Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth Collection

Culture on purpose: sustainable development opportunities for culture

Ben Sandbrook

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Acknowledgements

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

Ben Sandbrook has worked in arts, education and sustainable development for 20 years, supporting partnerships, organisations and individuals to develop their approaches and capacities in creative learning. He has worked for a number of major cultural and development organisations in the UK including Arts Council England, National Foundation for Youth Music, Glyndebourne, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, WWF, National Trust, RSPB and the International Institute for Environment and Development. He has also supported a range of arts, cultural, educational and sustainability organisations through his consultancy work, and led large network-based change programmes. He is a practising musician.

In 2015, Ben set up World Pencil, a charity and social enterprise which works with organisations and partnerships across England to develop projects, campaigns, experiences and tools which bring together arts, education and sustainable development, finding creative ways to unleash individual and organisational potential and to work towards the thriving sustainability of society and planet (https://www.worldpencil.net). World Pencil's vision centres around three big ideas:

sustainable development – the inter-related complex of challenges and issues facing our lives on and with the planet that operates globally as it does locally;

being exceptional – how every person can fulfil their potential as who they are, and be valued, personally and economically, for what they can do in the contexts where they do it, and;

'cutting-edge human' – in a world that increasingly asks how to sustain humanity as technology does everything for us, World Pencil is driven by what it is that people can and could do, with the right opportunity, technology, support and challenge.

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.

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CPF-funded In Light Of, graduation concert by Action for Hope music school students in Lebanon (September 2017).

Front cover photograph by Jean Milad

Culture on Purpose

Culture is who we are – *what we have become together*; it is born out of our humanity. Fish and amoeba have cultures too, and perhaps fish and amoeba would feel lost without their cultures. Certainly, we would feel lost without ours, or at least uprooted – and those roots lie in cultural heritage. If culture is *who* we are, then cultural heritage is *what* we have been and how we got to where we are now.

Culture has always been central to humans as social beings, but culture and cultural heritage are not just about the past, they are about the present and the future. In this essay I argue that culture can have a greater opportunity in the future than in the past for the sector to work with our human nature and draw on our cultural heritage to realise social, economic, cultural and environmental opportunities, creating future opportunities for culture.

Central to this is not so much a culture which emerges, but a culture which is deployed and harnessed, often deliberately, and on purpose.

Asking good questions

Much of the analysis and discussion around the utility, impact and value of culture, and indeed cultural heritage, focuses on the intrinsic vs. instrumental axis. On the one hand are the intrinsic benefits, say, of cultural experiences enriching the inner world of their visitors; on the other are the instrumental benefits or impacts essentially outside the sphere of those experiences themselves, such as how they feed a paint industry or allow a community to reflect, through the cultural assets, on their shared identity.

This axis has proved highly contentious. For starters, it can upset the purists. Even recently, a respected colleague tells me, senior figures in culture funders have admitted privately that they see pursuing the 'instrumental' benefits of culture as a compromise (of purism) in the interests of safeguarding vulnerable culture funding.

Whatever your perspective, the truth is that much of the analysis and evaluation of the instrumental impacts of culture have been to secure additional funding. This point, about culture resourcing and funding, is a very important one because, throughout much of history, funding and patronage for culture has been hard fought-for and hard won.

For some, the COVID-19 pandemic has manifested unmistakeably the vulnerability of our interconnected, just-in-time supply chains, and it has also given us a taste of what a lower-carbon lifestyle might be like. A few years ago, I was involved in producing what was at the time possibly the most comprehensive history of the sustainable development movement[1] and one of the interesting findings was the important role that huge disasters have in effecting necessary paradigm shifts and, indeed, there are whole research institutions dedicated to studying disasters.[2]

Hopefully we can avoid the need for a catastrophe in culture to justify sustaining its resourcing. Culture should not wait for its own disaster but show its value in the present. The prevailing approach to justifying culture funding – in which the instrumental impacts of one cultural intervention are evaluated so as to provide a case for why a subsequent intervention should be supported – suffers from various problems. It means the objectivity of evaluation is often clouded to some extent towards funding and affirmation which weakens not only the credibility of evaluations but also feeds an impression of sectoral 'over-claiming' from other sectors. It also assumes that cultural practice, or at least its impact, is transferable: that the impact of one intervention in one context can be repeated by another intervention in another context.

Purpose: unlocking the value of culture

Standing back though, the greater weakness of the intrinsic vs. instrumental question is that it remains a question asked from the perspective of those concerned for the cultural sphere – those in the cultural sphere – it's a cultural question, and one that is very often rooted to some extent in the sub-text of how continued support for a cultural activity can be secured. It comes from decades of looking at culture and its impacts on society, which has included observing some very significant instrumental and intrinsic benefits that are now much better understood as a result, and deriving evidence to create a case for cultural funding that would otherwise have been lacking. But it is still looking at culture, and indeed at culture as a relatively discrete object.

The key to unlocking the greatest opportunities for culture, cultural heritage and sustainable development, I suggest, is not to ask, 'what are the impacts of culture?' but 'what are the challenges and opportunities in the world, and what help, if any, could culture provide in responding to those challenges and opportunities: how can culture be useful?' Sometimes that help will draw on culture's instrumental impacts and sometimes on its intrinsic ones, but the question is now one of purpose, and now culture can become one instrument of many in an orchestra of purpose.

The key to being part of that orchestra, rather than being a busker holding a cap to keep playing the violin, is to be around the table when the approaches to challenges and opportunities are designed and developed. Culture needs to aim to be in the front row (maybe of the cellos), rather than fourth flute. It is true that to get around the table in the first place will require some evidence of culture's extra-cultural value, but the focus of getting the evidence could be more about winning a seat at the table and less about winning further funding: they might be related but are not the same.

This essay looks in broad brush strokes at what culture and cultural heritage are and at some of the things they can achieve, before moving on to look at some of the future opportunities for culture and cultural heritage in sustainable development, and what might help unlock them. But first, practising as well as preaching, it looks at some of the challenges and opportunities, outside the cultural sector.

1.   https://www.richardsandbrooksplace.org

2.   See the GADRI, the Global Alliance of Disaster Studies Institutes: https://gadri.net

Global and Local Trends: Opportunities for Cultural Heritage as Part of the Picture

What follows is a very brief overview of some of the global trends at play in today's world and some of the consequences they may have for its future. This overview is here, not to try to enlighten anyone (there will be no surprises), but so as to foreground a consideration of opportunities for cultural heritage for sustainable development and the reasons for why that development might be needed or wanted – development with purpose.

The future of work

First are the changes in the labour market that are taking place and are forecast to continue, due to artificial intelligence, task automation and robotics. The forecasts around these changes vary significantly; some say that luddites have always predicted technological labour displacements that have not come to fruition; others are investigating nation-wide experiments in universal basic income and equivalent schemes to test out the social and economic consequences of strategies to handle a society where humans do not find the same value (financial and emotional) from paid work as they have done for centuries. What seems reasonable is to conjecture that what can be automated, and is economically desirable (ie cheaper) or emotionally desirable (eg cleaning up waste) to automate, is likely to be automated.

There have been many forecasts of what these changes will mean to actual jobs. Grey and Osbourne's clarion-calling 2013 study estimated that just shy of 50% of 2013 US jobs would be unlikely to be around in 2030.[3] A 2019 OECD report[4] estimates that 14% of jobs are likely to be automated and a further 32% are likely to be radically transformed. An analysis from Nesta[5] provides a ranking of the UK-based jobs that are most likely to see increases and decreases. Following the what-can-be-automated-will-be-automated pattern, this puts artists (all artforms) on the top tier, and primary and secondary teachers not much further down, and that is despite there being some profound AI-based innovations in education and artistic creation.

