

Active8-Planet Newsletter

Newsletter #2

January 2022

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ACTIVE8-PLANET CHALLENGE INTRODUCTIONS

SERVANT LEADERSHIP & ACTIVE8-PLANET

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PREFACE

Welcome to our second newsletter! Join us to discover new developments in our project Active8-Planet. The main idea behind this European, Erasmus + Knowledge Alliances funded project is that students, academic supervisors, professionals and other stakeholders work in multidisciplinary teams to develop an approach, an intervention or a solution toward a better future for people and the planet. That may sound like a mouthful, but ... in essence, it's all about collaboration!

This fall, the first Active8-Planet Learning Cycle started in full force. Four 7+1 teams were shaped and each team explored their challenge collaboratively. The four challenge topics are ranging between mobility, circular building design and healthy environments in healthcare. Each team has found students, academics and researchers, companies and professionals that feel connected to these topics and will join forces to guide each challenge towards application.

In this second newsletter, we share insight into the newly defined challenges, some insights into Servant Leadership, we get down to the deep motivation of three of our project members, and we present one member's view on biodiversity. Most importantly, though, we hope to get you inspired and that you will want to keep up to date with the project in the upcoming newsletters. You can expect to read more from us every six months! In the meantime, you can already follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and, of course, on our project website: www.active8-planet.eu.

Please also feel free, anytime, to drop us a line at info@active8-planet.eu.

On behalf of the whole project team,

Soesja van Wijgerden and Giulia Sinatti

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Active8-Planet Challenge

Introductions

In the Active8-Planet project, four universities are tackling four different challenges. In this article we will shortly introduce each of them, as they stand now. During the course of the project, some challenge definitions might change according to the needs and wants of each 7+1 team; in response to field research or stakeholder wishes. But it's great to have a place to start from.

HASSELT UNIVERSITY:

Circular façade

Evy Puelinckx



WHY?

A façade is the outside or all of the external faces of a building. Along with the roof, it is one of the most important elements of a building, since it acts as the primary barrier against external weather and climate elements. People link a façade with something that only adds to the aesthetic factor of a building structure, but the potential of a façade

in architecture is much more than that. Buildings are responsible for almost 40% of global carbon emissions and 50% of global material use. Façades can play a key role in the transformation to a sustainable built environment.

So how can we design façades that tackle global warming, health and wellbeing, and resource impacts to deliver quality infrastructure — a critical need for our planet and communities.

Students from the departments of architecture, industrial engineering and economics will team up with our engineering partner Huygen to investigate how we can create this façade system. We start from the existing Webo façade panel: how circular is it now, what elements can be added or need to be transformed. We will be using the Active8-Planet matrix as a guiding tool to generate a wide perspective on this challenge. We will also explore the influence of business models in supporting this goal.

HOW?

WHAT?

In our research we want to understand the role of a façade in generating a positive impact on future society, both social and ecological, on the local scale but also on a global scale, including its economic feasibility.



HALMSTAD UNIVERSITY:

Who will own your mobility experience in a circular economy?

Susanne Lindberg



WHY?

There is an urgent, unequivocal need for climate action, and one important aspect where we need to make a change is mobility. From a sustainability perspective, shared and combined ownership is a reasonable direction, but it is not clear what the experience of ownership will look like. At the same time, we are more mobile than ever

before, and the pandemic has taught us that many jobs can be performed from any location. Yet, as the world opens up more, it is also important to better understand how mobility can be made more sustainable so that we can harness the benefits of the increasing mobility. Therefore, this challenge deals with ownership of mobility in a circular economy.

Together in a team with Volvo Cars, four students from the Digital design and innovation bachelor program and researchers in informatics and design, we will try to understand the challenge of creating a new, sustainable

mobility experience. The team will perform workshops and interviews with different stakeholders, such as employees at Volvo Cars, citizens in various Swedish cities (such as Halmstad, Helsingborg and Göteborg). The team will also work with critical techniques such as design fiction and critical design, and create and evaluate prototypes in order to better understand the possibilities for sustainable mobility and ownership in a circular economy.

HOW?

The aim is to better understand how mobility ownership in a circular economy can look like in the future, and what challenges there are to sustainable mobility. The main focus is on qualitative

WHAT?

insights into the experience of mobility, as well as a critical perspective of future possibilities. The perspective is strategic, and the contribution is relevant for anyone researching or designing mobility experiences.



VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM:

Healthy Healthcare Environment

Giulia Sinatti

WHY?

Healthcare facilities should have the healthiest environments in the world. When we are faced with health issues, we can use all the help we can get. Healthcare professionals in The Netherlands are equipped with high tech equipment and educated insights to help their patients.

Their patients however, might experience their care differently depending on the environment. For this reason, the healthcare organization we have partnered with would like to learn how their beautiful, old, low-ceilinged, rented building is experienced by their patients.

HOW?

What does a healthy environment look and feel like? And to whom? To answer such questions, this challenge zooms in on the experiences and perspectives of both patients and care professionals in a mental healthcare facility in Amsterdam. Four students will conduct ethnographic research at this facility to gain qualitative insights in the effect of environment. At the same time our engineering partner Huygen will collect quantitative data in these same environments.

WHAT?

After a few months of data gathering, we will align, analyze and interpret the quantitative and qualitative results to discover new insights into the meaning of a healthy environment. Together with all the different stakeholders, we will design interventions to boost the quality of the patient and staff experience in these environments. We expect these insights and interventions to not only be relevant to our specific research location, but also to other healthcare facilities that are dealing with similar challenges.

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA:

Mobility as a service

Veronika Zavrtnik



WHY?

As we move towards a (more) sustainable future, we must not only question the “big picture” and current political and economic systems, but also rethink our daily practices and how we live our lives on a much more mundane and smaller scale. In a very

literal sense, the way we live our daily lives is also related to how we move from one

place to another, from our homes to the office, to the mall, to our friends’ houses or to the airport. Especially in urban areas, the mobility flows created by our daily movements bring many challenges, from spatial issues to air quality. In general, people only use their own cars about five percent of the time, while for the remaining 95%, the vehicles are immobile. We believe it is time to challenge this and think of mobility not just in terms of cars, buses, trains, or planes, but in terms of services.

To understand how people think about and practice mobility, we will approach our research horizontally, starting by asking very general questions, such as What is mobility? Why do people want to own a car - and why they don’t? Is there a growing number of people who do not own a car?

HOW?

The collaboration between a team of anthropologists and the developers of a car sharing platform/app will take a very interdisciplinary approach, looking for new ways to combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and how to combine Big Data and Thick Data to deepen the research findings.

WHAT?

The main goal of our short ethnographic research is to understand the pull and push factors in the decision to use car sharing services in Ljubljana. We want to use our horizontal findings on why people choose to use or not to use a car sharing service for further steps in the development of the service and the mobile application.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP & ACTIVE8-PLANET

An interview about Servant Leadership
concept with Marrije Prins.



**Marrije Prins: Teacher, trainer and
development expert**

Could you please tell us what does servant leadership mean and how does it differ from “conventional” leadership?

Servant leadership, as a concept was developed by Robert Greenleaf, who first wrote about it in an essay that was published in 1970. While designing the Active8 Servant Leadership training with my colleague Ellen Bal, I came across a quote that captures the essence of what I think Greenleaf was trying to convey:

“A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.”

You can find this quote and much more on <https://www.greenleaf.org/>

What does servant leadership mean to you? How can it move our society towards better and more sustainable futures?

For me Servant leadership is about enabling others to grow, collaborate and create to the best of their abilities. As a Servant leader I do this by taking into account what people aspire and what it is they need to move forward. This requires me to first and foremost create and sustain a safe learning and working environment for all involved.

“Servant leadership is about enabling others to grow, collaborate and create to the best of their abilities.”

Which also included me, by the way. Then I make sure we get to know, see, hear and value each other. Obviously, this takes time and is a delicate and dynamic process because when people come together and collaborate, things also get messy, difficult, challenging. In fact, this needs to happen, because otherwise we are unable to develop ourselves or anything we strive for. Especially when we face complex challenges that require us to integrate all kinds of different perspectives, such as for example climate change, we need to be able to value and bridge our differences. As a Servant leader I help people to see that ‘dot on the horizon’, in the midst of all things messy, and guard and facilitate their collaborative process to get to where they want to be.

