

A BOOK ABOUT
HOPE AND LEADERSHIP
TOWARDS A MORE
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ONCE UPON THE FUTURE

EVERYDAY ADVENTURES
THAT CHANGE THE WORLD



THE BOOK is an anthology of six stories, inspired by themes from our own research. The stories aim to trigger the curiosity of children about their environment, highlight the connection between modern life and tradition, and empower readers to bring up change in their surroundings. Throughout our careers as researchers, our focus has been on communicating themes of sustainability to wide and diverse audiences. Writing for children combines our love of creative writing with our passion for telling engaging and exuberant stories about ecological and social issues.

While the book is mainly targeted at children aged 7-11, the stories appeal to the young at heart of all ages. Artist Rita Reis has been engaged as our illustrator, creating a stylish and whimsical look.

In addition to appealing to diverse audiences interested in sustainability-themed adventure stories, the book also has the potential to be marketed as an educational resource: each story is accompanied by a few proposals for follow-up activities, facts and explanations or suggestions for further readings. This will give curious readers the opportunity to dive deeper into the topics, and offer teachers support when using the book in their classrooms. Separately from the book, our team has also developed a companion workbook with related educational resources.



THE AUTHORS are six researchers working for a project about *Sustainable Place-shaping*



Lorena Axinte thinks kids and youth should have more power to change the places where they live, so she's writing a PhD about this in Wales, at Cardiff University. When she's not working on exposing governance and decision-making processes, she cycles, wonders around cities and eats 100% dark chocolate.



Anastasia Papangelou is an environmental engineer with an affinity for organic waste and toilets. When she's not researching the nutrient cycles of cities, she most probably does some sort of improv. Her biggest dream is to make the world a fairer place and one day to become a clown.



Marta Nieto Romero, a graduate in ecology, is exploring communal ways of using natural resources. She is interested in helping people in common lands to discover more regenerative activities. She dreams of a future where forests ecosystems are thriving, and in the meantime, she dances, hikes, and shares time with her non-human companions.

Angela Moriggi is a social scientist working on transdisciplinary projects about sustainability and change. She uses participatory and creative methods to engage different groups of people to discuss, reflect, and act upon their values and visions. She loves to hike, sing, practice yoga, and play board games.



Kelli Rose Pearson is researching the 'inner' dimensions of sustainability and the role of art, storytelling, and delight in spreading the seeds for regenerative ecological civilizations.



Alessandro Vasta is a multidisciplinary globetrotter researching for sustainability and for a more just society. In his spare time he tries to do as much gardening as possible and grow his own food, which he believes is an important way to change the world!



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ALMA IN THE WOODS

Seven year old curious and insecure Alma is sent into the woods by her teacher with talkative classmate Helio, to find a rare plant that can save Crooked Beech Forest from destruction. Soon enough, Alma gets lost and encounters a mysterious lady who offers her a magic Journal, full of tricks and riddles to discover the secrets of the forest. Although Alma and Helio eventually find the rare plant, they fail to obtain it. Instead, they get admitted to the Realm of the Gnomes, stewards of nature biodiversity, who teach them about inter-species caring. Back at the camp, the two unmask the evil character behind the Crooked Beech Forest destruction plan, and get rewarded for helping to conserve the plant.



THE CITY'S HEARTBEAT

Without street games and outdoor life, Asticum - a city that can understand humans through the vibrations they make, is dying. Asticum's last hope is Olivia, a girl obsessed with winning the video game competition against her bully classmate. When Mihnea, an immigrant child moves in, he convinces Olivia, and soon after a few more classmates, to form a secret playing club. Their first outdoor playing escape is harshly punished by their parents, but Olivia makes an unexpected discovery about her parents and their generation. Supported by Teacher Clara, Olivia and Mihnea bring humans out on Asticum's streets again, revitalising the city.

LEGEND OF THE COSMOS MARINERS

Twelve year-old Arlo has been grounded for lighting a stink bomb at school. His punishment? Three days camping with his weird one-eyed Aunt Bloom and his kid cousins. No friends, no phone, no video games. Around the fire, Aunt Bloom weaves a terrifying story of the demonic Hungry Ghosts who are destroying the world and tells the Legend of the Cosmos Mariners - a secret society who have vowed to bring kindness and beauty to the world. Despite himself, Arlo feels the call to adventure and after the others have gone to bed, he heads deep into the forest to face his fears and prove himself worthy.



THE MAGIC JUMBLE

When Charlie, a timid carrot with a big nose, Bo, a free-spirited banana with a bruised eye, and Toni, a stubborn tomato with a mouldy spot on her back, learn that they are to end up in a furnace and turn into ashes, they decide to escape the garbage bin and find the composting site. This is not an easy task for the three: they have to navigate the unknown streets and gutters of the city, avoid rodents and members of the notorious gang of the plastic bottles and make it before dawn, when the garbage truck will get out in the streets. The new day finds them in the composting site, the promised land they had imagined: magical, full of friendly faces and surprises...

FASHIONISTA JAMIE

Jamie, a boy passionate about fashion, enters the local fashion contest, hoping to finally win his classmates' admiration. To his disappointment, he gets sent to the countryside to help his grandma and her rural community with the linen process. Without shops, internet and fashion magazines where will Jamie ever find the inspiration to win the contest? Together with his grandma, he gets to explore a fascinating world of rural practices and natural ways of making clothes, while also learning more about himself.

BRUNAIA

Bruna lives with her parents on an eucalyptus farm. Far away from the city, she feels lonely. When her teacher, Ms. Therese, shows her how harmful eucalyptus are for other species, she decides to save the last little oak tree that she finds on the farm by fleeing away with it. On her way, she discovers that the little oak is called Aia and it can actually talk. Through the door of the Wood-Wide-Web, they are both drawn into a magical adventure as Brunaia. Through their adventures, Bruna discovers her community's ancient bond to the forest and the invisible wonders of nature, and stops feeling alone for the first time. But will a raging fire destroy her new connection and love for the forest and her community?