Essentially, in our analysis, future labour market growth will come in areas where:

- there is innovation and newly invented jobs, possibly in newly invented sectors (just as there were no social media strategists or scrum managers 30 years ago) and particularly in experience and service sectors;

- there is humanity in the individuality of experience, as in the painter painting you a picture (although there are plenty of algorithms doing this too); or

- there is humanity in the sociability of the experience, as in the older person in the care home who doesn't object to a machine doing the cleaning but would also like to talk to a real person, or the student in the classroom (assuming they're still around) who can learn with a machine but also does so most effectively alongside a human who is an expert in how that person learns and what motivates them, and who can learn with them.

This means that there are significant opportunities, in economic and employment terms, in the arts, culture and heritage. These are sectors that specialise in human experiences (ie participating with other humans), bespoke (looking at a picture on a screen is not the same as having one painted for you) and non-automatable/replicable experiences (you can visit a historic building virtually but it's seldom as good as the real thing).

These are sectors that can specialise and could specialise far more, in my opinion, in bespoke, human, non-automatable/replicable services, such as using participatory dance to prevent falls in older people, using arts experiences to support dementia patients, using historic buildings for creative co-working sessions, using arts to envision compelling low-carbon futures, using local history to address lack of community cohesion and societal disquiet, and using historic landscapes to tackle low education engagement.

One of the things that you need to innovate and create new jobs that don't currently exist is imagination. We should think about what arts, culture and heritage are, and what they can do, and imagine those new employment opportunities that provide experiences and services in response to societies' needs and desires, and then try to make those opportunities real.

The future of tolerance and diversity

There are significant social, economic and political trends afoot that deserve a brief mention. We have yet to operate at a species level in a way that respects our differences, accommodates our aspirations and celebrates our diversity. Building on long-standing conflicts related to religion and cultural intolerance there has recently been a groundswell in populist politics in Western countries, often rallying around nationalist causes (traditional jobs and ethnicities) and preservationist causes (institutions, industries and behaviours), and against more 'progressive' or innovative causes (tolerance, social justice, climate change, machine automation). These have bubbled up in countries all over the world including the Netherlands, US, UK, Italy and Austria, and many commentators foresee that a continued rise of these movements (or perhaps the polarisation between them and more centrist or progressive policies) in the anti-globalisation fervour that may emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It would be overly partial to assume that these trends represent challenges, but often they do present challenges, at least for particular communities. In such cases the solutions generally evolve in part through policing acceptable behaviours but also through education and relationship-building, and precisely the tolerant celebration of heritages, places, histories, cultures and communities that are the focus of much cultural heritage work and the outcomes of many cultural heritage institutions and new developments. In particular, culture and cultural heritage's track record in mediation and resolution in many forms of conflict is strong and sometimes startling.[6] Culture's ability to encourage empathy and to present diversity in a more positive light than some might see it in their day-to-day lives, make it an invaluable tool for the tolerance agenda.

The future of health

Mark Zuckerberg has set himself (not working alone) the goal of ridding humanity of disease by the end of the century.[7] Casting an eye over the developments in contemporary medicine, with combinations of AI and data, collective intelligence strategies, nano- and biotechnologies amongst other things, it does not look so unrealistic an ambition. But what is possibly less rosy is the future of mental health – an area of global growth in concern and understanding, including the attendant human and financial costs.

Our progress in physical health has been remarkable. In many areas of mental health, however, we are in our infancy; many neuroscientists suggest that our recently advanced knowledge of the brain has effectively given us a better understanding of quite how much we don't understand.[8]

A second major consideration of long-term health forecasting concerns the ageing population, with actual and predicted proportions of post-retirement, older and much older people rising across the globe.

These are two areas in which the experience and impact evidence of cultural interventions, experiences and approaches is also growing. Asked to conjure up an image of the apex of

3. Frey & Osbourne, 2013

4. OECD, 2019

5. Mulgan & Baker, 2018

6. See for example UNESCO: https://www.unesco.org/en/tags/conflict-resolution; Culture+Conflict: https://www.cultureandconflict.org.uk/; Council of Europe 2013; the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra: www.west-eastern-divan.org

7. Letzter, 2016

8. Savage, 2019

medical advancement today, many would see a person in surgical scrubs, or peering at an electron microscope of bioengineering. But I would venture that, a hundred years from now, the same image of the apex of our advancement but with mental health is just as likely to be wielding a wet paintbrush.

The future of wealth

Then there are economic challenges, such as extreme poverty (the alleviation of which is seeing considerable success, certainly in many of the poorest parts of the world[9]) and income inequality (which appears to be on the rise, although not perhaps in the historic timescale).[10] The greater consolidation of wealth that's predicted around the 'new oil' that is data intelligence in the 21st century has motivated some Silicon Valley giants to become proponents of universal basic income experiments in part, it seems, and ironically, out of concern their billions of customers will no longer be able to afford precisely the services that gave rise to the data in the first place.

In this context, adding to the existing inequality of wealth distribution, social justice, social equity and social mobility across nations and continents, the need for local-level inclusive growth and sustainable development is perhaps greater than ever. And the more cultural agencies and organisations understand the potential for their sector to support such growth, the better for them and the growth itself.

At the same time as the battle between distribution and consolidation of financial wealth goes on, and closely related to it, there is a growing twinned awareness of the challenges and costs of mental health and well-being and the value of other forms of wealth, including health and well-being, happiness, family and security, sense of fulfilment and the need for humans to find for themselves a value and role in society beyond that which might historically have been found through the provision of food, housing or income. Essentially, there is a growing awareness of the value of other forms of wealth and, at the same time, an emphasis by UNESCO and others that there is no *sustainable* economic development unless it is hand-in-hand with social,

environmental, educational and *cultural* development. It should be noted that this is probably a Western, capitalist perspective – plenty of societies and cultures have long held such holistic notions of wealth.

Here too, there is an array of potential opportunities for culture in the provision of and participation in human value experiences, products and services. It is not a new array, what is new about it is that it is becoming more mainstream in its acceptance. The more ubiquitously accessible various goods become (through, for example, digital distribution, global marketplaces, 3D printing, and efficient production) the more we may see a growth in the opportunity value of personalised, bespoke, in-person products, experiences and services, as culture and cultural heritage often provide. For example, bands used to go on world tours to sell albums; now they often give away the albums so as to sell tickets for concerts (and merchandise, admittedly – the experience has not yet usurped the goods). But big bands have major marketing machines behind them, way beyond the reach of all but a very few cultural organisations. If the cultural sector really wants to drive up its widespread perceived value as providing highly desirable, life-blood experiences, it will undoubtedly have to work resourcefully and collaboratively on that messaging, as well as ensuring the experiences are up to the message.

The future of the environment

The fifth set of trends concerns the more-than-human world, where we see the perhaps unprecedented extinction of species, threats to life on land, in the air and in the water, pollution, damage and degradation of landscapes and other natural resources, natural resource depletion and, of course, perhaps the most universal challenge humanity has faced – climate change. Depending on the trend and your perspective, these might be unknown, denied, regrettable, reprehensible, morally questionable, costly, or sometimes existentially threatening. Certainly, they will mean our children inhabit a world different to the one we grew up in.

These trends present culture with responsibilities and opportunities. Responsibilities, perhaps to

ensure, under the heritage preservation remit, that past and current assets and environments can be safeguarded for future generations; responsibilities to ensure our own sector's negative impact is as little as it can be. But it also offers opportunities: cultural activities can raise awareness of issues and challenges; they can mobilise people to innovate and act; they can build social, sustainable, inclusive economic opportunities; and they can help people to envision alternative and more sustainable futures and ways of living.

