

# IPR4SC

## Developing Skills in Intellectual Property Rights Open Data for Sustainability and Circularity

### Using Utopia Realized approach for teaching Sustainability and Circularity

**Part 3 of the IPR4SC Toolkit and Facilitator Handbook for 'I2P for Green' course and module**

## Document Sheet

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## 1. Introduction

Innovation is a key driver for economic growth in general and instrumental in meeting environmental challenges through Sustainable and Circular Development. Intellectual Property (IP) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are crucial in valorising intangible assets and play an increasing role in the global competition for technological and sustainable leadership. EU Intellectual Property action plan to support the EU's recovery and resilience (COM(2020) 760) thus claims that IP and IPR support European Innovation and enable digital and green transition leading to sustainability. Among the challenges is the fast-growing amount and availability of IP data and insufficient level of IP for business skills in smaller firms (SMEs) and entrepreneurs. European university Curriculum mainly includes IP and IPR rights in Law courses, leaving business graduates at a disadvantage regarding using IP data for Innovation and sustainable development.

The main aim of the project, "Developing Skills in Intellectual Property Rights Open Data for Sustainability and Circularity (IPR4SC)", is to meet the challenges mentioned above by developing the curriculum and materials for four VET and HEI courses, including a pilot test for honing the design and

**This document presents an innovative pedagogical framework known as Ecotopia Realized.** This approach is an evolution of the "Utopia Realized" methodology, tailored to engage learners in envisioning sustainable and circular futures while integrating principles of innovation and intellectual property (IP) governance. **Ecotopia Realized has served as a teaching strategy** within the "I2P for Green" course, **focusing on sustainability and circularity by embedding students' learning experiences in scenario-building exercises.** But this is a teaching strategy that can be reapplied more widely. Through steps like defining an ideal sustainable world, analyzing provided cases, and creating personalized cases, students gain hands-on experience in tackling real-world challenges. The approach encourages creative problem-solving, reflection, and the practical application of sustainability and circular economy principles. .By situating sustainability within a vivid, imaginative framework, Ecotopia Realized empowers students to bridge theory and practice, driving meaningful contributions to a greener future.

**Designed for both higher education and vocational training contexts,** this methodology combines **case-based learning with interactive tools and open-source materials.** It enables students from diverse backgrounds to **collaboratively explore transformative ideas for sustainable innovation,** fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between ecological, social, and economic systems.

All the materials have been developed as a part of the IPR4SC project funded by the Erasmus+ Program and are freely available for use in whole or in part for teaching activities **under the Creative Commons Licenses.** Should you wish to consult the Handbook (Part 1a) and Toolkit (Part 1b) as a whole please go to: [https://www.ipr4sc.eu/I2P4Green\\_Facilitator\\_Handbook\\_1a.html](https://www.ipr4sc.eu/I2P4Green_Facilitator_Handbook_1a.html) and to: [https://www.ipr4sc.eu/I2P4Green\\_Toolkit\\_1b.html](https://www.ipr4sc.eu/I2P4Green_Toolkit_1b.html)

Should you wish to consult the real-life cases go to [Part 2](#).



