

Cultural Heritage for Inclusive
Growth Collection

Cultural heritage and human development

Introduction to the Cultural Heritage for
Inclusive Growth Collection

Chris Dalglish

October 2023



Acknowledgements

Series Editor

Dr Chris Dalglish, Inherit

Series Manager

Nikki Locke, British Council

Special thanks to

Angelica Burrill, Stephanie Grant, Rosanna Lewis, Jonathan Morley, Stephen Stenning and Ian Thomas (British Council)

Skye McAlpine Walker and Aphrodite Sorotou (Inherit)

Stephen Hignell and the team at Nordicity

Stamos Abatis (graphic design)

The Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth Collection

Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth (CH4IG) is a British Council action research programme which, since 2018, has been exploring how local culture can improve the lives of individuals around the world. The essays in this collection were originally commissioned by the British Council and Nordicity as independent thematic studies during the pilot phase of the programme. They have since been updated by their authors and edited for the British Council by Inherit.

The essays are published as part of the British Council's What Works Cultural Heritage Protection programme, which is designed to support better outcomes for heritage protection and local communities by bringing the best available

evidence to practitioners and other decision-makers across the international heritage protection sector.

Together, the essays explore the role of cultural heritage in bringing about the change which is needed to secure a sustainable future for people and the planet. The collection explores the relationship between heritage and sustainable development from different geographical, topical and philosophical perspectives. The diverse essays are bound by common themes, namely that cultural heritage is at the heart of human development; that cultural relations create conditions in which human development can occur, and; that human development is enabled by people-centred approaches and transparent, accountable and participatory governance.

The author

Dr Chris Dalglish is a director of Inherit, the York Archaeological Trust's Institute for Heritage & Sustainable Human Development. With over 20 years experience in the heritage sector, he is an expert in cultural heritage and sustainable development. He has a particular interest in the role of heritage in social justice and in how communities can use their heritage to come together and take action which improves their lives.

Dr Dalglish joined the York Archaeological Trust in 2017 after a career in the public sector, academia and commercial heritage practice. He helped the Trust to establish Inherit and, as one of the institute's directors, is responsible for developing and delivering its work programmes. He has led major Inherit projects in the UK, across Europe and in Asia, working with diverse communities, NGOs, public bodies, government agencies and other partners.

The editors

The collection was edited by Dr Chris Dalglish (series editor) and Skye McAlpine Walker (copy editor and proofreader) of Inherit.

Inherit – the York Archaeological Trust's Institute for Heritage & Sustainable Human Development – supports community development through cultural heritage (<https://www.inherit-institute.org>). We help people to safeguard, sustain and transmit their heritage. We provide practical support to communities so that they can fulfil their cultural rights and use their heritage for the collective good. We carry out purposeful research and advocate evidence-based policy change which enables people to care for their heritage and achieve their development goals. We help other organisations to improve their programmes and services for the benefit of the communities they work with. We collaborate with communities, non-profit organisations, public institutions and experts around the world.

The York Archaeological Trust (<https://www.yorkarchaeologicaltrust.co.uk>) has been safeguarding heritage and making a difference to people's lives since 1972. The Trust is a self-funded educational charity which discovers and protects archaeology and built heritage and enables people to enjoy and benefit from this heritage in its home city of York, elsewhere in the UK and internationally.

The British Council

The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

Copyright and DOI

© British Council 2023. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

This essay was commissioned by the British Council, edited by Inherit and authored by Chris Dalglish.

Suggested citation: Dalglish, C (2023) *Cultural Heritage and Human Development*. British Council. Available online: doi.org/10.57884/7wxh-hv33

Contents

Introduction	06
The Cultural Turn in Development	08
Culture and Sustainable Development in the 21st Century	10
The Relationship Between Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development	13
Cultural heritage and and the Purpose of development	13
Cultural heritage and the Conditions for Development	13
Challenges in Realising the Potential of Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development	16
The Movement for Change	19
References	24

The Bahnar women playing gong at a local festival in Mo H'ra village, Kbang district in Gia Lai province. Heritage of Future Past in Viet Nam, a Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project.

Front cover photograph by Le Xuan Phong.

Introduction

Culture is a fundamental part of the global vision for development. In adopting the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) pledged:

... to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development.¹

The UNGA reaffirmed this position in 2021² and, in 2022, 150 UNESCO Member States adopted the MONDIACULT Declaration affirming culture as a 'global public good' and committing to 'a forward-looking agenda that fully harnesses the transformative impact of culture for the sustainable development'.³

The *2030 Agenda* represents a paradigm shift in global development policy and is informed by a new understanding of the relationship between culture and development which took hold in the decades prior to its adoption. Yet this 'cultural turn' has yet to be fully realised in the implementation of development around the world. There is a need to continue advocating for culture and to share learning about how its development potential can be realised at local and international levels.