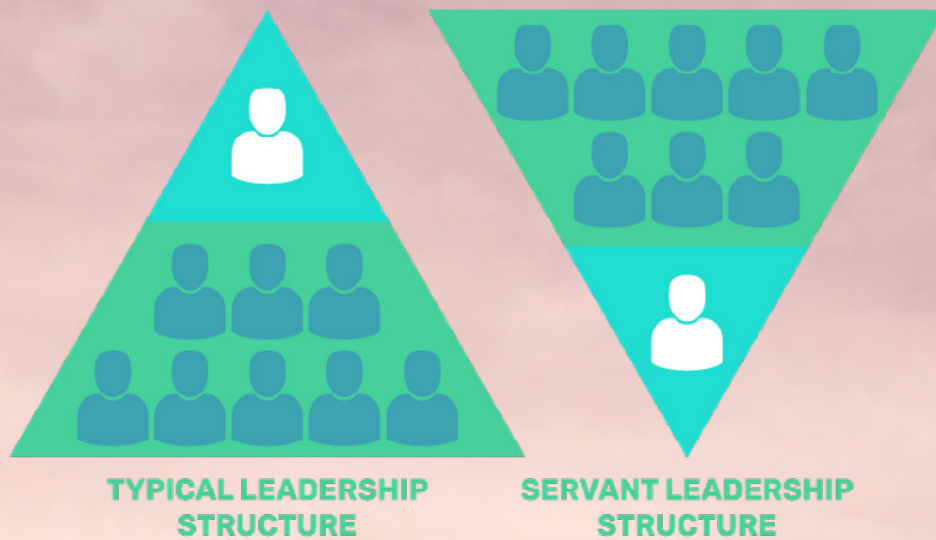
How specifically will the Active8-Planet project integrate this concept into activities?

All our 7+1 teams have a Servant leader in their midst. They are in fact the ‘plus ones’! These Servant leaders empower individual team members and guide the development of their team by listening, asking questions, connecting people, ideas and knowledge. They provide a safe space for interdisciplinary collaboration, focus on the communal discovery of similarities and differences and their constructive deployment in the co-creation of the Active8 concept their team is working on. You could say these servant leaders act as inspiring examples as they focus on impact and well-being, people and planet, strengths and opportunities, creativity and community. And I hope that, through their leading by example, all Active8 Planet members will eventually embrace and embody Servant leadership in the rest of their lives on this planet.

How did the training look like – what are your impressions?

Ellen and I designed the Servant Leadership training with the aim to help our four Servant leaders prepare for their role and provide them with a tool to design a guidance plan for their particular team. We started with a duo





exercise: 'interview each other to get a glimpse of your leadership backstories'. Afterwards these stories were shared in the group which allowed us to discover similarities and differences between us. We also established fourteen 'grounding rules' to create that safe space we too need to develop ourselves. Then we delved into the content by reflecting on the six Active8 Planet Servant leadership principles, by discussing the contours of the different Learning Cycles and by making a start with using the Learning Guidance Canvas. This is a tool that allows Servant leaders to reflect on and make decisions about the guidance they plan to arrange for their team. All in all, it was a very energetic and inspiring training that left me feeling confident that our Servant leaders will take up their roles with style and grace. A second part of the training will take place when the Servant Leaders are a bit further along with their team and might have entered that 'messy' phase of collaborating.

What do you expect from our servant leaders, what are your aspirations?

I hope our Servant leaders will not only help others collaborate and develop, but I hope that they will allow themselves to do the same. We are all learning here on this beautiful earth. Although they might have the role of leader, this does not mean that they should be the ones to know and do it all, all the time. Not knowing and making mistakes is what makes us human. And asking for help allows others to step up, and join you. I think, in the end, that is one of the greatest things of being a Servant leader, to be able to see the people you have guided, surpass you in certain areas, so they can stand their ground and help you and others.



Active8-Planet Servant Leadership Principles

1

A servant leader puts each individual in the team at the centre of their thinking and their actions, and allows all team members to grow as a person, become healthier, wiser, freer, more independent.

2

A servant leader encourages a sense of unity and of a shared responsibility and decision-making.

3

All this within a clear set of values that are collectively gathered and supported by everyone in the team, regardless of hierarchy in terms of age, position, gender, etc.

4

A servant leader guards the collaborative process within each team and ensures that members stay focused and connected to each other and the ultimate goal.

5

A servant leader creates space for all voices in the team, especially if these represent minority perspectives and/or are embodied by people who are not necessarily trained in voicing their perspective in an interdisciplinary team.

6

A servant leader allows room for discontent and conflict and ensures that these will be addressed through frank and open discussions, with the goal of attempting to reach a shared decision.



