



Heritage and Our
Sustainable Future
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*This session addressed all the
United Nations Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs), in
particular SDG 11 and 17.*

EVALUATING THE IMPACTS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Brief Report from the UK National Commission for UNESCO
and PRAXIS at the University of Leeds. Session held on Tuesday
2nd March, 2021.**

This session built upon recommendations from earlier conference sessions and previous discussions in the sector calling for greater recognition of the potential of cultural heritage to help achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It explored current evaluation frameworks to capture the impacts of cultural heritage for sustainable development. It also discussed existing assessment challenges and ways to rethink and reframe methods for measuring heritage-generated impacts.

KEY INSIGHTS

ONE. The SDGs framework and its monitoring system do not adequately capture the multifaceted impacts of cultural heritage for sustainable development.

Cultural heritage is critical to sustainable development and plays a cross-cutting role in contributing to all the SDGs; Target 11.4, the sole mention of heritage, is insufficient. The relevance of cultural heritage, broader than just economic contribution, cannot be assessed in isolation from the rest of the global challenges.

TWO. The type, range and spheres of cultural heritage-generated impacts are multifaceted and require diverse evaluation methods and indicators.

Cultural heritage impacts are difficult to measure, and both qualitative and quantitative aspects need to be assessed to provide evidence to policymakers on heritage as a vector for sustainable development. Indicators that are too broad and universal miss the granularity and specificities, whilst those that are too narrow miss the full scope, thus preventing an appropriate assessment of the impacts of cultural heritage and heritage-based projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

ONE. The SDGs framework and its monitoring system do not adequately capture the multifaceted impacts of cultural heritage for sustainable development.

- **Understand the availability and reliability of existing data and assessment frameworks** to demonstrate the diverse values generated by cultural heritage, working with relevant institutions, researchers, policymakers and communities at international, national and local levels.
- **Develop and test new assessment approaches using methodologies from various disciplines** to provide evidence for national and local policymaking on the impacts of cultural heritage in contributing to sustainable development.
- **Support consistent monitoring processes over a sustained period of time** to collect long-term datasets able to assess progress, legacies and trends to inform decision-making processes and provide guidance.
- **Conduct research to understand the broader impacts of cultural heritage and develop qualitative and quantitative indicators** able to capture the complexity involved in heritage evaluation processes, including those which measure incremental steps toward set goals.
- **Improve existing evaluation frameworks by using a wider range of cultural heritage indicators** in relation to cultural participation, cultural expression, creativity, identity, and cultural rights, as well as the interconnection between cultural heritage and global challenges such as gender equality, equity and global justice, mental health and well-being, climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and poverty reduction.

TWO. The type, range and spheres of cultural heritage-generated impacts are multifaceted and require diverse evaluation methods and indicators.

- **Use and improve theories of change for planning and evaluation in the heritage field:** firstly, identify the desired outcomes of heritage-based projects and only then define appropriate evaluation frameworks.
- **Learn from the evaluation process for projects or programmes and co-design assessment frameworks with local stakeholders** to include their needs and planned outcomes, build local capacity for evaluation and contextualise the evaluation locally.
- **Consider co-creation with local communities and equitable partnerships as a core criterion for funding** to foster participation and inclusion in data collection and evaluation.
- **Develop flexible assessment methodologies based on quantitative and qualitative indicators**, relying on existing data sources and on innovative strategies for data collection.
- **Conduct research to assess replicability and scalability of current evaluation approaches** and find adaptable measures to implement these approaches in different contexts.
- **Create platforms to aggregate and share evaluation methodologies and data from different case studies and contexts** to support the comparison of diverse experiences, knowledge sharing and capacity building, and the development of aspirational evaluation models.
- **Build local capabilities to collect meaningful data on cultural heritage impact** by working with local communities, government authorities, universities, research councils, NGOs and civil society organisations.



KEY ISSUES

1. The potential of heritage to address global challenges and improve people's lives is underrepresented in the SDGs framework because its impacts are difficult to measure.
2. Progress toward the achievement of Target 11.4 of the 2030 Agenda is measured through per capita expenditure on cultural and natural heritage. This focus on the economic dimension is inadequate to capture the contribution of cultural heritage to sustainable development.
3. Evaluation indicators are often narrowly based in economics and focus on those aspects that can be easily measured with existing tools such as Gross Domestic Product. Subtler quantitative measures, and qualitative aspects, which are often the most relevant to capture cultural heritage's impacts, are frequently left out of the assessments.
4. Heritage evaluations need to be context-specific to capture the complexity of heritage-generated impacts, using approaches and terminologies which are co-designed with local stakeholders, rather than externally imposed.
5. The variety of evaluation approaches, relying on locally available data and expertise, makes the comparison of different data and assessments a challenge for researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. THE IMPACTS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, BOTH QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE, ARE DIFFICULT TO MEASURE
2. INCONSISTENT AND SCATTERED DATA ON CULTURAL HERITAGE
3. POLICYMAKERS FOCUS MOSTLY ON QUANTITATIVE DATA
4. EVALUATION INDICATORS OFTEN EMPHASISE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION
5. LACK OF HOLISTIC AND COMPARATIVE EVALUATIONS

CASE STUDIES

VALUING CULTURE AND HERITAGE CAPITAL

The UK's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched the [Culture and Heritage Capital Programme](#) in January 2021 with the [publication](#) of 'Valuing culture and heritage capital: a framework towards informing decision making'. The framework sets out DCMS's ambition to develop a formal approach to value the wide range of benefits provided by culture and heritage assets. The programme's ultimate aim is to create publicly available statistics and guidance that will allow for improved articulation of the value of the culture and heritage sectors in decision-making. This will help organisations make more sustainable, evidence-based decisions with regard to culture and heritage capital. The valuation of benefits and costs plays an important role in deciding how the government should spend taxpayers' money. [Sector specific guidance](#) is already available to value the impact of interventions in crime, environment, health and transport. It is important that similar guidance is also available to help guide decisions on culture and heritage. The guidance will be consistent with Social Cost Benefit Analysis principles published in HM Treasury's Green Book. The Green Book contains guidance issued by HM Treasury on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects. The role of appraisal and evaluation is to provide objective analysis to support decision-making.



UNESCO THEMATIC INDICATORS FOR CULTURE IN THE 2030 AGENDA

UNESCO's advocacy for a culture-based approach to development has culminated in the integration of culture in the 2030 Agenda. In this context, UNESCO developed the [UNESCO Culture | 2030 Indicators](#) to establish an innovative methodology for demonstrating culture's role and contribution to the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The lack of reliable data collection, measurement and monitoring processes combined with the fragmentation of existing data related to culture have resulted in its marginalisation in public policies and in national and local development strategies. The [UNESCO Culture | 2030 Indicators](#) framework aims to bring the data together and set up more reliable measurement systems to show the multiple ways culture contributes to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The framework, composed of 22 indicators grouped into four thematic dimensions, measures culture's contribution as a sector of activity in itself and transversally across other sectors. The framework was developed in collaboration with the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) to help decision-makers by building a coherent and strong evidence-based narrative on culture and development. Pilot implementation has been launched for the period 2021–2022 in more than 14 countries and cities around the world, the outcome of which will allow measuring the contribution of culture to the SDGs and informing policy making.



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