Cultural organisations can be actors of change – making sure their own house is in order – but also agents of change – effecting change in the outside world. Many of these environmental challenges present not just moral duties but also economic costs and, potentially, economic opportunities for culture: it is the invitation to be *agents* of change that really presents the cultural sector with new purpose-driven opportunities.

The future of sustainable development

There has undeniably been growth in widespread public awareness of, and proactive effort towards, achieving sustainable development, as a holistic total concept rather than focusing more exclusively on some of the single-issue constituent challenges (eg poverty, economy, or biodiversity). The sustainable development movement has been striving for this for decades, and it has blossomed with the recent help of movements such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals; the role of business and financial drivers; the growth of more local or company-level 'sustainability' agendas;[11] growing understanding of and operation with systems thinking; and public awareness of issues such as poverty, plastic pollution and climate change.

What role does culture have in a sustainable future? This question has arguably blossomed less, or at least less universally. Several commentators and authors now see culture as an essential fourth pillar of sustainable development,[12] or a fifth, if you include governance, alongside economic, social and environmental domains. But is culture seen as a core component in strategies

developed for sustainable development, in governments, inter-governmental panels, local planning, community planning, organisation planning? And do cultural organisations see themselves as integral to these wider societal and environmental agendas? These matters of culture as incorporated within broader purpose-based agendas are central to our work at World Pencil and we see that there is much yet to be done. So too with far larger bodies, including UNESCO, that work hard to advocate for culture's integral role. Jyoti Hosagrahar, Deputy Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre essentially agrees:

There needs to be a lot more transversal interaction with culture and huge reflection and further work necessary to ensure that the work on culture is not seen as a sector by itself but is closely integrated with all types of development activity and a variety of strategies need to be developed for promoting sustainable local development that integrates cultures and cultural heritage.[13]

The energy behind this interaction is likely to need to come from the cultural sector's friends and proponents and from the sector itself; if we want to be part of the picture, we need to see ourselves as part of the picture and get around the table. I heard a good anecdotal illustration of why there will need to be a proactive and strategic push from the cultural sector for its centrality, in a meeting of cultural organisations, early in the UK's COVID-19 lockdown. It was reported widely that high-level donors and sponsors were now heavily supporting medical, health, food and safety needs with culture right at the bottom of the list – a good example, perhaps, of how dispensable discrete culture is considered – but then the discussion that followed centred almost exclusively on how the cultural organisations present could (understandably) sustain themselves and very little on how they could contribute to the pandemic and the challenges arising. Culture can, and should, be a core part of sustainable development and the cultural sector must strive to achieve this status, where it is not already achieved. But it's not going to achieve this by arguing for culture's special place – it needs to work towards culture's integrated place. We must join in.

11. Meaning an emphasis on economic, social, environmental and particularly, business, sustainability of individual organisations and communities, as distinct from, albeit connected to, a broader and more globally interconnected sustainable development.

12. See, for example, Dümcke & Gnedovsky, 2013

13. Jyoti Hosagrahar, Deputy Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, personal communication, May 2020

9.   https://ourworldindata.org/extreme-poverty

10. See, for example, Spinney, 2020

Where can we help: what impacts can culture and cultural heritage contribute to?

Firstly, what is culture?

This essay looks at the opportunities for culture, including cultural heritage, that are presented by drawing on the impacts and outcomes that can be derived from cultural activities and assets. I include examples here mainly of culture, the set of things born out of people's interaction and expression (ie the arts, museums, heritage assets, and creative industries), and also culture as the wider nature and characteristic embodiment of that interaction (eg fish and chips, vernacular slang, weddings and funerals, football team rivalry).

Cultural outcomes and where they come out

But aside from the kinds of culture that we, or you, might mean, perhaps most importantly for the present essay is to consider that the outcomes of culture, which we argue are the root of its future opportunities, come out from different places. For example, much of the impact derived from historic buildings relies heavily on the buildings themselves, their history and age (they're likely to qualify, for example, as heritage under the 40+ years definition). The World Heritage Site of Petra in Jordan wouldn't attract the same tourism income or sense of wonder if it had been carved out in 2017. However, the impact of AESOP's Dance to Health programme, which supports falls prevention in older people, comes from a dance-based process, not a dance itself as a work of art, nor a particular dance – old or new. In this sense, the impacts of culture are attached to different things: some are attached to cultural forms or domains; some to cultural assets and traditions; some to processes connected to culture; and some to cultural practitioners. This attachment is important for the realisation of culture's opportunities; you might not achieve the same falls prevention impact if you used a different dance-based process with the same dancers, or the same dance-based process with some less-expert dance practitioners, ie it's not just dance that has the impact but what you do with it.

Using cultural impact on purpose

Returning to the question of 'what are the challenges and opportunities in the world, and what help, if any, could culture provide in responding to those challenges and opportunities?', we turn now to a rapid sweep through a selection of the impacts that have been noted and evaluated as having been achieved by and through culture and cultural heritage assets and activities. These impacts are presented here in the structure we use at World Pencil, including on the Creative

Participants in Dance to Health, a falls prevention dance programme for older people in the UK (https://dancetohealth.org). The programme is delivered by AESOP, a charity which provides arts solutions to health and social care problems.

Photograph © AESOP: Arts Enterprise with a Social Purpose

Impact programme, based on how we provide guidance on harnessing culture. There is a huge range of studies and meta-studies from which advocates can draw evidence and cultural organisations can draw inspirations.[14] The point of summarising these studies here is to provoke consideration of how culture could help (below) with challenges and opportunities (above).

Alongside each impact area below we've included a selection of case studies, largely referenced through conversations leading to this essay, that try to provide examples, from the UK and internationally, of culture for sustainable development, where culture is harnessed on purpose.

Economy

Numerous studies have focused on, measured and demonstrated the impacts that culture, including cultural heritage, have on local, national and international economies, often focusing on the direct, indirect and induced economic effects of culture-related spending and employment. In the UK, for instance, arts and culture contribute over £10bn to GVA,[15] and heritage contributes around £31bn.[16] Arts, culture and heritage all have a significant role too in feeding the wider creative industries, which in the UK contribute over £120bn[17] to the economy (around 6% GVA). In addition to this, a 2016 analysis by Nesta found that creativity had a direct impact on businesses outside the creative industries, including STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) start-ups outperforming STEM ones (without the arts) by 8% in sales growth and 2% in radical innovations to market.[18]

In particular, culture, cultural heritage and creative industries also play a huge role in tourism and this role has been significant in cultural policy for a long time. But the economic value of culture in other parts of the economy (eg health, education, local development, community cohesion, and social protection, as covered below) is growing in its recognition.

- **Example – Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts (YBCA), San Francisco, USA**

Opened to the public in 1993, YBCA was founded as the cultural anchor of San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens neighbourhood.[19]

It is a good example of a hyper-local development in what has been a challenging neighbourhood with underdeveloped areas. In 2014, the centre consulted carefully to identify neighbourhood need, which was found to be nothing to do with arts, culture and heritage but access to food, especially fresh food for families, which couldn't be bought locally. Through a community buyout the centre turned a redundant parking lot into a green allotment space, with a massive arts project, huge murals and lots of food partnerships with local and outside companies.

It's become its own ecosystem which runs courses, grows vegetables, connects to environmental causes and has, through investigation of its own cultural heritage, discovered a history of local agricultural growing.

- **Example – Jaaga, Bengaluru, India: programmes and space for innovation building on local heritage**

Bengaluru is a busy city in southern India. Jaaga is a community-run artist-heritage social enterprise which sets up tech spaces in reclaimed old buildings with a focus on arts for start-ups.[20] One of the start-ups set up a farm and turned it into a training space, running an apprenticeship programme with young people, providing training for people in farming skills but also helping trainees to apply farm-based skills more broadly, and taking those skills into their neighbourhoods and communities. They have worked to build on the environmental heritage of the local area. They investigated the historical records related to the particular site of the farm, its history and heritage – for example: discovering old crops that used to be grown there – using heritage in the broadest sense to inform the design and development of the contemporary farm.