ACTIVE8 MOTIV8ION

This project has so many different participants, I was curious about what made each of them join! To get a peek into their different motivations, I talked with one of our students, a company partner and a researcher.

What struck me hearing their answers was the passion sparking from their words. But also, the overlap in their ambitions. Though these three have such different backgrounds, what seems to bring them to Active8-Planet is a common goal; Change. To achieve this, they share their ideas and experiences.

The benefits of joining a multidisciplinary team

As you know, the Active8-Planet project works with multidisciplinary teams. This means that each 7+1 team consists of students, academic teachers, supervisors and company partners from different disciplines and fields of expertise. This concept is constructed with the ambition of creating more value by exchanging ideas between disciplines and sectors. Learning from each other as much as from books. This is what our panel said on this topic:



Louise Labus -
Student at
UHasselt

"The team being formed by a combination of students from different departments and industry professionals might give us a glimpse of our later professional life.

When you sit together to brainstorm with people from very different backgrounds, so many more ideas come up. Other team members bring things to the table that I would never think of myself. That is very inspiring, because that way you automatically start thinking further too, they help you think in different directions."

"Active8 Planet asks people to observe the world to identify potential challenges, and then teaches people of different ages, professions, and experience to work together, listen to each other, and find a common language. All this not to be more productive or thorough, but to come up with ideas and proposals that will improve our ecological, social, cultural or economic environment.

One of the many wonders that ethnographic fieldwork can do is to provide comprehensive insights into daily life, a non-fictional scenario of how people approach and cope with chosen challenges, how they envision the future, and how they think about their future situation. This human element is essential to a sustainable future because the future is shaped by our agencies. I hope that I can somehow balance the engaged, activist stance with the ethnographic perspective, and that I can humbly take advantage of the opportunity I have been given to navigate this transdisciplinary learning process."



Veronika Zavratnik
-Anthropology
Researcher at
IRI UL



Ana Tisov -
Project Leader
and Researcher at
Huygen Engineers
and Consultants

The issue is far too complex to do it on our own. Instead of doing it our versus their way, in Active8-Planet we do it together."



Searching for more skills and knowledge

Each 7+1 team not only strives to tackle a challenge, they also strive to grow. As a teacher, as a student, as a professional or expert. Joining Active8-Planet is not something you do because you have to. Each member has personal goals they wish to tackle or overcome in this project.

“To open myself up more to dare to speak in a group is also something I want to work on. Building the confidence to express your opinion clearly is important for a future industrial engineer.”



“This project asks for individual and collective reflection and deep inquiry. Willingness to step into the unknown.”

“I took on the role of servant leader a little later than other servant leaders and learning about the role and influence of servant leadership has definitely been the biggest ‘Aha!’ moment for me so far. I like the way servant leaders transform leadership to provide a safe and stimulating environment for their team members and ensure they grow as people and as co-workers, and how broader community engagement can be integrated into work and research processes. After all, we should (all) be putting people and the planet at the centre of our work.”



Sustainable impact within reach?

Clearly one of the “hot topics” in the interviews with the Active8-planet team members was sustainable impact. Sustainability is one of the project’s key concerns, so it stands to reason it is also a salient motivational factor. What struck me was hearing how impact was also important to them. What are their questions, aspirations and expectations?

“Yes! We are finally going from people to planet centricity, from ego to eco. We need to realize that a healthy human and a healthy planet are just two sides of the same coin. We talk about industries and



sectors being responsible for emissions, but all those industries and sectors are made up of individuals and all decisions are made by individuals within those sectors. There is immense power at the individual level to influence the systematic change and the institutional change that is necessary.

We are putting too much emphasis on technology. As someone said: “Technology is a wonderful servant but a terrible master.” The BIG question is which way do we go?”

“When I read the name of the project, Active8 Planet, I was not quite sure I knew exactly what the project was about. What are we supposed to do – activate the whole planet in just three years? I have often been told how overly optimistic and – in that sense – naive I am, but even to me it all seemed too idealistic. Engaging people, yes, that sounded like a good plan. However, times were busy with global epidemic and two different realities overlapped our global reality: in the first, any kind of “activation” did not seem to belong in the era of quarantines and lockdowns, but in the second, it seemed that the world was entering a time of change and when, if not now, is a good time to do things differently? Is it even possible to bring about “real change” without real political power, and is it possible to make the world more sustainable? And what does living sustainability actually mean? And to achieve this, do we need a reformation or a revolution? I hope that the local/national projects carried out in the framework of Active8 Planet will demonstrate the importance of establishing multifocal “lines of communication” and the importance to see the same things from different perspectives, firstly to understand local challenges and secondly to propose meaningful and sustainable responses to these challenges.”