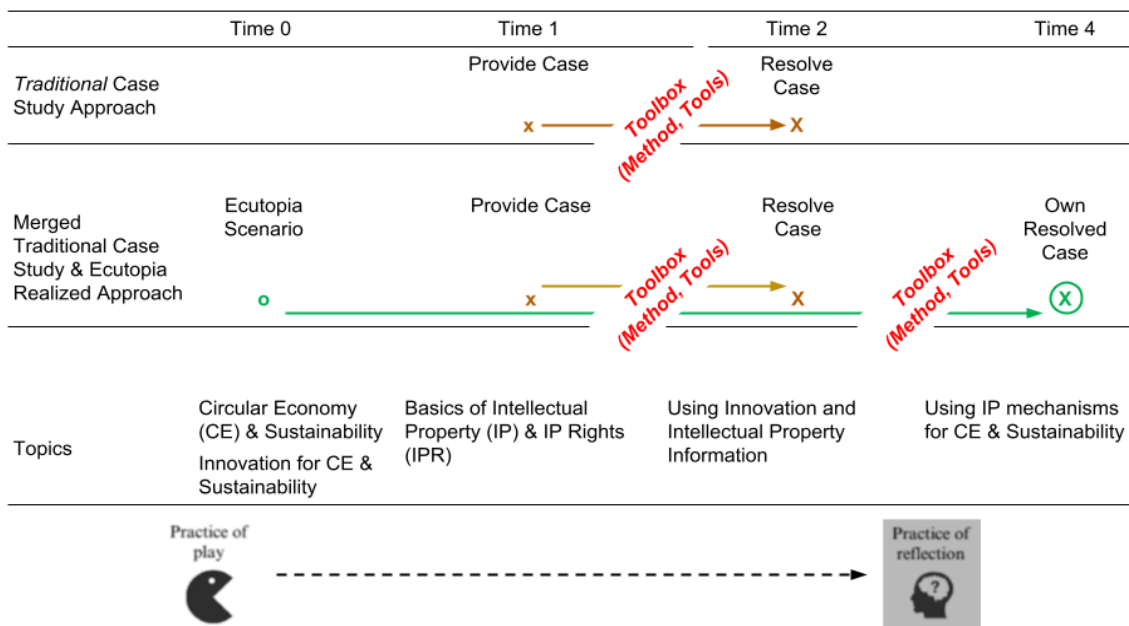
## 2. Ecotopia realized

### 2.1. An extension of the Utopia realizing: Ecotopia realized

In general *utopia* is seen as an expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living or a vision thereof (e.g. alternative social arrangements; alternative economic systems, alternative ways of technology supporting societies functioning and development) (Levitas, 2013; Wiger and Vestrum, 2021; Wigger, 2022). Typically, it would be a non-existent society or a system described in considerable detail (and normally located in time and space).

*Ecotopia realized*, as an extension of the Utopia realizing, is a method for teaching sustainability and circularity, i.e. a scenario building method to allow for embedding cases in sustainability/circularity contexts. Similar as in the Utopia realizing by Wigger et al. (2022), also Ecotopia Realized is designed in a way that **the students first engage in a wishful-thinking scenario of the case context (i.e. utopia) before any case is introduced**. However, then the approach deviates from Wigger et al. (2022) in terms of the future steps, to allow the approach to be used more effectively for the teaching in the intersection of innovation, IP and circularity and sustainability. However, same as Utopia realizing it combines elements from entrepreneurship and sustainability teaching methods through the live case method. Using the latter **we traditionally provide a case to students, together with the method and tools, and encourage them to learn by resolving this provided case**.

### Ecotopia Realized & Practice Based approach: A possible application in the I2P4Green (and the modules)



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**Figure 1: Ecotopia and the traditional case-based approach**

However, Ecotopia realized includes a scenario building and scenario integrating exercise in the start, which allows students to also engage at the beginning in the, what Neck et al. (2021) call, the practice of play and in the end in the practice of reflection.

In comparison to Utopia realizing (Wigger et al., 2022), it deviates in terms of the individual steps, and comprises of:

- **STEP 1: Ecotopia defining**

This part addresses what sustainability/circularity looks like/could be materialized in participants' views. The result is an Ecotopia realized scenario (in which spaced-out ideas + alternative forms of living/economy are possible).

- **STEP 2: Introducing provided cases and resolving them**

Instead of a single case, which is within Utopia realizing then used throughout, this is replaced/enriched by our case studies/practice based approach providing several cases, a toolbox, methods and practice opportunities.

- **STEP 3: Identifying and building own case**

Identifying and building your own case is replacing the pursuit of opportunities element. However, this is integral to allow students to also employ previous knowledge and experience, as well as pursue specific interests, which is key when using the method with participants from different educational, professional backgrounds, as well as with differences in pre-existing knowledge and experience in relevant topics.

