a global scale.



*In 2008, front-of-house lighting is powered by an in-house hydrogen-fuel-cell system.*

# Our Vision of Sustainability



As you can see, **sustainability** doesn't end with the environment.

In fact, it's only the beginning. Our sustainability programme encompasses the following **streams**, which we believe are key to **delivering true sustainability**.



In every action we take in each of these delivery streams, we are guided by four principles:

**Precaution<sup>1</sup>**  
Don't wait until the disaster to act! At the leading edge there will always be doubts and uncertainty but this is no excuse to do nothing!

**Prevention**  
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

**Solidarity**  
For good or ill, what we do now has far-reaching consequences. We are all inextricably connected, both *intragenerationally* (sharing the same planet today), and *intergenerationally* (with future societies and cultures).

**Responsibility**  
In the end, no one will help us but ourselves. It's our individual responsibility to act, in the face of a worldwide challenge.

<sup>1</sup> It is prudent to incorporate a level of risk aversion in the face of uncertainty. "Precaution" is defined by the United Nation Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992, as follows:

*Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.*

Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration is available at <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>

# And How We're Going to Do It

## Our Delivery Streams

Each delivery stream will be made up of targeted **projects**, governed by common objectives, principles for action, and tools.

<p><b>Innovative Governance</b></p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Principles and Tools</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve local democracy</li> <li>○ Introduce a long-term, integrated vision of Dalston regeneration</li> <li>○ Promote the role of the arts in policy development and project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Partnership</b> approach with local and national governments, creative industries and private-sector entities</li> <li>○ <b>Participative</b> approach with local population, through a process of socialisation, mobilisation, and negotiation; grassroots initiatives</li> <li>○ <b>Cross-functional, systematic approach:</b> thinking in terms of connectedness, relationships and contexts; always incorporating social, economic and environmental aspects of development</li> <li>○ <b>Project-dynamic:</b> combining top-down approach to development with grassroots-driven initiatives, innovation, and improvement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Responsibility</b></p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Principles and Tools</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make significant improvements in our carbon footprint</li> <li>○ Improve sustainability practices in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Resource monitoring</b> to reduce our environmental footprint and drive innovations in clever resource usage</li> <li>○ <b>Using theatre operation as well as production</b> as media to educate and inspire local community and theatre sector</li> <li>○ <b>Creating the Technology and Research Incubator</b>, the world's first in an arts setting, to host companies, spur creativity and innovation, conduct technical/policy research, and create and disseminate best practices</li> <li>○ <b>The Mayor's Climate Change Action Plan<sup>2</sup></b> approach sets ambitious targets and devises delivery mechanisms, working backwards from goals to determine what we need to do</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/climate-change/ccap/index.jsp>

## Cultural Heritage and Diversity

Objectives	Principles and Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Celebrate the cultural diversity of Dalston</li> <li>o Develop innovative approaches to promote cultural heritage</li> <li>o Lead artists and the community in developing ideas for Dalston regeneration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>Social sustainability in both theatre and the community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o innovative artistic programs</li> <li>o exceptional theatre work</li> <li>o integrating different communities (Arcola Writers Group, Arcola Heritage programme, Arcola 60+ Drama Group)</li> <li>o education and awareness programme dealing with contemporary issues (democracy, climate change, globalisation)</li> <li>o youth theatre projects</li> <li>o effective volunteer campaign</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Social and Economic Justice

Objectives	Principles and Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Encourage fair trade and energise local economies</li> <li>o Support equal-access to culture</li> <li>o Foster local creativity to stimulate innovation, experimentation, and social creativity in Dalston</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>Culture for all:</b> Tuesday pay-as-you-can, free access to all workshops and bar events</li> <li>o <b>Supporting local business:</b> through the Wedge Card program, Arcola aims to support local businesses by offering a reward to customers choosing to shop locally</li> <li>o <b>Eco-bar</b> promoting fair trade and quality refreshment through a strict supplier-selection process</li> <li>o <b>Technology and Research Incubator:</b> founding it in Dalston to bring together local ingenuity and innovation with wider industry and community</li> </ul>

See our separate **policy** publications for further details:

***Innovative Governance***  
***Environmental Responsibility***  
***Cultural Heritage and Diversity***  
***Social and Economic Justice***

## Our Approach

In order to succeed, we will approach everything we do with these basic values.

### Grassroots Support

Our projects depend entirely on support at the grassroots level: those parties and people our efforts are meant to help.

### Collaborative Approach

Feedback is crucial. If something isn't working (or even if it is working), this will be used to continuously improve our practices.

### Intellectual Rigour

All our projects will be well-defined through policy, strategy, and project plans, with clear targets and logical procedures.

So, a sustainability programme with  
**delivery streams**

designed with  
**clarity and rigour**

benefiting and fed by  
**grassroots support**

constantly undergoing  
**reassessment  
and renewal.**

At Arcola, sustainability will **drive itself.**