“For our specific challenge at UHasselt we are developing a circular facade panel and it’s amazing to discover how much positive impact a facade can potentially generate, with for instance integrating vertical farming, water purification, generating solar energy, etc.”

To be continued

After reading what drew my team members to Active8-Planet, I couldn’t help but wonder; what will happen next? Maybe I’ve been watching too much Netflix, but I really am curious to follow their journey through this project and discover which dreams, skills and solutions they will achieve. Will the multidisciplinary teams work well together? Will each member develop the skills they wanted, or will they stumble onto another focus? Will Active8-Planet reach sustainable impact? Thankfully, this newsletter will keep us posted throughout the project. And I’m lucky enough to be on the front line! Stay tuned...



by
Soesja van
Wijgerden

BIODIVERSITY IS TOO SIMPLE

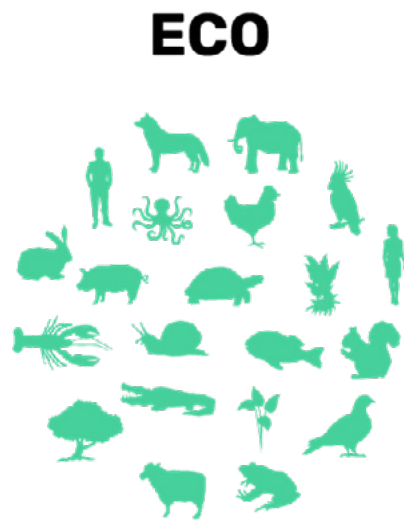
This term from the field of ecology has become very popular for biological sustainability, and with good reason. Biodiversity implies the presence of many different species in a given area. The benefit of a biodiverse site is that it is more resilient to external change. Some might even refer to it as 'healthy' or 'successful', however these are mainly anthropomorphic interpretations of ecology. An ecosystem is not something that can be successful: it simply is. Success implies a purpose, however 'purpose' does not really exist in ecosystems. It is important to keep this in mind to understand the use and misuse of the concept of biodiversity.

In this blog I hope to convey its merits and its flaws. But mostly I wish to impart how ecological sustainability requires another perspective on life.

Our skewed perspective on life

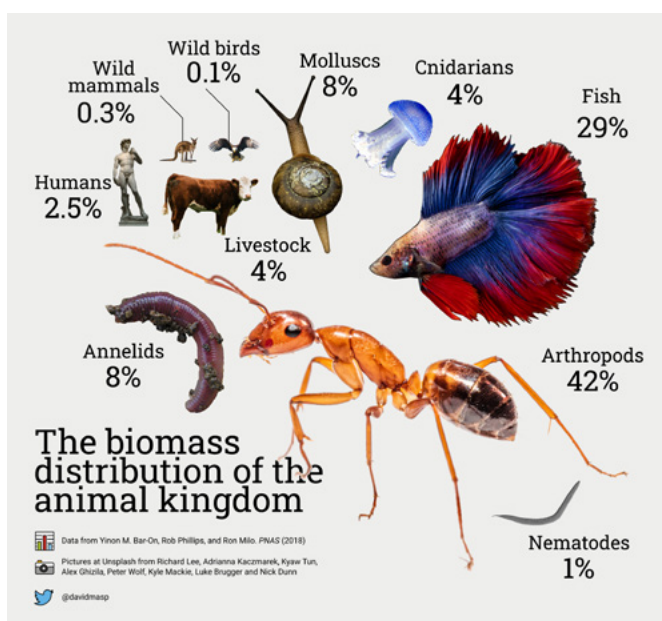
This image (on the right), taken from the first Active8-Planet newsletter, shows a typical representation of biodiversity. We see a variety of animals, mostly mammals, some plants and one arthropod. Pretty diverse right? Sure, from a human perspective this is the diversity we encounter consciously in our daily life. But it is not even close to representing the actual diversity of life on earth.