The British Council is active in this regard, as the UK's international organisation for cultural relations, and as part of its mission to support peace and prosperity by building connections, trust and understanding between people in the UK and countries worldwide. Through its *Missing Pillar* reports and talks,⁴ the British Council is making the case for why culture matters for sustainable

development. In the field of cultural heritage, it has been providing practical support to people and organisations around the world through the Cultural Protection Fund⁵ and programmes such as Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth⁶ and Our Shared Cultural Heritage.⁷

The essays in this collection were originally commissioned by the British Council as independent thematic studies during the pilot phase of Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth. They have since been updated by their authors and edited for the British Council by Inherit.⁸ The essays are published as part of the Cultural Protection Fund's What Works programme to share learning and evidence on heritage and sustainable development. Together, the essays explore the role of cultural heritage in bringing about the change which is needed to secure a sustainable future for people and the planet.

The essays in this collection explore the relationship between heritage and sustainable development from different geographical, topical and philosophical perspectives, and the collection makes a distinctive contribution to understanding in this field. For the authors, cultural heritage is not just a bounded set of objects, monuments or traditions of the past which have persisted into the present. Rather, heritage is active in the here and now as an inextricable part of people's diverse and constantly evolving cultural lives. In the current context, cultural heritage can be defined as a collective inheritance which people wish to carry forward, adapt and use creatively as the basis of their self-determined development.

Three overarching conclusions emerge from the collection as a whole:

1. Cultural heritage is at the heart of human

development:

The fulfilment of people's right to cultural life is an essential part of sustainable development because cultural life, in all its forms, is essential to human wellbeing and dignity. Cultural heritage is at the root of cultural diversity and, as such, it is necessary to self-determined development. People's heritage shapes their values and sense of who they are, their understanding of the present and how it came about, and their visions of what the future should look like and how change should be achieved; it provides them with the capability to lead this change.

2. Cultural relations create conditions for human development:

Cultural relations activities bring people together within the space of culture and civil society to build relationships based on the principle of mutuality. They serve sustainable development by creating trust, understanding and sustained cooperation and promoting peace, justice and tolerance. Development typically involves – and can require – the interaction of different communities, organisations and institutions both from the local area and wider afield, including across national and cultural boundaries. For those relationships to flourish and be equitable – and for development to succeed and be appropriate to its context – a deep understanding of cultural differences needs to be at the centre of the process.

3. Alongside the evidence for what works, analysis of how it works is critical to the spread of good practice:

Human development is by its nature context-specific and it cannot be assumed that successful examples can simply be scaled up and replicated elsewhere. However, analysis of how positive change has been achieved in particular circumstances can generate learning which is of wider relevance. Rather than rigidly copying particular models and methods, the focus should be on identifying the underlying principles which characterise successful and ethical human development processes.

These points are discussed further in the overall conclusion to the collection, where recommendations are made under each heading. To provide the necessary background, and to situate the individual essays of the collection in their wider context, the remainder of this introduction explores major trends in the field of culture and development and introduces the British Council's work in this area.

1. UNGA, 2015, p 10

2. UNGA, 2021, p 2

3. UNESCO, 2022a, p 1

4. British Council & Nordicity, 2020; <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/the-missing-pillar-sdgs>

5. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund>

6. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-heritage>

7. <https://oursharedculturalheritage.org>

8. The Institute for Heritage & Sustainable Human Development, part of the York Archaeological Trust; <https://www.inherit-institute.org>; <https://www.yorkarchaeologicaltrust.co.uk>

The Cultural Turn in Development

Over the last four decades there has been a ‘cultural turn’ in global development policy, with the result that cultural sustainability has come to the forefront as a policy goal and culture has been recognised as a means to sustainable development more generally.⁹

In the decades after the Second World War, multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and bilateral aid agencies propagated technocratic and neo-liberal models of international development through which they sought – paternalistically – to transform ‘backward’ or ‘underdeveloped’ societies.¹⁰ Through formulaic, top-down programmes which disregarded local agency, culture and diversity, development assistance was used to impose industrialisation and other economic reforms. This model sought to universalise particular ideas of ‘modernisation’ which are rooted in the histories, mindsets and interests of the West and the Soviet Union, and which privilege economic growth.

Over time, the conventional economic wisdom that ‘all growth is good growth’ has been undermined by the evidence of a widening gap between rich and poor.¹¹ According to the OECD, ‘Growth as we know it doesn’t work for all and is putting everyone’s wellbeing at risk’.¹² Economic growth often has limited benefits for marginalised people and for those in poverty. Likewise, development models which produce or exacerbate inequalities are unsustainable.¹³

The response to this need for a new model is ‘sustainable development’. When the ideas behind sustainable development were first articulated in the 1970s and ‘80s – notably by the UN World

Commission on Environment and Development¹⁴ – the main concern was for environmental sustainability, but there was also a growing interest in cultural sustainability and the integration of cultural, social, economic and environmental goals.

People and countries in the so-called Global South played a significant role in propagating new ideas about development, and in the adoption of these ideas by the UN and others.¹⁵ For example, when the UN Secretary General announced the Decade for Culture and Development in 1987, this was in answer to pressure from the Group of 77 (G-77) ‘developing’ countries. Similarly, the evolving ambit of UNESCO – the UN’s body for education, science and culture – in part reflects its expanding and diversifying membership, the priorities of new post-colonial states, and concern across the Global South about the challenges of rapid economic development.