- **Example – The Partition Museum, Amritsar, Punjab, India**

'The world's first partition museum'[21] at Amritsar is 28km from the India-Pakistan border, a partition created in 1947 following the break-up of the British Empire and Indian independence, and one that has seen regular struggle and conflict to this day. The museum's building (the old town hall) used to be completely derelict and is now

maintained by a trust, who started in the gardens, commemorating the site of a 1919 massacre. The trust was originally a traditional heritage trust but they then started to connect more with local people and to think differently about heritage, at which point they build the Partition Museum, which opened in 2016 and is, in many ways, a people's museum, which has been renovated by local communities.

It provides a good example of using a heritage asset (the town hall) imaginatively, creating local jobs and bringing in tourism to the city. They have a wide perspective on what heritage is: it is bricks and mortar and material heritage (including objects from the partition), but it's also people's stories, for which they run a large-scale oral histories programme about their experience of partition. It's the latter oral histories programme which has spread the museum's work globally, through pop-up museums all over the world because there are other places that have experienced partition, including Manchester, which also has large Indian and Pakistani origin resident populations. The Partition Museum now has a 10-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Manchester Museum.

Education

Clearly there is an 'intrinsic' dimension to cultural education – you can learn how to play the cello, or about the cultural traditions in a locality – but there is also a growing field of understanding and evidence around the instrumental impacts of culture on other areas of education. Cultural heritage for example, has a strong role to play in education around cultures and societies, geographies and histories, citizenship education, tolerance, and economics. Some cross-curricular arts approaches have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on reading and maths, and several studies have suggested links between music, ability and learning in maths, cognition and language learning. Arts and cultural heritage have been shown through numerous studies to provide

effective strategies for developing the mutual understanding of different peoples.

Cultural and heritage education can provide very effective 'carrying media' for skills development, including many so-called 21st-century skills, such as project-based learning, creative development, problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork.

More broadly, cultural experiences feed our minds and the inner worlds of our imaginations – the worlds that give rise to our outer innovations and feed our productive creativity, the font of all human economic development and much of its wealth creation – although measuring that and putting a figure on its value is not straightforward.

14. For example: Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; Warwick Commission, 2015; Dümcke & Gnedovsky, 2013; Trends Business Research Ltd, NEF Consulting Ltd & Middlesex University, 2016; OECD 2019; UNESCO's library of resources, conference reports and evidence collations: https://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity

15. CEBR, 2019

16. Historic England: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy

17. Department for Culture Media and Sport: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-monthly-gva-to-september-2022, accessed 20/4/23

18. Nesta, 2016

19. https://ybca.org/the-center

20. https://www.jaaga.in/contact

21. https://www.partitionmuseum.org

- **Example – Creative Impact: young people using arts and culture to raise awareness of oceanic plastic pollution**

One of our own programmes at World Pencil, Creative Impact, helps children and young people to run their own culture-based projects that have a measurable social or environmental impact.[22]

For example, in 2022, 60 primary-aged pupils made a life-sized tree installation to highlight issues around deforestation, made of recycled branches, fabrics, plastics and festooned with deforestation-endangered species and positive changes that can be made. It travelled around for many months and had over 40,000 viewers. In another project, a group of teenagers designed, scripted and produced a series of short plays around equality issues, performed to their peers and community.

The Creative Impact approach places a strong emphasis not just on arts-based change-making but also, as part of building a wider understanding and skill set, on researching the issues; understanding sustainable development; investigating culture's impact on addressing issues and challenges; young person-led project management; and evaluating their impact themselves. It is not yet an example of inclusive economic growth but a good example of culture-on-purpose growth in communities and young lives, with a strong aspiration that this will follow through into culture-rich change-making futures for these young people.

Creative Impact: a programme – led by World Pencil – that works with schools, arts and community organisations to help children and young people to build their own experiences of harnessing the arts to change the world (https://www.creative-impact.org).

Photographs © World Pencil

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22. https://www.creative-impact.org

Health and well-being

Cultural impact on health and well-being is one of the fastest growing areas of cultural impact studies. Examples include the above-mentioned Dance to Health programme, which has now received over £2m in funding in the UK to support falls prevention in older people and is involved in the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. Dance has been shown to support children's physical activity and to prevent psychosis in older people. Singing activities have been shown to be effective in addressing various lung disorders, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and drumming activities have been found to support various mental health conditions including anxiety and inflammatory immune response. Some cultural experiences have been shown to reduce recovery times from clinical procedures, and visual art and local heritage have long been recognised as an important part of hospital and other care environments, and there are many more examples.

- **Example – Dance to Health: dance-based falls prevention for older people rolled out by the National Health Service, England**

Dance to Health, run by UK charity AESOP (Arts Enterprise with a Social Purpose), began through a pilot in 2015-2016 and has been through several iterations of development and evaluation. It was completed through a £2m project supporting dance-based falls-prevention programmes in three NHS trusts in England. Critical to their success has been gathering evidence of sufficient robustness for clinical commissioners. Their early results indicated that dance-based initiatives could be more effective at addressing falls prevention, and cheaper, than the prevailing treatments used in health services, and they're now embarking on clinical-level randomised control trials to build a stronger evidence base, which may lead to this programme becoming a universal service.

Dance to Health is an excellent example of culture on purpose – using dance to address a significant and costly health issue. They also have interesting findings to offer other comparable initiatives, including:

- The importance of co-working between dance practitioners and health practitioners, so that each can complement the skills and experience of the other, working with what are often fundamentally different backgrounds and perspectives, to make a collective synergy;

- The importance of evidence-gathering of the right level of robustness, to be able to even open the door to decision-makers in other sectors (in this case, health);

- Sobering insights around funding: whilst Dance to Health and others have been successful in demonstrating cultural impacts relating to physical and mental health, and in showing their eligibility for social and community prescribing, this by no means always translates into access to health budgets for cultural initiatives.

Dance to Health – culture with a purpose in action (https://dancetohealth.org).

Photographs © AESOP: Arts Enterprise with a Social Purpose

Transforming lives, citizenship, society

In the same way that it is difficult to measure culture's impact on the creative imagination and what it goes on to achieve, it is difficult to measure the often life-changing impacts that cultural experiences have on people, although social return on investment and other approaches have been successful in some cases. Yet cultural opportunities and experiences, cultural affirmation of ability and establishing belonging through culture and heritage can have profound consequences, including for vulnerable people, some of whom might otherwise have presented long-term costs to society. Examples include working with looked-after children, those in the justice system and people not in education, employment or training, including the long-term unemployed.

Cultural approaches, when well-operated, can transform people's confidence and self-esteem, without which they might achieve a small fraction of their potential. Cultural activities – as essentially about cultures and societies – can be effective at building civic responsibility, increasing volunteering and participation in democracy.

As mentioned above, there are many examples of cultural activities and approaches being successful at conflict mediation and resolution, often revolving around shared cultural heritages and using cultural activities to build empathy, understanding and respect.

As culture is, in many ways, what societies *are*, ie ways of connecting people (positive or otherwise), culture and cultural heritage have a strong track record in a broader range of social impacts, including enhancing social cohesion, fostering social inclusion, developing community empowerment and capacity-building, and developing civic pride and confidence.