Representation of 'Planet-Centred Mindset'

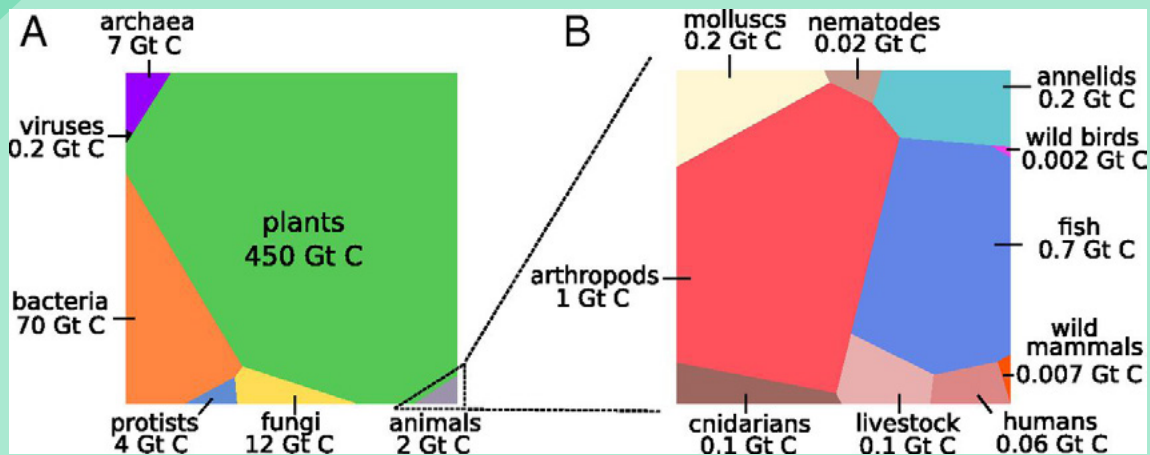


Planet-Centred Mindset

The biomass distribution of the animal kingdom



In this image (on the left) you can see a visual interpretation of the actual worldwide biodiversity in the animal kingdom. It shows that mammals and birds are only a very small part of the world's ecosystem. Arthropods and fish have a much bigger presence! And this image is not representing numbers of individuals. You probably know that we are easily outnumbered by the number of ants living under our house. But this picture shows biomass! The sheer volume of arthropods on our planet outshines our presence almost 20 times. Also note that this is only the animals. If we take all living organisms into account (*a.k.a. life*), such as fungi, plants and bacteria, we get this (*less pretty, but very accurate*) picture.



Graphic representation of the global biomass distribution by taxa. Source: 'The biomass distribution on Earth' by Bar-On, Yinon M. et al. (2018)

In the graphic above you can see that the animals we see as symbols of biodiversity make up only a fraction of life on earth. The majority are by far plants, and next up we have bacteria and fungi. Even this group called *archaea* (cousins of bacteria, which most of you probably never heard of) have a bigger, more voluminous presence on our planet than all animals combined. *Significantly*. Interestingly, this distribution is not something that has changed much over time. Sadly, not many people are considering plants, bacteria or fungi when measuring biodiversity, even though their vast presence on our planet has an immense impact on our climate.

Some ecosystems have been existing steadily for hundreds of thousands of years with a very low biodiversity of, say, 2 to 3 multicellular species. Examples of these sustainable low biodiversity ecosystems can be found in deserts or in extremely acidic lakes. Striving for more biodiversity in such sites could actually make these ecosystems less sustainable.

Indeed, biodiversity could indicate a higher resilience against external or internal stressors, however this is not always the case. Neither is the lack of change necessarily beneficial or more sustainable than certain fluctuations. The changing tide, for example, creates an environment of high biodiversity. If the tides would stop (*I don't know, maybe somebody blows up the moon*), the sudden stability of the seawater would disrupt many lifecycles and cause massive extinction in marine life (*not to mention the catastrophic effect of no more moon, but that's another topic*).

Note also the addition of the word 'multicellular' to the species count. Unfortunately in our strive for biodiversity we tend to focus on species we can see, or in worse cases, species we find useful. This forgoes the essential ecosystem functions of microbes. Though many of them are hard to eradicate (*though*



Photo by James Wheeler on Unsplash

Graphic representation of the global biomass distribution by taxa

we do like to try), forgetting about these microbes in our biodiversity ambition could create areas where they cannot thrive and therefore cause the collapse of the entire ecosystem. Also, since biodiversity tends to work with counting species, microbes can really throw off the count! They tend to be present in very high numbers, and possibly coexisting with thousands of different species, but still be invisible to the naked eye. In some cases their presence is negligible and in others they are essential. Once again proving that biodiversity is not a synonym for a sustainable ecosystem.