For their part, the UN and its agencies have fostered the new development agenda through initiatives such as the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies, the Decade for Culture and Development (1988-97), the World Commission on Culture and Development, the 1998 Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Sustainable Development, and the World Culture Reports of 1998 and 2000.¹⁶

This growing interest in culture is part of a wider shift exemplified by the ‘human development’ approach of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP ‘introduced a new approach for advancing human wellbeing [and] expanding the richness of human life, rather than



simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live’.¹⁷ The UNDP’s Human Development Index emphasised ‘that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone’.¹⁸ Culture and cultural diversity have a natural place at the heart of this people-centred way of defining and pursuing development.

Men from the Bahnar ethnic group, Mo H'ra village presenting their wooden statues. Heritage of Future Past in Viet Nam, a Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project

Photograph © Nguyen Ngoc Hai

9. UNESCO, 2022b, p 2; Singh, 2019; 2022; see also British Council & Nordicity, 2020

10. Singh, 2019, pp 9-10

11. Antink et al, 2020, p 12; Singh, 2019, p 7, 9

12. <http://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth>

13. See eg Lewis, 2018, p 7; RSA Inclusive Growth Commission, 2017, p 2; Stott, 2017

14. World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987

15. Vrdoljak & Francioni, 2020, p 4

16. UNESCO, 1998, 2000

17. <https://hdr.undp.org/about-hdro>

18. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>

Culture and Sustainable Development in the 21st Century

The cultural turn has had an increasing impact on UN development frameworks over time. The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment & Development recognised culture in particular terms by acknowledging the traditional knowledge and practices of Indigenous Peoples and their role in environmental management and development.¹⁹ The Millennium Declaration of 2000 was broader in striving 'for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of ... cultural rights for all'.²⁰

The current framework – the *2030 Agenda* – calls for transformative action to achieve prosperity, wellbeing, equity, peace, justice and environmental sustainability for all.²¹ It is anchored in human rights²² and sees the purpose of development as being to achieve human wellbeing and dignity, with the means of development being people's participation, on their own terms, as agents of change.²³

The *2030 Agenda* explicitly acknowledges the contribution of culture²⁴ which, although it does not have a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), is seen to pervade all 17 SDGs²⁵ and is explicitly present in the SDG targets for safeguarding cultural heritage (target 11.4) and for education and sustainable tourism (targets 4.7, 8.9 and 12.b).

The links between culture and development have also been strengthened in other policy areas, particularly in human rights and cultural policies.

The International Bill of Human Rights – ie the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), the

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) – recognises the right for everyone to take part in cultural life.

Interpretation of this right has evolved over time.²⁶ When the UDHR was adopted in 1948, cultural rights were limited to the participation of individual citizens in the (homogenous) cultural life of the national community and 'cultural life' narrowly meant culture as defined by institutions, with an emphasis on 'high culture' – the performing and literary arts, painting, sculpture, museums and monuments.

In the 1960s, with the adoption of the ICESCR and ICCPR, cultural rights began to be interpreted in a more anthropological manner. In 2009, the UN Committee which monitors implementation of the ICESCR clarified that culture is a 'living process, historical, dynamic and evolving' which encompasses:

... ways of life, language, oral and written literature, music and song, non-verbal communication, religion or belief systems, rites and ceremonies, sport and games, methods of production or technology, natural and man-made environments, food, clothing and shelter and the arts, customs and traditions.²⁷

Over time, the distinct policy areas of cultural rights and development have converged. The UN Special Rapporteur on cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki, has recently underlined that cultural



Misak artisan using a spindle to work wool. Sewing Our Knowledge in Colombia, a Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project.

Photograph © British Council Colombia

19. UNGA, 1992, p 4

20. UNGA, 2000, p 7

21. UNGA, 2015

22. Xanthaki, 2021, pp 4-5

23. Singh, 2019, pp 17-18

24. UNGA, 2015, p 10

25. UNESCO, 2022b, p 6

26. See Donders, 2008; Groni, 2008; Stamatopolou, 2008

27. Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights 2009

rights are indispensable to development²⁸ and the UN Committee on ESC Rights is working on a new authoritative statement on the relationships between those rights and sustainable development.²⁹

International cultural and heritage frameworks have also evolved as part of this broad trend. In the 2000s, UNESCO reached beyond its traditional focus on tangible heritage and redefined the purpose of cultural and heritage policy through the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) and the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005).³⁰ The latter was the first standard-setting instrument to link culture and sustainable development at the heart of the rights and obligations of Parties.³¹

At the same time, the Council of Europe brought forward the *Convention on the Value of Cultural*

Heritage for Society (2005). This explicitly places heritage in the context of human rights and sustainable development. It has people at the heart of its definition of heritage, which is not a concrete entity but ‘resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions’. The convention introduces the concept of ‘heritage communities’, ie people ‘who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations’.