• **Example – Decide Madrid and the Plaza de**

España: 27,000 citizens remodel one of the city's major heritage centres

Decide Madrid is one of many large, city-based programmes for inclusive city and cultural planning shifting decision-making, in this case for €100m annual budgets, from town planners to citizens. As part of this programme, 26,961 citizens were involved in making and voting on proposals to remodel Madrid's central square. The programme involved online platforms for voting and decision-making but also for design and delivery. Participatory budgeting attracted 45,522 people to get involved in its first year and Decide Madrid now has over 400,000 registered users.[23]

Similar work has been undertaken in Paris, where the new mayor has shifted around 15% of the city's annual public spending budget to public-made decisions.[24]

These are both good examples of inclusive growth at a large scale, including both culture and cultural heritage but as part of the bigger picture of metropolis development.

• **Example – Atlas of Inequality: using granular data to identify how inclusive culture is**

MIT's Atlas of Inequality uses various forms of anonymised individual-level data, such as mobile phone signals, to trace the minute movements of individual people, mapped against socio-economic demographic data, to show the places that people visit most often in cities, including coffee shops, movie theatres, shops, restaurants and more. Among other things, the atlas shows how different social demographics access the provision around them. In some cities, poorer communities, for example, don't access 90% of the available opportunities, including cultural provision.[25]

• **Example – Noise Solution: using music technology to support young people in challenging circumstances**

Noise Solution, based in the UK, is one of many organisations that have developed techniques that use participatory approaches, rooted in community music practice and music technology, to support young people in challenging circumstances, many with a wide range of behavioural and personal challenges.

What is notable about them for the present essay, however, is their successful social enterprise model, indeed they describe themselves as one of the 100 most successful social enterprises in the UK.[26] Key to this success is evidence gathering and clarity of identity and purpose, as well as
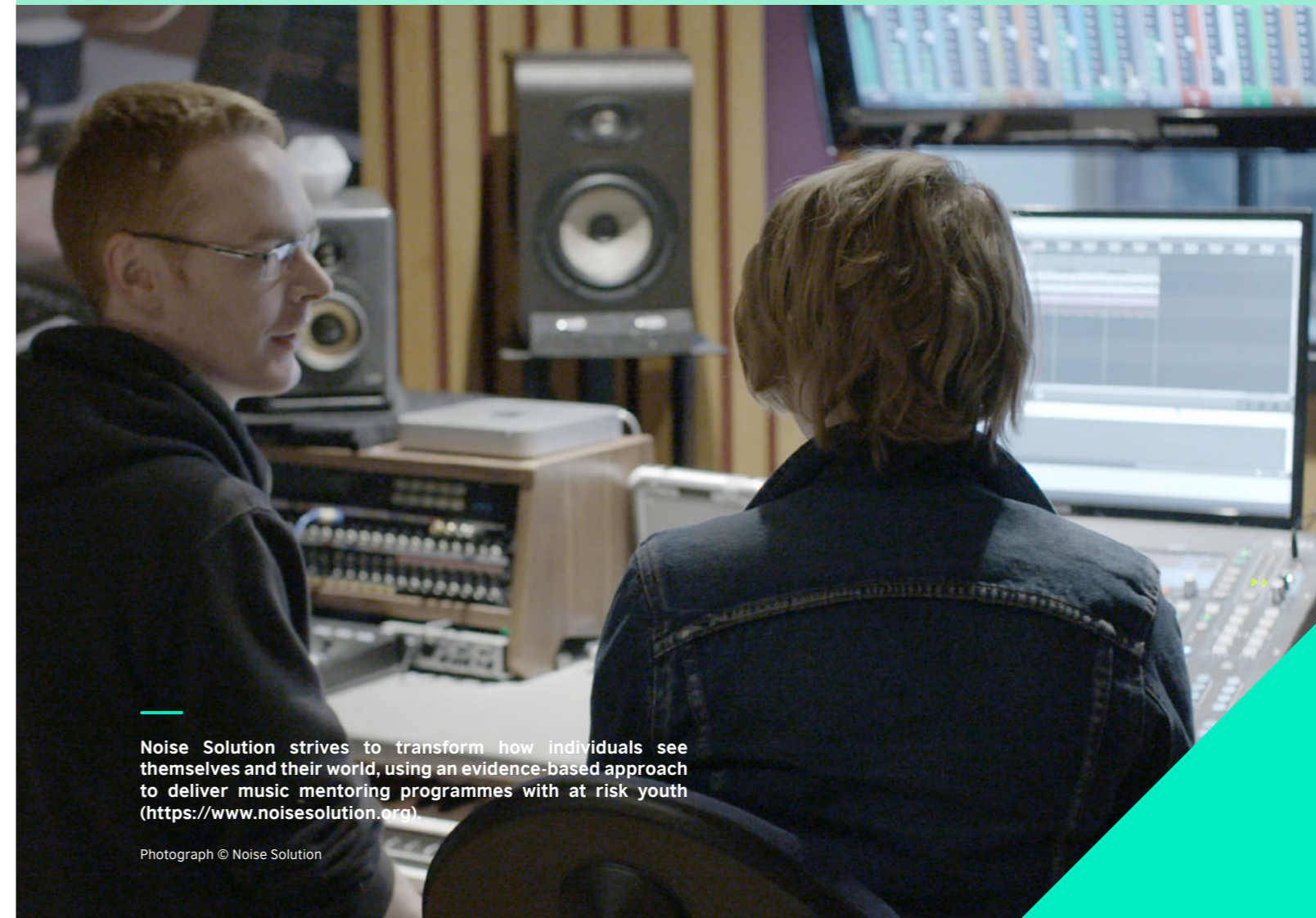
Noise Solution strives to transform how individuals see themselves and their world, using an evidence-based approach to deliver music mentoring programmes with at risk youth (https://www.noisesolution.org).

Photograph © Noise Solution

23. https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/case-studies/decide-madrid

24. Peter Baeck, Nesta Director of Centre for Collective Intelligence Design, personal communication

25. https://inequality.media.mit.edu

26. Interview with Hilary Jennings, 25th February 2020

proven success in what they do, which has helped them to secure commissions from a variety of local authorities under agendas related to supporting young people in challenging

Place-making and regeneration

The relationship between culture and cultural organisations and local development is centuries old. The establishment of cultural institutions is 'chicken-and-egg' with many great civic and urban developments in particular. However, over the past few decades there has arguably been more deliberate, evidenced and on-purpose co-creation of cultural and economic local development, and several of the case studies below are on this theme. Particularly in an era where, in many places, traditional manufacturing, coastal or farming economies are dwindling, at least in employment numbers, and new creative and tech industrial clusters are growing, there is a push to build thriving cultural centres which attract talent and skills from further afield than traditional manual industries often needed to do.

Culture, and cultural heritage in particular, have had a profound impact in many places, aiding regeneration of communities and localities, transforming communities with perhaps little sense of historic pride and sometimes community cohesion challenges into places of intercultural celebration with strong roots to provide a foundation for sustainable development.

- **Example – The Bilbao Effect: transformational Guggenheim injection into a polluted industrial port in Northern Spain**

Perhaps one of the most famous cultural regeneration examples in the world, Bilbao was a port and industrial iron-smelting city with a heavily polluted river from industrial waste. The local authority decided it needed a contemporary fine art gallery to catalyse a complete rethink of this industrialised city (coincident with the possible decline of the metal industry) and commissioned Frank Gehry to design the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, opened in 1997. In its first three years it

circumstances and, in some cases, addressing youth justice and antisocial behaviour.

raised over €100m in taxes for the regional government, covering the construction costs and leaving a surplus. In 2017, the museum had over 1 million visitors, at least half of them from overseas – the third-highest number ever. Other cities the world over have emulated Bilbao's example.[27]

Bilbao is now rated the highest for inclusive development and prosperity for any city in Spain, and the 20th (out of 113) globally, according to the PICSA index.[28]

- **Example – Turner Contemporary, Margate, England; Tate St Ives, Cornwall, England**

Two further examples of the 'Bilbao effect' can be found, both with galleries, in two formerly underdeveloped areas in England – Margate in Kent, where the Turner Contemporary gallery was opened in 2011 – and St Ives in North Cornwall, where Tate St Ives opened in 1993. Both have had transformational impacts on the local pride, tourism, economic opportunity and inclusive development, creating new go-to destinations. But the inclusive growth job is not yet complete. As the BBC reports, the area around the Turner Contemporary is still in the poorest 1% in the country and whilst there is much new economic development, not everyone has benefited. Inclusive growth – yes; inclusive growth for all – not yet.[29]

- **Example – Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site, Wales**

The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site in South East Wales was inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. The landscape is one of the best places to experience and study the Industrial Revolution at large, as it still has many of the mines (including a visitable

coal mine), steelworks, houses, chapels, workmen's halls and other features. It lies within the South Wales Valleys, a historic coal mining region that suffered significant economic hardship with the reduction of the UK's coal industry in the 1980s.