Let us embrace our flaws

So no, biodiversity is not in and of itself a useful goal to tally our biological sustainability. Does this

mean we should ignore biodiversity? No. In many cases aiming for biodiversity has created more sustainable ecosystems. It is however not a one-size-fits-all solution. Ecosystems do not adhere to our human centric view of 'healthy' or 'successful'. Each ecosystem is unique, has its own needs and many to us invisible and wholly important species working together, or destroying one another in harmony. *My advice?* Sustainability in ecosystems can be reached by giving it space and trusting nature to do what it does best. Most of these systems are simply beyond our understanding, but luckily they do not need us to understand in order to exist.



A temple in Angkor Wat, Cambodia

RESILIENCE

AMSTERDAM 2022

We are proud to announce that our very own [Giulia Sinatti](#) from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is co-chairing next year's EPIC conference! She will be in good company, with Erin Taylor ([Finthropology](#)) and Johannes Suikkanen ([Gemic](#)).

EPIC promotes the practice of ethnography in industry, organizations, and communities. Its annual conference is a leading event bringing together a global community of people who practice and promote ethnography to ensure that innovation, strategy, products, and services are anchored in deep understanding of culture and people and their everyday lives.

Theme of the 2022 conference is **Resilience!** This concept has mushroomed far beyond what we might think of as its origins in ecological and social/ecological "systems", and is becoming widely used across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. But what does it mean, and to whom? Who is responsible for being resilient, and what should the end goal of resilience be? Who benefits, and who loses? And what does ethnography have to add to discussions about resilience?

Of course this means that Active8-Planet has a seat at the table, providing our students and members with a wonderful chance to reach more people! Follow the conference on [LinkedIn](#) or read more on the [website](#).

ACTIVE8-PLANET PARTNERS:



Slovenia

Institute for Innovation and
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<http://iri.uni-lj.si/en/domov-2/>



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Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

<https://www.vu.nl/en/>



Belgium

Hasselt University

<https://www.uhasselt.be/en>



Sweden

Halmstad University

<https://www.hh.se/english.html>



The Netherlands

Huygen Engineers & Consultants

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Endava

<https://www.endava.com/>



Sweden

Volvo

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Austria

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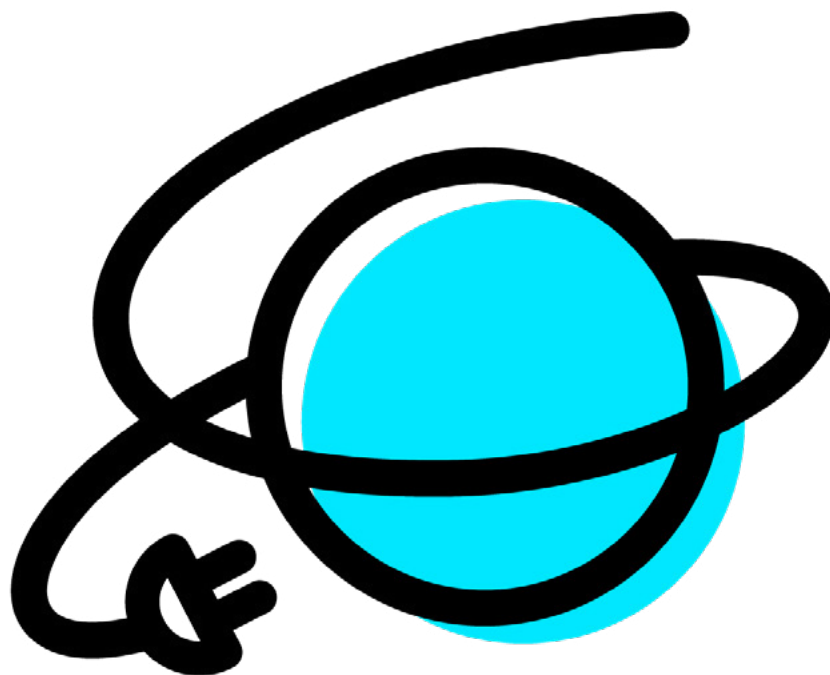
<https://icnm.net/>



Co-funded by the
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Project reference number: 621436-EPP-1-2020-1-SI-EPPKA2-KA



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