As part of its wider work on culture and cultural heritage, the Council of Europe has developed an Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD) to map trends in access to culture and participation in cultural life.³²



CPF-funded ‘Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Palestinians living in the South Hebron Hills’ project; interview with youth researcher.

Photograph © Coventry University

28. Xanthaki, 2021, pp 4-6, 24

29. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr/general-comment-sustainable-development-and-international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural>

30. See Scovazzi, 2019, Blake, 2020; Vrdoljak & Francioni, 2020

31. British Council & Nordicity, 2020, p 11; Xanthaki, 2021, p 6

32. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/indicators-culture-and-democracy>

The Relationship Between Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development

In development contexts, cultural heritage is often discussed in terms of its utility for particular social, environmental and especially economic ends. This is an important consideration, and cultural heritage has acknowledged value in relation to each of the 17 SDGs,³³ but it’s worth stressing that heritage has potential for sustainable development in two other senses: as a core part of the purpose of development and as a means of self-determined human development.

Cultural Heritage and the Purpose of Development

The purpose of development – as articulated by the UNDP and the *2030 Agenda* – is to promote human well-being and dignity; in contrast ‘development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul.’³⁴

Well-being and dignity are experienced subjectively and their meaning varies according to people’s diverse ways of life; ways of seeing the world; knowledge and practices; institutions; social systems; and relationships with the natural world. If this cultural diversity is not taken into account, only one vision of development will prevail (that rooted in colonialism). In order to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’, there can be no ‘one size fits all’ approach to development and it is vital to respond to people’s particular needs and circumstances, including the character of their

cultural lives.³⁵

Emphasising this point, UN Special Rapporteur, Alexandra Xanthaki, has stated that, in order to achieve the radical social and economic transformation which is needed to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical violation of cultural rights in the name of development and to respect alternative visions for development which express the cultural diversity of humanity.³⁶

In this light, nurturing cultural diversity and cultural heritage is indispensable to human development. Heritage is not just an instrumental means of achieving other goals – be they economic, social or environmental – it is an end in itself as part of the fulfilment of people’s right to cultural life.

Cultural Heritage and the Conditions for Development

The human development approach looks to people as the source of their own development and seeks to expand their capabilities and freedoms, focusing on *what they can be and what they can do*. From this perspective, as an enabler of development, cultural heritage is more than a means to particular

ends; it enhances people’s capabilities in a much deeper and broader sense.

Highlighting the importance of heritage encourages people and institutions to look beyond the immediate future and place themselves within

33. UNGA, 2021, p 6; Labadi et al, 2021; British Council & Nordicity, 2020

34. World Commission on Culture & Development, 1995, p 15

35. See eg Antink, et al, 2020, pp 122-4; Xanthaki, 2022

36. Xanthaki, 2022, pp 8-9

longer narratives of what has been received from past generations and what will be left to future generations. Taking heritage as a starting point for change is a means of promoting culturally diverse visions of development, enabling people to imagine where they might go from here, on the basis of where they have come from. Placing heritage at the heart of development helps to promote other ways of understanding and living within the world. It empowers people to bring forward alternatives to the development models which focus on economic growth in isolation; alternatives which are needed to end poverty and tackle rising inequalities, realise human wellbeing and dignity for all, and respond to the deep harm which has been caused to nature and the climate.

When it comes to realising their diverse visions for development, 'heritage communities' around the world have inherited manifold skills, knowledge and material resources which they can deploy for the common good. Cultural heritage also enables community-led development as a source of the necessary social capital, collective confidence and common interest. It can contribute towards creating the fundamental conditions for human development – conditions such as inclusion, self-determination, peace, trust and cooperation.

Inclusion

The UN General Assembly has pledged, in the *2030 Agenda*, 'that no one will be left behind' and stated that 'all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment', with the emphasis on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.³⁷

Culture is 'a driving force towards a more inclusive world'³⁸ and an equitable means of including people in the process of development and its benefits. The British Council and its partners have championed this perspective through their work on heritage and inclusive growth.³⁹ To this end, they have adopted a people-centred approach,

working with and for people, paying particular attention to those who have been marginalised, and supporting people to use their own resources and capabilities – their cultural inheritance and identity – to pursue development which meets their own needs and aspirations.

Self-determination

For development to be sustainable, it must be self-determined and community-led.⁴⁰ The principle of equitable and empowered participation in the economy and society, in cultural life and in the processes, decisions and benefits of development runs through the *2030 Agenda* as well as current human rights and cultural frameworks.