The aim of the World Heritage Sites programme has always been twin: heritage preservation and local economic development. Twenty or so years later, the local government's planning documentation suggests that this is a work in progress. The World Heritage Site has brought £50m to the area since 2000, invested in the

heritage asset, local community improvements and successfully attracting businesses to relocate to the town. But there remain a number of key challenges for the future: declining town-centre footfall; limited local economic and employment opportunities; empty properties and unused historic buildings; and the poor condition of housing and facilities in the public realm. Many of these challenges are not unique to Blaenavon and can be seen across Wales and elsewhere in the UK.[30]

Environment, society and sustainable development

As described above, culture can provide significant contributions to the environment and sustainability more broadly. There are notable examples: eg Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, Al Gore's 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth*, or BBC/David Attenborough's 2017 series *Blue Planet II*. These are significant waves on an estuary of other culture-based environmental change-making, feeding an ocean of potential. Cultural organisations, as sustainable development actors, can and should ensure their own negative environmental impact is as low as possible. As agents of change, cultural activities – which are often highly effective, undeniable, immersive communicators – can be effective at raising awareness. But raising awareness is really only the first step towards impact. Cultural experiences, as personal, vivid and social participatory experiences, can be effective at changing hearts, minds and actions. With careful impact assessment

as part of the approach, we hope this will be a significant growth area for the cultural sector.

- **Example – The Eden Project, Cornwall: former china clay pit turned botanical tourist hotspot**

Another famous mine-based redevelopment is the Eden Project in Bodelva, Cornwall. The Eden project has had sustainable development at its heart from inception, with a life-long emphasis on community consultation, creating local employment and developing as a centre for learning, as well as building tourism and creating a unique biological conservation and experience landscape.

According to Eden's website,[31] they employ around 350 people and 150 volunteers and, since opening in 2001 have attracted 18 million visitors and contributed £1.7 billion to the local economy.

Where the outcomes come out: active ingredients

There would be little point in weighing up the impact of cultural assets and activities, nor in perusing interesting case studies of those impacts, if there weren't an interest or intention to do more of the same – to scale and transfer.

As mentioned earlier in this essay, one of the failings of the common trajectory of activity > observed impact > evaluated impact > evidence > advocacy and fundraising > further activity is that it assumes the further activity can have the same

27. The Economist, 2018

28. https://www.picsaindex.com

29. Gupta, 2019

30. Chris Blandford Associates, 2018

31.   https://www.edenproject.com/about-us/our-funding

impact as the original one; that cultural activities are transferable and replicable, but often they are not. Sometimes this lack of transferability is due to assets; Blaenavon and Eden both need their mines and not everywhere has a mine, which is obvious (although Eden has developed sister sites in other former mining locations). But often it is due to activities; Dance to Health would obviously not have the identical impact if it used visual art, but neither would it work if the dancers were focused on reaching professional ballet standards, instead of understanding how to build physical strength in older people.

So, it is critical to understand where the outcomes come out, where the outcomes are attached and what is responsible for achieving an impact – *how* culture makes the differences that it does. A whole global industry of evaluation, policy-making, funding, training, streamlining and delivering activity has grown out of this impetus to scale and transfer but the question of active ingredients does not have the centrality in this industry that, by rights, it should.

Hence, there is a risk of reading, for example, that 'museums can help with student engagement' rather than 'well-constructed, participatory co-designed engaging experiences in museums and other stimulating environments can help engage students whose school experience they found boring' – ie the active ingredients were not the museum itself, but the fact that the museum had built an experience through consultation and careful design, that it was participatory, not

passive, and that this and other features provided a welcome contrast to a school environment which, for whatever reason in this case, did not work for a group of individuals, and that the same process might be undertaken in a swimming pool, castle, opera house or youth centre, as well as a museum.

It is these active ingredients that lie at the heart of cultural impact scalability.[32] It isn't always possible, or straightforward, to make attributions of causal contribution to particular activities, nor is it always straightforward to communicate them. As the above two quotes demonstrate – it's much more tempting simply to say that museums can help with student engagement.

Without this attention, the scalability of cultural learning is much reduced: partly because it risks one person failing to scale the right bits of another person's practice; and partly, and of particular interest to cultural heritage for sustainable development, because it may be possible to scale active ingredients from one place to another very different place. Not everywhere has a mine, but plenty of places can learn to use the active ingredients of Blaenavon or Eden to make their own successful recipe. This raises an important question for building and scaling the cultural heritage for sustainable development programme: what level or kind of heritage asset, as distinct from cultural activity, do new project locations need to qualify for inclusion?

with concerted deliberate and strategic effort. Additionally, it must be collaborative – working with and alongside community stakeholders throughout – not just consulting with stakeholders

but genuinely collaborating with them. Related to this, many examples of culture-related inclusive growth are very localised.

Particular values of heritage; heritage as an active ingredient

This essay looks broadly at culture in the round, rather than focusing exclusively on cultural heritage, and this is not the place for a comprehensive audit of the impact of cultural heritage. What is of *particular* value in heritage, from the perspective of active ingredients, purpose-orientation and sitting around the table, looking at how a collective approach to a challenge or opportunity can be found?

> Heritage just gets to the heart of identity, place and belonging. It might be the building you're in, a box of vinyl, or something completely different. When people feel they belong, they will be braver and more likely to try new things. They will have more agency.[33]

Clearly, some of the impacts of cultural heritage are attached to particular heritage: physical assets (eg buildings, objects), institutions (eg museums, libraries), or particular traditions (eg tribes,

fashions, canons of works) and these present clear opportunities for harnessing cultural heritage for inclusive growth. But what about locations and communities where these heritage assets do not exist, or at least not obviously enough for community members to want to turn them into an inclusive growth opportunity?

> It's only if you can understand your heritage and where you've come from that you can make sufficient sense of the present as to make informed decisions or discuss the future in an informed way. If you just helicopter in without understanding the context, you don't make good decisions. This is the same in life-long terms, as it is in instantaneous ones.[34]

This essay has not focused on how you can harness a cultural heritage asset for inclusive growth but instead on how you could bring to the table a repertoire of cultural assets and activities,

Is the growth inclusive?

As illustrated in some of the case studies above, the growth attached to harnessing cultural assets and activities can be inclusive. But it is not *always* particularly inclusive, indeed in many cases it is

likely not to be inclusive unless that inclusion is a founding part of the approach; inclusion is not necessarily innate to culture and cultural activity – it often needs to be developed on purpose and

32. This essay is not the place for a comprehensive analysis of what those ingredients are. Readers are referred, amongst other sources, to: the 'Principles and ways of working' identified in Lewis et al, 2018, p 12; 'Ingredients in a Creative Impact approach' that we have produced as part of our Creative Impact programme (http://www.creative-impact.org); 'Ingredients for music and social impact' in World Pencil, 2019; 'Hitting the Spot: music and social impact toolkit', pp 30 -36, (http://www.worldpencil.net/music-and-social-impact-toolkit); and AESOP, 2018

33. A social worker supporting vulnerable people on an inner-city estate, responding to a question about 'what is important about heritage specifically', asked by Esme Ward, Direct of Manchester Museums, during her Clore Fellowship research for Heritage Lottery Foundation, UK
34. Anna Southall, former Director of the National Museum of Wales, and Vice Chairman of the UK Big Lottery Fund, personal communication.