- **STEP 4: Engage for Sustainability and Circularity**

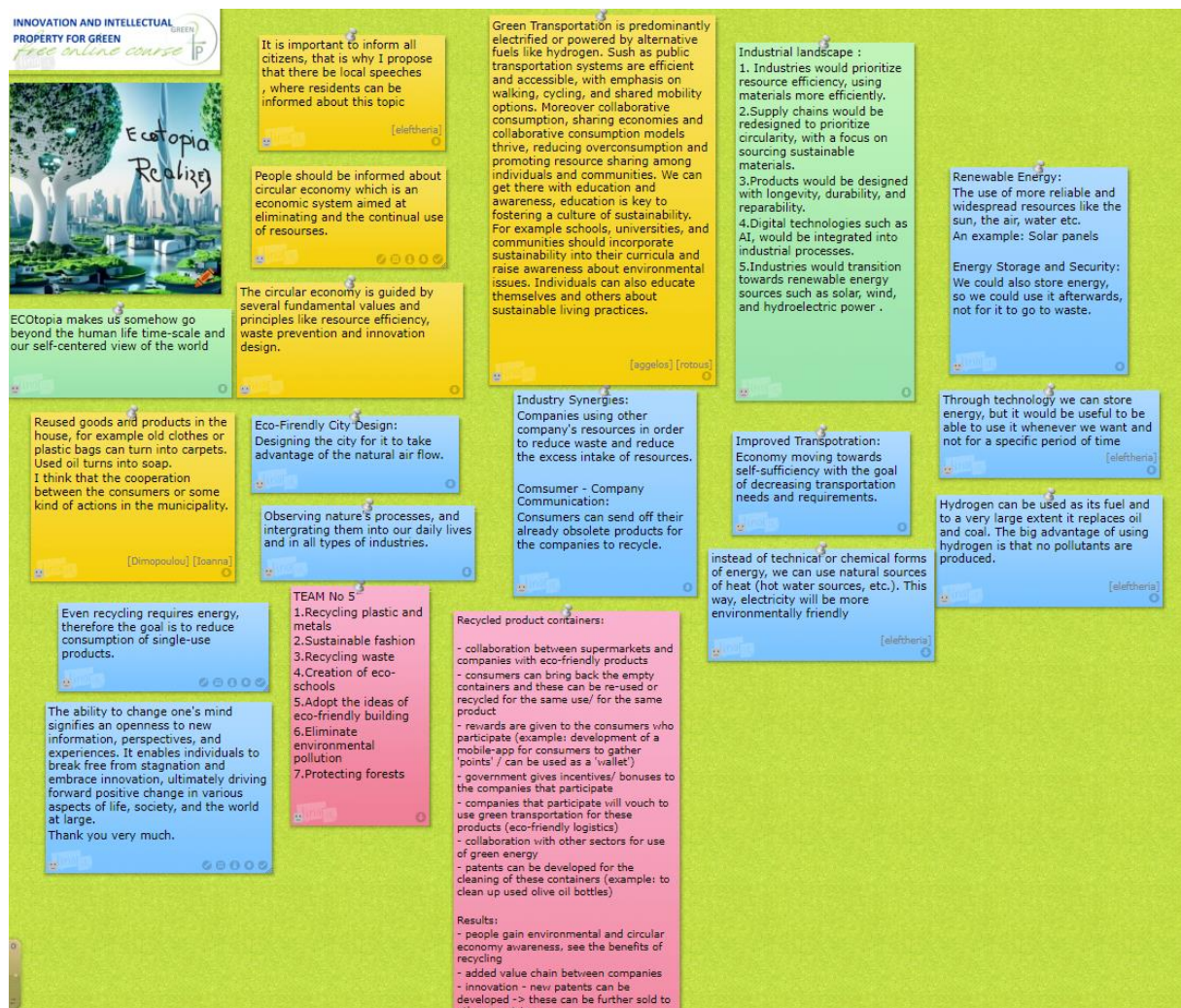
Inside the Ecotopia realized this step is achieved via the end assignment. This end assignment connects the own case, application of the toolbox and methods, which were already practiced and applied on the provided cases, and connects to the developed Ecotopia scenario in step 1.



### 3. Ecotopia realized and the Innovation and Intellectual Property for Green topics

As seen in Figure 3, the topics of the I2P4Green course run parallel to the introduction of the method. To engage in the scenario building at least the topics of sustainability & circular economy (S&CE), and innovation for S&CE would be helpful if introduced. In the end of the course we return to the Ecotopia, as the own resolved case will be embedded in the wishful-thinking scenarios, i.e. the utopias, as were initially designed by students. This interconnects the approaches in the I2P4Green course. However, during the VET modules implementation the Ecotopia exercise is ran at the end of the course first and foremost as a reflection method and to allow students to harness the input for the assignment at the end.