Culture and self determination go hand-in-hand. Self-determined development is change which aligns with people's aspirations, ways of life and ways of seeing the world.⁴¹ Culture is an asset which exists within all communities and places, affording possibilities for all and enabling people to bring their own resources to bear in solving problems relating to their circumstances.⁴²

In adopting a people-centred approach, the British Council recognises that:

... it's important that the challenges that are being addressed are mutually identified by the people facing them, and any subsequent solutions are co-created and delivered. This promotes individual agency, and ensures that socially and politically excluded groups/individuals have the opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the decisions and changes that affect their lives.⁴³

In implementing this approach through its *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth* programme, the British Council has supported locally-led initiatives in which those closest to their heritage identify their goals and how best to address them.⁴⁴

37. UNGA, 2015, pp 1-2

38. UNESCO, 2022b, p 11

39. Lewis et al, 2018; Antink et al,

40. Xanthaki, 2022, pp 8-9

41. Xanthaki, 2022, pp 8-9

42. Singh, 2022, pp 7-8

43. British Council, 2022

44. Lewis et al, 2018, p 11

Peace, trust and cooperation

The *2030 Agenda* has peace as one of its cross-cutting principles and it promotes partnership between countries, stakeholders and people as a means of enabling sustainable development.⁴⁵ For UNESCO, cultural relations are important to achieving these conditions of cooperation and peace:

In this more fragmented and volatile world ... multilateral dialogue is needed more than ever before to address issues that transcend national borders ... What culture has to bring, in that context, is its power to bridge people and countries, offering more inclusive, participative and collaborative patterns, to foster mutual understanding and forge a renewed paradigm for multilateralism, which places human dignity at its heart.⁴⁶

This is a point which the British Council has also voiced, and which it has made real through its heritage programmes.⁴⁷

Cultural relations activities are conducted by state and/or non-state actors. They bring people, organisations and institutions together within the space of culture and civil society for reciprocal interactions which cross national and cultural boundaries. The outcomes include better mutual understanding; greater connectivity; more and deeper relationships; mutually beneficial transactions; and enhanced, sustained dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion.⁴⁸

The cultural relations approach to development seeks to establish people-to-people relationships based on trust, cooperation and mutual benefit over the long term, making it well suited to tackling global challenges which require sustained effort and genuine collaboration.⁴⁹

The value of a cultural relations approach to heritage lies in its ability to connect the protection, promotion and reimagining of heritage, on the one

hand, with communities and their development, on the other.⁵⁰ This approach shifts the focus from formulaic procedures to processes which are more attuned to the values, beliefs and practices of the participating communities and social groups.⁵¹ It provides pathways to transcending the paternalism of past development paradigms and supporting inclusion and self-determination.⁵²

45. UNGA, 2015, p 2

46. UNESCO, 2022b, p 3

47. Lewis et al, 2018, p 4

48. Ian Thomas, British Council, personal communication

49. Ian Thomas, British Council, personal communication

50. Singh et al, 2021, p 38

51. Ian Thomas, British Council, personal communication

52. Singh, 2022, p 4

Challenges in Realising the Potential of Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development

While there is broad, high-level recognition of the significance of cultural heritage for development, there are challenges to overcome in putting the principles into practice around the world.

Cultural heritage and the cultural sector are vulnerable to the global environmental, health and economic crises which have exacerbated structural fragilities and inequalities.⁵³ In some places, cultural life is also threatened by armed conflict, destruction, illicit trafficking and the violation of human rights.⁵⁴ Political and social oppression frequently include the active suppression of people's cultural identities and practices, violence against distinct cultural communities, and destruction of the tangible symbols and sites of cultural expression.⁵⁵ Extractive and unsustainable economic development is wrecking communities, livelihoods and ways of life through land-grabbing and land-clearing, forced displacement and resettlement, and heritage destruction.⁵⁶

Even in the context of 'sustainable development', and despite the cultural turn in global development policy, cultural heritage is still not sufficiently recognised in policy and supported in practice and through the necessary infrastructure.

From a policy perspective, while culture is now embedded in global development frameworks, the 'cultural turn' has yet to run its course. The *2030 Agenda* promotes three pillars of sustainable development – the economic, social and environmental – and culture is seen as a cross-cutting enabler and contributor to development.

This relegates culture to an instrumental role in achieving other development goals, rather than seeing cultural sustainability as an end in itself; for many cultural actors, culture is a 'missing pillar' which needs to be given greater prominence in the development agenda.⁵⁷

While many countries have culture ministries, institutions and cultural policy frameworks, the situation is variable across the different world regions and cultural policy tends to remain isolated from other policy areas.⁵⁸ 'Sustainable development' strategies and interventions all too often reflect dominant cultural viewpoints, ignore cultural diversity or seek to exploit and co-opt it, and cause significant cultural harm in pursuing particular economic, social or environmental objectives.

Too often development projects are not community led, and they rarely incorporate cultural rights.⁵⁹ In arguing these points, Xanthaki cites the example of 'fortress conservation' programmes which protect nature in ways which harm local communities and their cultural lives, lack community consent and sometimes involve the forced displacement of people and the violent prevention of their return. She also cites the example of renewable energy development, where wind, solar and hydropower projects can violate the land, resource and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities.⁶⁰

Within the cultural sector there is insufficient adoption of the language of sustainable development, the *2030 Agenda* and the SDGs by



Cham women from Ninh Thuan province introducing traditional cuisine. Heritage of Future Past Viet Nam, a Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project.