Identifying and prioritising opportunities for cultural heritage

Outlined above are a series of trends which, with the right approach, might present opportunities for culture to support inclusive growth. How could we make sense of these opportunities and work out where to prioritise efforts? As an attempt in this direction, Chart 1 gives a crude analysis of opportunities for the cultural sector on two axes: opportunities for inclusive growth through tourism and opportunities for inclusive growth achieving social impact (recognising they are far from discrete).

Chart 1: Tourism and social impact: opportunities for the cultural sector

There aren't any widely accepted formulae for calculating economic opportunity, as we've encountered in use, but a loose definition is based on **economic opportunity** arising from the ability to meet a need or desire with some form of **payment or return**. The data below uses various data sets to estimate economic opportunity for the cultural sector, thus:

Opportunity = level of need × current cost of or gain from meeting that need × capacity of culture sector to meet that need

For tourism, we have calculated:

- 'Need' using the WEF Travel and Tourism index, on the difference between a country's Cultural Resources and Business Travel score and the shortfall in its infrastructure's ability to enable the maximisation of that resource (one minus the total score; this means that 'need' can be negative, where the overall infrastructure score is greater than the resource score),[35] assuming that need is proportional to unmet potential;

- 'Current cost/gain' on the contribution of tourism to that country as a % of GDP,[36] assuming realisation of further potential is proportional to gain from current realisation;

- 'Capacity of culture sector' on the percentage of the workforce employed in the culture sector,[37] assuming the culture sector's potential future capacity to support tourism is proportional to its current size overall.

For social impact, we have calculated:

- 'Need' on the mean of a country's GINI coefficient for income inequality,[38] IGI score for gender inequality,[39] and percentage of non-enrolment in secondary education,[40] assuming the need that might reasonably be partly met through culture is proportional to these three measures in aggregate;

- 'Current cost/gain' on the percentage of government spending currently allocated to social protection and education,[41] assuming that potential resource for the cultural sector serving these needs would be proportional to the current costs of doing so (not, though, implying any expectation that governments will readily divert these budgets to the cultural sector);

- 'Capacity of the cultural sector' as for tourism, on the percentage of the workforce employed in the culture sector,[42] assuming the culture sector's potential future capacity to work deliberately and successfully towards social impact is proportional to its current size overall.

We have also included (bubble size) the current level of government spending on culture as a percentage of GDP.[43] We have used pre-pandemic data throughout.

Chart 1 shows countries for which data is available, which are predominantly OECD member countries.

The chart and its methods are crude but interesting, perhaps at least because it attempts

35. Data source: *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019*, World Economic Forum, 2019

36. Data source: World Bank / World Travel and Tourism Council

37. Data source: UNESCO.UIS and EU/Eurostat

38. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient accessed April 2023

39. 'The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions. Discriminatory social institutions intersect across all stages of girls' and women's life, restricting their access to justice, rights and empowerment opportunities and undermining their agency and decision-making authority over their life choices. As underlying drivers of gender inequalities, discriminatory social institutions perpetuate gender gaps in development areas, such as education, employment and health, and hinder progress towards rights-based social transformation that benefits both women and men. The SIGI covers five dimensions of discriminatory social institutions: Discriminatory family code, Restricted physical integrity, Son bias, Restricted resources and assets, Restricted civil liberty The index presents scores ranging from 0 to 1, with 0 meaning there is no discrimination against women and 1 meaning indicating there is a very high level of discrimination against women.' https://data.oecd.org/inequality/social-institutions-and-gender.htm

40. Data source: UNESCO

41. Data source: OECD, 2015 figures (latest)

42. Data source: UNESCO.UIS and Eurostat

43. Data source: OECD

to show not just the level of need in a country but the potential capacity to meet that need and the resource for doing so – the opportunity. On this basis, for example, Iceland, which has the strongest cultural sector government spending percentage, has perhaps more future opportunity unrealised in supporting social impact than tourism, and Finland, Latvia and Germany have particular potential opportunities for cultural sector social impact support. USA has approximately the same social impact opportunity as Spain, France and Norway, despite much smaller government cultural spend (bubble size) and indeed social protection and education spend, because it has higher GINI and secondary non-enrolment figures.

Of course, there are numerous factors that this chart does not convey. One of the most significant is the expertise (or lack thereof) of the cultural sector in supporting social impact – which is by no means the same skillset as supporting culture itself – and an expertise where various commentators see the UK as having an advantage that the British Council has a key role in exporting.[44]

Hurdles and recomendations for realising the opportunities

For these culture contribution opportunities to be realised, there are practical and systemic hurdles in their implementation which will be encountered, and which will need to be overcome. This final section looks at some of these hurdles and makes recommendations for overcoming or circumnavigating them.

Can the culture sector thrive and survive?

If you work in the cultural sector, you are unlikely to miss this hurdle; it is perhaps as perennial as the impetus to create, overwhelming the economy of scale to recreate. It is not, however, a subject to dwell on for this essay, other than to point out that the essay is focused on opportunities for culture, although not with the primary intention of sustaining the sector itself.

Does the culture sector see itself as part of sustainable development – does it want to make a social impact on purpose?

If pushed, and the situation is changing positively, I would venture that many – perhaps a significant majority in my own experience – of those working in the culture sector would honestly answer 'not really' to these questions, at least beyond the social impact that is perhaps an added benefit of cultural activity. For a variety of reasons, many of them positive and understandable, much of the attention and focus in the cultural sector is relatively introspective and contributing to external agendas is not the main emphasis. UNESCO, the UK'S National Lottery Heritage Fund and the British Council have worked hard for some time to champion the role of culture in sustainable development agendas, but they are not always joined by their counterparts and colleagues elsewhere in the culture sector.

Many have a good understanding of the instrumental value of their sector, as well as its intrinsic value, but perhaps less understanding of how it could be harnessed on purpose beyond its primary sphere of activity.

There are those that voice this more strongly and see many cultural figures, including high-level decision-makers and influencers in arts, culture and heritage, as indifferent to or uninterested in the role that this sector can play in contributing to social impact and sustainable development. It is no surprise, then, that there are plenty that see the culture sector as snobbish, superior, and too concerned with high artistic values and heritage preservation.

Closely related to this are the sets of values and understanding of excellence that hold great sway in the cultural sector. Often in culture and cultural education the distinction between values by which others are judged professionally and personal tastes is indistinct. In our work at World Pencil, we advocate that the excellence of the past and present should be used to inspire the future, but not to dictate its goals and aspirations; the past

44. UNESCO UK, 2019

has already been created – move on.

Related to this are questions of power shifts. Often, inclusive approaches to culture generally, including culture for inclusive growth, involve some shifting of power (eg decision-making power) from recognised authorities and experts to communities, who may have less of the same recognised expertise. Sometimes this shift is welcomed by those in power, sometimes not, for a variety of reasons.

This set of issues is the first hurdle. There are many recommendations to its resolution.

The first is providing **inspiration**. Showing cultural organisations and individuals what they already achieve, and could do in the future, in terms of social impact and sustainable development, can be the mirror glass door that opens up a future of potential.