The debrief at the end of the exercise is crucial. This can be done either only verbally or also by using some tool – in our pilot implementations we have used the open software Linoit.



Picture: Ecotopia Realized exercise from the VET wrap up module

## 4. Implementation of the Utopia Realized

### 4.1. The instructions

#### INSTRUCTION SHEET ECOTOPIA REALIZED

*In this exercise you address issues that relate to the three pillars of sustainability and the CE toolbox*



#### THE TASK

**Answer the question in assigned groups (35 mins):**

**How does the circular and sustainable world of the future look to you? How do we get there?**

#### SOME HINTS<sup>1</sup>:

- Address basic values and principles.
- Describe how our industrial landscape might look like in this new circular and sustainable world.
- Talk about social, economic, and ecological relations, locally and globally.
- Contemplate what our environment and overall ecological situation would look like.
- Talk about basic institutions, regulations etc. related to sustainability and circularity.
- Focus on a typical character of space – on any level: house, your street, your city, ... or the world as a whole.
- Provide a narrative of political and daily life.

#### HOW?

- Work in assigned groups with other participants (35 minutes).
- Breakout rooms (1 group = 1 room) – going away from the main room for the duration of the task and coming back for a debrief in the end of the 35 minutes – you should be brought back automatically – if not, just rejoin the session.
- During breakout rooms you will be briefly visited by one of our colleges

<sup>1</sup> You can choose to focus on all of these issues, some of these issues, or approach this task in another way.



- Spaced-out ideas + alternative forms of living/economy are possible during your discussion in the group. Be active! Have fun!

## 4.2. The accompanying slides



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# I2P4Green course

## Ecotopia Realized exercise

Dolores Modic  
[Dolores.modic@nord.no](mailto:Dolores.modic@nord.no)  
Nord University

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# From Utopia to Ecotopia Realized (1)

## Utopia

- **Expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living or a vision thereof** (e.g. alternative social arrangements; alternative economic systems, alternative ways of technology supporting societies functioning and development)
- **Non-existent society/system described** in considerable detail (and normally located in time and space)



## Why bother?

Common utopia **as a directionality** for sustainability transitions and transformations



Picture source: <https://www.zmescience.com/science/ecotopia-project-cities/>  
Developing Skills in Intellectual Property Rights Open Data for Sustainability and Circularity

# Group work (approx. 35 mins)

- Random **groups with other participants.**
- **Breakout rooms (1 group = 1 room)** – going away to groups - coming back for a debrief in the end; /visit by one of our colleagues
- **Instruction sheet** in the **chat – download now!**
- Feel free to prepare a slide/a document or a picture, which can allow you to tell us about your ideas.

**Keep in mind:** Building joint goals/scenarios or visions for the future **needs your active participation.**

**Don't be a «sitting duck»!**

**Have fun** while providing your inputs and discussing.



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## 5. Literature list and list of other resources

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Springer.

Wigger, K. and Vestrum, I. (2021). Sustainability in Practice: Session 3. Course presentation slides. In authors' archive.

Wigger, K., Vestrum, I., Jin, F., & Solvoll, S. (2022). From Utopia to sustainable entrepreneurship: a novel case methodology. In *Reframing the Case Method in Entrepreneurship Education* (pp. 130-138). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Springer.

Wigger, K. and Vestrum, I. (2021). Sustainability in Practice: Session 3. Course presentation slides. In authors' archive.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The project consortia would like to above all thank all the participants in the I2P course and modules: the students, the observers providing peer-feedback, the experts participating (WIPO and ABCD) directly in the sessions, but also all those that have helped us to create the materials for the I2P4Green course and modules. We are grateful to all those who took the time to talk to us, in particular also to Andrea Larson (University of Virginia, USA) and *Karin Wigger* (Linkoping University, Sweden) for providing us with valuable input during the teaching event, both on using case studies, as well as on the intricacies of using Utopia in sustainability contexts.