Photograph © Nguyen Ngoc Hai

53. UNESCO, 2022a, p 2; 2022b, pp4-5

54. UNESCO, 2022a, p 2

55. Singh, 2019, pp 21-22

56. Xanthaki, 2022, p 18

57. British Council & Nordicity, 2020; Xanthaki, 2022, p 4

58. UNESCO, 2022b, pp 3-4

59. Xanthaki, 2022, p 4

60. Xanthaki, 2022, pp 18-19

cultural and heritage organisations and practitioners.⁶¹ While there are examples of good practice in linking culture with development, this is a nascent approach and there are still many untapped opportunities.⁶²

Even where culture is at the centre of development, there are risks.⁶³ For example, urban regeneration which draws on the historic character of a place can lead to gentrification and the cultural and/or physical dislocation of long-standing residents. In both urban and rural areas, efforts to promote cultural tourism tend to focus on tangible heritage attractions (severed from their heritage communities) or reduce living culture to a performance.

There is still a tendency in many national and local contexts for development practice to be paternalistic rather than truly inclusive and participatory.⁶⁴ In Global North-South development engagements the ‘history and legacy of colonialism are the elephants in the room’ and the international institutions which drive the human development agenda can be distant from communities, practitioners and realities on the ground.⁶⁵

Effective and ethical practice requires an appropriate infrastructure.⁶⁶ Communities and practitioners need adequate political, financial and technical support and they need to inhabit ecosystems formed of equitable relationships with people, organisations and institutions in the local area and beyond. Barriers to heritage-led development include a lack of adequate and appropriate political buy-in, public support and funding; volatile economic models; insufficient social security in the cultural sector; the fragmentation of the cultural sector itself; and gaps in skills and knowledge.⁶⁷

To gain more support, evidence is needed for the contribution of culture to human development and the SDGs, but the relevant data has either not been collected or it is inconsistent and remains fragmented and scattered across diverse

institutions. There is insufficient coordination between different public authorities and sectors, and a gap in the monitoring framework for the SDGs which does not include the necessary mechanisms relating to cultural contributions.⁶⁸

61. British Council & Nordicity, 2020, p 40; Labadi et al, 2021, pp 14-15

62. Antink et al, 2020, p 98

63. Xanthaki, 2022, pp 17-18, 21-22

64. Antink et al, 2020, p 20; Singh, 2022, p 9; Xanthaki, 2022, pp 20-21

65. Singh, 2019, pp 12-13, 18

66. ngh, 2019, p 23; 2022, p 9

67. UNESCO, 2022b, pp 8-9; Lewis et al, 2018, p 20

68. UNESCO, 2022b, p 10; Xanthaki, 2022, pp 13-14; British Council & Nordicity, 2020, p 13

The Movement for Change

Responding to some of the challenges outlined above, there has been a long-running campaign to integrate culture more fully in the global development agenda.

In the run up to the adoption of the *2030 Agenda*, United Cities & Local Governments and several international civil society organisations campaigned under the banner #culture2015goal. After 2015, the campaign evolved into #culture2030goal.⁶⁹

UNESCO has also been active on this front. At the 2022 MONDIACULT *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development*, culture ministers from 150 UNESCO Member States called on the UN Secretary General ‘to firmly anchor culture as a global public good, and to integrate it as a specific goal in its own right in the development agenda beyond 2030.’⁷⁰ This comes after the UN General Assembly decided in 2021 to consider the contribution of culture to sustainable development in the follow-up and review framework of the *2030 Agenda*⁷¹ and it follows UNESCO’s long-running efforts to raise awareness, for example through the Culture|2030 Indicators.⁷²

Since 2015, the British Council has been a prominent voice in this field, making a distinctive contribution which is rooted in the organisation’s cultural relations mission.

The British Council’s work is guided by the UK’s international development strategy, which prioritises attainment of the SDGs and identifies culture (including cultural heritage) as one of the

UK’s soft power strengths.⁷³

Within this strategic context, as a non-departmental public body, the British Council works at arm’s length from government to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.⁷⁴ In the arts and culture, it promotes cultural exchange, the growth of the creative economy and cultural responses to global challenges.⁷⁵ In relation to the latter, its work:

... focuses on the transformative power of arts and culture. It protects and nurtures valued cultural heritage, supporting environmentally sustainable development and well-being. It creates opportunities for people, institutions and communities to connect and respond to challenges with local impact and global relevance.⁷⁶

The British Council has been promoting understanding of the significance of culture for sustainable development through its *Missing Pillar* reports and talks⁷⁷ and through publications on *Culture and International Development*,⁷⁸ *Soft Power and Cultural Relations Approaches in International Heritage Protection*,⁷⁹ *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development*⁸⁰ and, jointly with EUNIC and IfA, on *The Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development*.⁸¹

The British Council’s contribution to the field is distinguished by two particular features of its work, as outlined in a recent submission to the UN.⁸² The first of these is the cultural relations

69. <https://culture2030goal.net>

70. UNESCO, 2022a, p 7

71. UNGA, 2021, p 7

72. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators>

73. UK Government, 2021; FCDO, 2022

74. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-strategy>

75. British Council, 2022a, p 14

76. British Council, 2022a, p 17

77. British Council & Nordicity, 2020; <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/missing-pillar-talks>

78. Singh, 2019

79. Singh et al, 2021

80. Singh, 2022

81. Lamonica, 2021

82. British Council, 2022b

approach:

Taking a cultural relations approach to development shifts the focus from a formulaic approach to ... mutual processes based on local contexts ... [it] supports values of openness, tolerance and mutual respect, and lends itself to a people-centred approach ... This cultural relations approach recognizes local contexts and needs, and values arts, culture and heritage for sustainable development.

