The Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development

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What is Culture?

“Culture is crucial for sustainable development
Culture is what makes us human
Culture is about our identities
Culture is about our history and our heritage
Culture is about peace
Culture brings about social inclusion and social cohesion.
That is why we believe today that culture should be at the heart of the global debate about sustainable development.”

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO
Culture and sustainable development

• Sustainable development is most often defined through three pillars: the environment, society and economics, while the fourth pillar culture is usually forgotten.

• Culture is part of society, which unites members of a social group, people, and at the same time differentiates them from members of other social groups. Culture is everywhere, permanent, belongs to everyone, and is not reserved for only one social class.

  Consequently, the definition of sustainable development must include the concept of culture.

• Contemporary research shows that a strong cultural sector inspires positive changes in consumption and spending, strengthens moral mechanisms, promotes human rights awareness and encourages a positive and informed attitude toward the environment.
Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development

- Agenda 21 for Culture (UCLG) launched in January 2016 policy paper examining three roles of culture in sustainable development:

1. A supportive and self-promoting role (‘culture in sustainable development’) - expands conventional sustainable development discourse by adding culture as a 4th pillar. Culture stands, linked but autonomous, alongside separate environmental, social, and economic considerations and imperatives of sustainability
Culture *in, for and as* Sustainable Development

2. A role which offers culture as a more influential force that can operate beyond itself (‘culture for sustainable development’) - this role moves culture into a framing, contextualising and **mediating** mode, that can **balance** all three of the pillars and guide sustainable development between economic, social, and environmental pressures and needs.

3. A role which sees culture as the necessary overall foundation and structure for achieving the aims of SD (‘culture as sustainable development’) - by recognising that culture is at the **root** of all human decisions and actions, culture and sustainability become mutually **intertwined**, and the distinctions between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability begin to fade.
Culture drives sustainable development

Cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and cultural infrastructure can serve as strategic tools for **revenue generation**.

Cultural and creative industries represent one of the most rapidly **expanding sectors** in the global economy in developing countries given their often-rich cultural heritage and substantial **labour force**.

Culture-led development also includes a range of **non-monetized benefits**, such as greater **social inclusiveness** and rootedness, resilience, **innovation**, **creativity** and **entrepreneurship** for individuals and communities, and the use of **local resources**, **skills**, and **knowledge**.

Investment in culture and creativity has proven an excellent means for **revitalize the economy** of cities. Today, many cities use cultural heritage and cultural events and institutions to improve their image, stimulate urban development, and attract visitors as well as investments.
Culture enables sustainable development

Culture has a transformative power on existing development approaches, helping to broaden the terms of the current development debate and to make development much more relevant to the needs of people.

Development interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and advance a human-centred approach to development are most likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Acknowledging and promoting respect for cultural diversity within a human right based approach can facilitate intercultural dialogue, prevent conflicts and protect the rights of marginalized groups, within and between nations, thus creating optimal conditions for achieving development goals.

Culture, understood this way, makes development more sustainable.
How is culture connected with other pillars of sustainable development?

• **Culture and economy** – e.g. creative economy > cultural activities such as dance or music are of growing importance to the economy of many countries and gave employment to a large number of people

• **Culture and environment** - artists and cultural workers can be catalysts of change in society and encourage discussion of environmental issues such as climate change

• **Culture and society** - an integral part of every society
Although none of the 17 SDGs focuses exclusively on culture, the resulting Agenda includes several explicit references to cultural aspects, for example:

• **Target 4.7** refers to the aim to ensuring that all learners acquire the **knowledge and skills** needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for global citizenship and the appreciation of **cultural diversity** and of **culture’s contribution** to sustainable development.
Culture in Sustainable Development Goals

• **Target 8.3** addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities as well as, among others, **creativity** and **innovation**

• **Targets 8.9** and 12.b refer to the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through **local culture** and products

• **Target 11.4** highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the **world’s cultural and natural heritage**
A Hope for Europe!
Culture, Cities and New Narratives

• On 20-21 June 2016, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a conference which brought together approximately 180 persons (EESC members, European civil society, cultural organisations, foundations, etc.), to explore how, why and when Culture matters today in Europe.

• The conference explored four themes:

1. Culture as a vehicle for economic growth
2. Culture as an instrument for reconverting cities and territories
3. Culture as a tool for integration and inclusiveness
4. Reshaping European identity within Europe and beyond
Culture as a vehicle for economic growth

- Culture has a big impact on driving development, cohesion and identity, but this remains marginal in many political and policy developments in Europe.
- There is a risk of culture being understood exclusively as a tool for the achievement of other objectives, rather than an intrinsic aspect of quality of life in cities and a key component of freedoms and rights.
- Culture should be systematically integrated as an important element in cohesion strategies and policy, employment measures, urban development strategies etc.
- While the potential of the arts and culture for economic growth is certainly non-negligible, its potential to promote sustainable development and the growth of our societies and citizens in their human and creative dimension is at least as, if not far more, important.
Culture as an instrument for reconverting cities and territories

• The place of culture in reconverting cities has been the subject of significant attention over the past few decades, with particular emphasis on cities which integrated culture in long-term development strategies enabling a transition from traditional industries to a knowledge-based economy.

• The breadth of these processes means that, in practice, urban regeneration needs to combine economic, social and cultural processes, rather than seeing culture as an instrument for reconverting cities.
Culture as a tool for integration and inclusiveness

• Fostering inclusive societies and cities is both a question of providing adequate infrastructure (e.g. sustainable mobility), as well as a matter of sociocultural environment and mind-set, and of active policies for equality.

• Among the challenges cities face, few are greater than finding the right tools to foster inclusion. In many ways social cohesion is not quite enough. It is one thing for groups to mesh with the general social ambiance of the city. It is another for all the individuals in a city to feel included in its life, whether at work or leisure.

• Cultural tools are clearly useful in speeding up the process of individual integration, e.g. the arts can bring people together and help them participate in a mixed community life in ways which give them the chance to build bridges out of their immediate surroundings.
Culture as a pillar of European Identity within Europe and beyond

The question of European identity and the role played by culture in its conceptualisation have been approached from different perspectives, e.g. how cities and regions contribute to European identities and narratives?

- The position of cities is of particular relevance as they are able to circumvent centralised hubs dominated by scale and international visibility or to create more dynamic initiatives compared to those originated top-down from central governments.

- Although geographic position and economic scale, cities have encountered within the European context and elsewhere, ways to co-operate and become visible actors at regional level and through transnational engagements, based on specific niche areas or heritage, supported by specialised networks or through mobility programmes.
EESC Recommendations

1. Recognise **cultural rights** as fundamental to human development
2. Acknowledge **culture** as necessary for **sustainable development**
3. **Include new players** in the democratic governance of culture
4. Support **exchange between cultures** to foster social and economic development
5. Empower **cities’ decisions on culture** to shape our future

• recommendations are directed to cultural operators and political decision-makers on local, national and European levels alike