The second is for cultural organisations to affect a **shift of focus from a cultural purpose to a social or sustainable development purpose.** If a cultural organisation is pursuing a largely cultural agenda or purpose, it is likely to be harder for it to embrace inclusive working or to harness its

cultural asset for social impact than if it is focusing on a social or broader sustainability agenda, alongside other stakeholders.

A third recommendation comes in the form of the influence that can be exerted by **funders and policy-makers** – asking, requiring or ensuring that cultural policy and investment is focused in at least some part on social impact and sustainable development, ie focused instrumental value where it is needed.

A fourth recommendation is about **building a visible strength in numbers**. 'If you want to change what people do, just have more fun than them and make sure that they know about it.'[45] There will always be those that are more socially and communally minded than others, just as there will be early adopters and stragglers in any adoption curve. So, the culture sector should continue to make a noise about how powerful and impactful it can be (without being sanctimonious and whilst making sure it isn't over-claiming) and continue being an integral and celebrated part of the wider society from which it is born.

Developing the right expertise

The second hurdle in harnessing culture for social impact and sustainable development is actually being able to do it and do it well.

'A perennial challenge for education is that everyone has had one and therefore thinks they're an expert in it.'[46] It is not so true, perhaps, that every cellist or curator thinks themselves equipped to tackle community cohesion, but it is sometimes surprisingly true that the skills and expertise for harnessing culture for sustainable development are not the same as the skills and expertise for doing or developing culture itself, neither, like teaching, are they obvious or necessarily intuitive.

The solutions to this are not surprising though. The first is **professional and organisational development:** equipping people and organisations (eg through training, experiences, reflection,

mentoring, and strategy development) to develop new social impact capacities to harness their existing cultural capacities.

The range of skills and specialisms to harness culture for sustainable development effectively is extensive, including collaboration, leadership for collaboration, inclusion, growth, economic development, economic policy, impact assessment, individual-needs specialist knowledge, communication, and sustainable development understanding – more specialisms than it makes sense for most organisations or individuals to develop themselves.

Therefore, the second solution is **partnership and collaboration**: working alongside specialists in the fields that you need but don't specialise in yourself. In many cases, collaboration is the

preferable solution to capacity development and often the best approach for it. AESOP have found, for example, with Dance to Health, that co-design and co-development, ie close working between dance and health professionals, is essential to success, partly because the backgrounds, skills and perspectives of the two disciplines are often so different and partly because they need to be. Although there is a need for arts-and-health training, in many cases artists need to be valued and supported as artists, and health practitioners as health practitioners. Synergy can be more powerful than synthesis.

Collaboration with other sectors can also have the advantage of dissipating and, indeed, harnessing the competitiveness and individuation that are common in the cultural sector (and often essential for survival within it). There can be only one person who is the best cellist in the world, but there can be as many exceptional cello-harnessing-social-impact-change-makers as there are needs for social impact that can be met with a cello.

Indicators, evaluation and measurement

The third hurdle concerns developing an understanding of the impacts of culture and building a body of evidence that attests to these impacts. This becomes a hurdle for many reasons, including:

- evaluating for impact is not always seen as a priority, in comparison to developing the cultural activity itself or, indeed, achieving the impact itself;

- some evaluation purposes require evaluation rigour or skills which are beyond the practical reach of those organising the activity;

- some things are hard to measure, so what can be easily measured can get in the way of working out what *should* be measured;

- evaluation can be expensive – often much more expensive than the activity being evaluated;

- evaluation findings can be over-claimed: finding evidence to show that something works is not the same as finding evidence to see if something works.

We propose two sets of recommendations to this evaluation challenge. The first concerns ensuring that there is **clarity of purpose behind any evaluation and clarity of the level of rigour required** to meet that purpose. Purposes behind evaluation tend to be one of the following:

1. Funder: to satisfy the requirements of a funder;

2. Making the case: to build evidence to secure funding for future activity;

3. Quality: to develop the quality of practice and refine future practices, approaches and strategies;

4. Curiosity: to explore the impact of work, to test intuitions, to discover new things unknown.

In particular, it is important that these purposes are not confused. As mentioned above, if culture is to realise its much greater potential outside the cultural sector, there needs to be less focus on purpose oriented towards fundraising, and more towards earning a seat at the decision-making table (below).

The second set of recommendations concerns **capacity and infrastructure for evaluation**, including:

- the development and deployment of common evaluation indicators for culture and sustainable development, which could sensibly build on or reference the Culture 2030 Indicators;[47]

- the support for and encouragement of capacity building and collaboration for evaluation. In particular, in our experience, it is rare for the funding of an evaluation to be quite separate from the funding of the activity

45. Ed Gillespie, Futurra, personal communication, 2014

46. Fellow educationalist, personal communication, 2019

47. https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators

being evaluated, which quickly places a cloud above aspirations of impartiality;[48]

- further initiatives to encourage and make accessible the sharing of approaches for

evaluation and impact assessment, as well as their findings.

Earning a seat at the decision-making table – do other sectors see culture as part of the approach?

Throughout this essay, if culture is to realise its sustainable development opportunities, I've advocated that cultural stakeholders should not so much advocate for continued support for their work so it can achieve its impacts but instead aim to be part of the design and development of collective strategies to achieve impact. They should not only seek funding but also a seat at the decision-making table – but this is not always easy.

Outlined above are several reasons why it can be a hurdle:

- culture is not always seen, or understood, to be viable player in the approach for a sustainable development challenge;

- the evidence of its viability is often insufficient;

- sometimes cultural organisations are not proactively keen to be involved, and;

- sometimes they cannot access the opportunity to be involved.

In response to this hurdle, the first recommendation is a **set of questions for cultural organisations** seeking a place at the design and decision-making table; that is, developing a strategy in response to a particular challenge or opportunity:

1. **Capability:** can you achieve an effective impact in support of this challenge or opportunity and do you have the resources, people and skills to do it, including at scale? Do you have at least enough financial viability to survive?

2. **Identity:** can you be clearly recognised for what you do and how it is of value? Are you known for ten things or one?

3. **Convincing communication:** do you have the

stories, case studies and evidence to communicate your potential impact convincingly, and well-placed advocates to act on your behalf?

4. **Connectivity:** can you get around the tables where decisions are made? Can you get introductions from others to that table? Can you raise brand value and general awareness so that the decision-makers find you themselves?

5. **Empathy:** can you genuinely understand the perspective of the other people working in this context, circumstance or challenge, understand what they're trying to do, talk their language and understand that cultural heritage or cultural excellence might be of little significance to them? Are you aware of when you're trying to pursue a cultural/ heritage agenda and when you're trying to pursue a different one? Which purpose is it?

6. **Utility:** is your approach genuinely useful for a particular context, circumstance or challenge? How do you know? How can you evidence it?

7. **Plausibility:** how realistically and viably can your approach be deployed? Have you got evidence of the level of rigour required to justify policy or spending decisions? Have you got, or could you source, the infrastructure and assets to operate at the required scale to be worth bothering with?

The second recommendation is that the British Council, UNESCO, Historic England and others who have made strides in this area should work together, and bring others together, to **develop insights and capacity for further establishing culture as an essential stakeholder for sustainable development strategies at every level.**

Concluding comments

It is true that often the people who are involved in producing cultural experiences, and those who visit or participate in them (often the same people), find great value in culture being a slightly removed part of life – being somewhat other. This is an important part of culture's value, meaning and impact.

However, in our opinion, this 'otherness' has got in the way of inclusive culture for too long and been a contributing factor to culture not being as central to sustainable development strategies as we believe it could be and should be.

This essay has attempted to show why and how culture could be more centrally involved and indeed that now perhaps more than ever before, there is a need and an opportunity to take this forward. The opportunities for culture on purpose are many.

48. The RSA's 'Learning about Culture' programme is a good counterexample to this trend: https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/creative-learning-and-development-folder/learning-about-culture

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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