The second is the organisation's capacity – through its global network of offices and its connections to embedded civil society organisations – to work directly with people around the world to bring about practical change. This is achieved through

programmes such as the Cultural Protection Fund, Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth and Our Shared Cultural Heritage.

The Cultural Protection Fund⁸³ (CPF) was launched in 2016 and is led by the British Council in partnership with the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport. It supports efforts to protect cultural heritage from risks relating to conflict, instability, climate change and related disasters, while delivering social and economic outcomes for local communities. The programme has supported projects in the Middle East and in North and East Africa. Projects must include meaningful involvement of the local community and be led by or involve local partners.



CPF-funded boat building project, cane canoe on the water.

Photograph © Safina Projects

83. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund>

Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth (CH4IG)⁸⁴ is an action research programme which, since 2018, has been exploring ways in which local culture can improve the lives of individuals around the world. During the pilot phase of the programme, the British Council supported communities in Colombia, Kenya and Vietnam to safeguard their heritage, develop their economies and improve social welfare. The projects are community- and

people-led and devised and managed with local partners. Through CH4IG, the British Council has also contributed to broader learning about cultural heritage and inclusive growth, including by commissioning the essays in this collection, publishing the reports *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth*⁸⁵ and *Heritage for Inclusive Growth (with the RSA)*⁸⁶ and running a peer and collaborative learning project.



Chao Tayiana Maina, from African Digital Heritage, at the National Museums of Kenya during a session titled Digitising Artefacts in 3D. #CultureGrows in Kenya, a Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth project.

Photograph © Mutanu Kyany'a

84. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-heritage>

85. Lewis et al, 2018

86. Antink et al, 2020

Our Shared Cultural Heritage (OSCH)⁸⁷ experiments with new ways for museums and heritage organisations to work better for young people. The project is led by people aged 11-25 and looks at how museums and heritage organisations can become more relevant and engaging places to explore identity, connect with others and create new opportunities for young people. The programme concentrates on young people from the South Asian diaspora in the UK and in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is managed by the British Council in partnership with Glasgow Life, Manchester Museum and UK Youth, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and works in collaboration with museums, youth and heritage organisations in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The British Council's advocacy around cultural heritage and sustainable development is rooted in its practical collaborations with partners around the world. This practice is generating learning and evidence which the British Council shares more widely. As part of this aim, the Cultural Protection Fund is delivering a new What Works Cultural Heritage Protection programme designed to support better outcomes for heritage protection and local communities by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the international heritage protection sector. The programme is sharing and translating research, decision-making approaches, best practices and lessons learned and is promoting further collaboration, all contributing to more coordinated impact across the heritage and development sectors.

The What Works programme is looking at four overarching evidence themes relating to International Cultural Heritage Protection, ie sustainable development, climate change, the cultural relations approach, and approaches to evaluation and research. In these areas, the British Council is funding Research and Policy Fellowships; providing evaluation training and support; investing in a data storytelling platform to empower community voices and inform inclusive decision-making; delivering a peer and collaborative learning programme; undertaking a systematic international review of the evidence and research on cultural heritage protection and climate change; sharing thought leadership through publications (including this essay collection), events and other means; and running an international What Works learning gathering.

The essays in this collection were commissioned by the British Council during the pilot phase of Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth and are published as part of the What Works programme, contributing to the body of evidence and research on cultural heritage and sustainable development.

The essays are presented in three groups, the first of which explores ideas relating to heritage and sustainable development from different perspectives, but with a shared grounding in the human development approach. The essays in the second group bridge between higher-level concepts and practice on the ground by exploring principles and approaches which can guide action in diverse contexts. The essays in the third group present case studies from different countries. Finally, a general conclusion identifies common threads which run through the collection and presents recommendations relating to the overarching findings: that cultural heritage is at the heart of human development; cultural relations create conditions for human development; and, alongside the evidence for what works, analysis of *how it works* is critical to the spread of good practice.



Our Shared Cultural Heritage Youth Board member exploring Puthia Palace, Rajshahi.

Photograph © Juliet Dean

⁸⁷ <https://oursharedculturalheritage.org/>

References

Antink, R, Cox, E, Cooke, J, Stenning, S & Locke, N, *Heritage for Inclusive Growth*, RSA & British Council, 2020, www.thersa.org/globalassets/reports/2020/the-rsa-heritage-for-inclusive-growth.pdf

Blake, J, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage', in Francioni & Vrdoljak (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Cultural Heritage Law*, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp 347-370

British Council, *Corporate Plan 2022-23 to 2024-25*, British Council, 2022a, https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/corporate_plan_2022-25.pdf

British Council, *Submission to the UN on Cultural Rights and Human Development*, Published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022b, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/culturalrights/sustainabledevelopment/2022-08-22/submission-development-ga77-cso-britishcouncil-en_0.docx

British Council & Nordicity, *The Missing Pillar: Culture's Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, British Council, 2020, https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_missing_pillar.pdf

Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, *General comment No. 21 – Right of everyone to take part in cultural life (art. 15, para. 1 (a), of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)*, 2009, <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4slQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW1a0Szab0oXTdlmnsJZZVQc5ReG9hKvddWC2ML5U76E63nT%2beY%2btmSVIRS0ynN0q4EDmpjJye7rC1DxEtC%2fGxx7WLBcmnxGwpWSXy0fmnHDS>

Craufurd Smith, R, 'Europe', in Francioni & Vrdoljak (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Cultural Heritage Law*, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp 908-930

Donders, Y, *Cultural Life in the Context of Human Rights*, Background paper produced for the 40th Session of the Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, 2008, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CESCR/Discussions/May2008/YvonneDonders.pdf

FCDO (UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office), *The UK Government's Strategy for International Development*, UK Government, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-strategy-for-international-development>

Francioni, F & Vrdoljak, A F (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Cultural Heritage Law*, Oxford University Press, 2020

Groni, C, *The Right to Take Part in Cultural Life*, Background paper produced for the 40th Session of the Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, 2008, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CESCR/Discussions/May2008/ChristianGroni.pdf

Labadi, S, Giliberto, F, Rosetti, I, Shetabi, L & Yildirim, E, *Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals: Policy Guidance for Heritage and Development Actors*, International Council on Monuments and Sites – ICOMOS, 2021, https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2453/7/ICOMOS_

[SDGPG_2022.pdf](#)

Lamonica, A G, *The Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development: Opportunities for National Cultural Institutes*, EUNIC (EU National Institutes for Culture), 2021 <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/news/culture-sdgs-report>

Lewis, R with Arthurs, K, Berker, M, Bishop, A, Louis, T, Slack, J, Stenning, S, Thomas, H & Thomas, I, *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth*, British Council, 2018, www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/bc_CH4IG_report_final.pdf

RSA Inclusive Growth Commission, *Inclusive Growth: Putting Principles Into Practice*, RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce), 2017, www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/inclusive-growth-putting-principles-into-practice

Scovazzi, T, 'Culture', in Chesterman, S, Malone, D M & Villalpando, S (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Treaties*, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp 307-320

Singh, J P, *Culture and International Development: Towards an Interdisciplinary Methodology*, British Council/George Mason University, 2019, https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/final_manuscript_cultureintldev.pdf

Singh, J P, *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development: Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies*, British Council, 2022, https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_cultural_relations_of_negotiating_development_dice_at_the_british_council_webfinal.pdf

Singh, J P, Li, M, Kaptanoglu, N & Childress, E, *Soft Power and Cultural Relations Approaches in International Heritage Protection*, British Council/George Mason University, 2021, https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/soft_power_and_cultural_heritage_protection_report.pdf

Stamatopoulou, E, *The Right to Take Part in Cultural Life*, Background paper produced for the 40th Session of the Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, 2008, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CESCR/Discussions/May2008/ElissavetStamatopoulou.pdf

Stott, J, *What is Inclusive Growth and Why Does it Matter?* Blog published by the Joseph Rowntree foundation, 2017, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/what-inclusive-growth-and-why-does-it-matter>

UK Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, UK Government, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

UNESCO, *World Culture Report 1998: Culture, Creativity and Markets*, UNESCO, 1998

UNESCO, *World Culture Report, 2000: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism*, UNESCO, 2000, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121058>

UNESCO, *UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022: Final Declaration*, UNESCO: MONDIACULT-2022/CPD/6, 2022a, https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/10/6.MONDIACULT_EN_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION_FINAL_1.pdf

UNESCO, *UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022: Background Document*, UNESCO: MONDIACULT-2022/CPD/4, 2022b, https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/09/4.MONDIACULT_EN_BACKGROUND%20DOCUMENT.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Rio Declaration on Environment & Development*, Report on the UN Conference on Environment & Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, Resolution 55/2, adopted 18 September 2000, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Resolution 70/1, adopted 25 September 2015, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Cultural and Sustainable Development*, Resolution 76/214, adopted 17 December 2021, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3954974?ln=en>

Vrdoljak, A F & Francioni, F 'Introduction', in Francioni & Vrdoljak (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Cultural Heritage Law*, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp 1-10

World Commission on Culture & Development, *Our Creative Diversity*, UNESCO, 1995, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000101651>

World Commission on Environment & Development, *Our Common Future, From One Earth to One World*, United Nations, 1987, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>

Xanthaki, A, *Development and Cultural Rights: the Principles*, Report to the 77th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3988016?ln=en>



To find out more about the Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth Collection, please visit:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/cultural-heritage-inclusive-growth-essay-collection>

British Council 2023

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities

