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The cultural economy's contribution to sustainable development: Practices and opportunities

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Abstract---This article explores sustainability in the cultural economy and how the cultural economy can play an important role in sustainable development. Using a qualitative approach, it examines the links between the cultural economy and sustainable development, highlighting the cultural industry's environmentally responsible practices and their impact on sustainable development. The qualitative analysis highlights opportunities for economic growth, artistic innovation, social responsibility and positive impacts on society and the environment, while obstacles include economic pressures, energy consumption and resistance to change. Government policies and individual actions by cultural actors can complement each other to promote environmentally and socially responsible practices while maintaining the vitality and creativity of the cultural industries.

Keywords---Cultural economy, cultural industries, sustainable development.

I. Introduction

At the intersection of artistic creativity and social responsibility, the cultural economy¹ embodies considerable potential for shaping a sustainable future. It

¹- Culture, cultural economy and cultural industry

Culture, cultural economy and cultural industry are related concepts, but they have important differences:

Culture: Culture refers to the set of values, beliefs, practices, customs, art, music, literature and other forms of creative expression that characterise a society or group of people. Culture is a fundamental aspect of the identity of a society and its members.

Cultural economy: The cultural economy encompasses the economic activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services. It includes creative industries such as film, music, literature, visual arts, design, fashion, etc. The cultural economy values creativity and intellectual property and plays an important economic role in many societies.

evokes the idea that culture, in all its forms, can play a central role in creating more just, equitable and environmentally respectful societies. This inspiring notion invites us to explore how artistic expression, cultural heritage preservation and creative industries can be mobilised to address the most pressing challenges of our time.

This paper seeks to answer the question: how can the cultural economy serve as a powerful lever to promote a sustainable future? To answer this question, we will explore innovative initiatives, sustainable practices and cross-sector partnerships that demonstrate how creativity can be harnessed for environmental protection, social inclusion, cultural heritage preservation and economic development. We aim to inspire cultural sector stakeholders, policy makers and society at large to harness the potential of this approach to shape a world where creativity and responsibility are intertwined for a better and more sustainable future.

II. Conceptual framework

II.1 Conceptual framework of the cultural economy

This section presents the conceptual framework for the two key concepts of this paper, namely the cultural economy and sustainable development.

II.1.1 Definition of the cultural economy

The cultural economy, also referred to as the creative economy, is a set of market-oriented activities based on the creation, production and distribution of cultural goods and services. It covers various fields such as art, cinema, music, literature, fashion, video games, television and many more (Lercihe, 2006)².

This economy is based on the added value of creativity, artistic expression and culture in general. It can make a significant contribution to economic growth, employment and innovation in many societies. Cultural and creative industries

1. Cultural industries: The creative industries are a sub-category of the cultural economy. It focuses on the mass production and marketing of standardised cultural products. This concept was developed by thinkers such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who criticised the industrialisation of culture, standardisation and excessive commercialisation. Examples include the entertainment industry, pop music, television and commercial cinema.

2- Frédéric Leriche, Sylvie Daviet, Mariette Sibertin-Blanc, Jean-Marc Zuliani. "The cultural economy and its territories: What are the issues?" The Cultural Economy and Its Territories, September 2006, Toulouse, France. pp. 20-25. ffhals-00286485f

3- Xavier Greffe "Review of Political Economy" 2010/1 (Vol.120), pp. 1-34.

4- United Nations Development Programme 2015-2030 1_Culture, cultural economy and cultural industry

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are increasingly recognised for their role in promoting cultural diversity, heritage and national or regional identity (Grefe, 2010)³.

II.1.2 Key elements of the cultural economy

The cultural economy is a constantly evolving field, increasingly influenced by technological advances and changes in consumer behaviour. It plays an essential role in diversifying the economy and preserving cultural diversity. The following are the main elements of the cultural economy:

- Cultural creation: This includes artists, writers, musicians, designers, etc. who create original cultural works.
- Cultural production: This refers to the processes involved in the creation and development of cultural goods, such as film production, music recording or the creation of visual art.
- Cultural distribution: This includes the ways in which cultural goods are disseminated and made available to the public, whether through digital platforms, performance venues, bookstores, etc.
- Cultural consumption: This refers to how individuals and communities engage with cultural goods, whether by purchasing them, consuming them online, visiting museums or participating in various ways.
- Intellectual Property: The protection of copyright, trademarks and patents is essential in the cultural economy to encourage innovation while allowing creators to benefit from their works.
- Creative industries: The cultural economy includes creative industries that contribute significantly to the economy, creating jobs, income and economic opportunities.
- Cultural value: Beyond economic value, the cultural economy recognises the intrinsic cultural value of artistic and cultural works, their role in cultural identity and their contribution to social well-being.
- Cultural sustainability: The cultural economy is increasingly concerned with sustainability, seeking to minimise its environmental impact and promote social inclusion.

II.2 Conceptual framework for sustainable development

II.2.1 Sustainable Development: Definition - Pillars - Objectives

According to the Brundtland Report, published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”⁴ (UNDP, 2003). In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio, under the auspices of the United Nations, officially established the concept of sustainable development and its three dimensions, also known as the three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, the environmental and the social. In fact, sustainable development is economically efficient, socially equitable and ecologically sustainable (Bovar, 2023)⁵.

³- Xavier Grefe "Review of Political Economy" 2010/1 (Vol.120), pp. 1-34.

⁴- United Nations Development Programme 2015-2030 <https://www.undp.org/fr/sustainable-development> 16/09/202316/09/2023

⁵- Bovar O, Demotes Mainard M, Dormoy C, Gasnier L, Marcus V, Panier I, Tregouet B. “The indicators of sustainable development”, P51 file

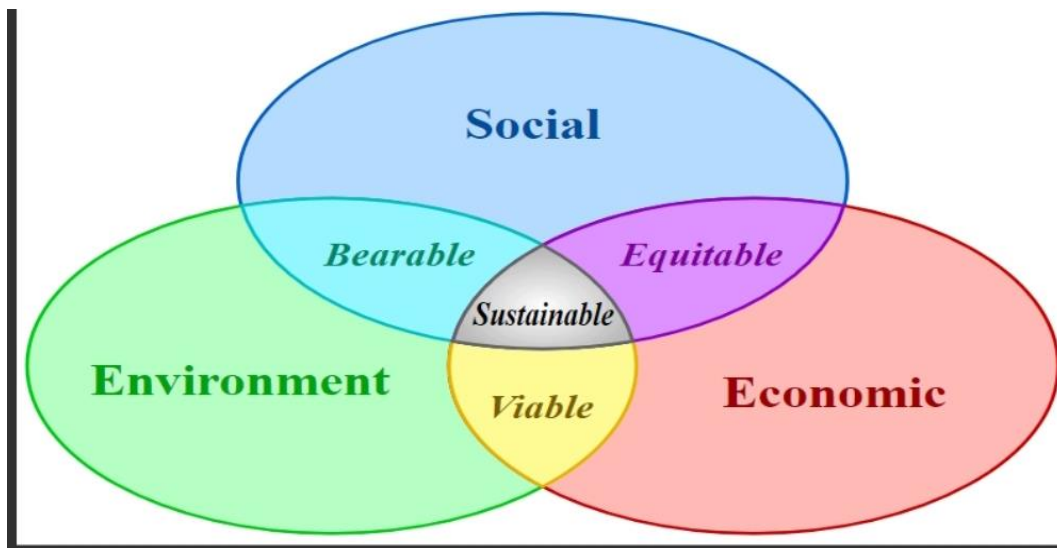


Figure 1: Pillars of sustainable development

Source: <https://circularecology.com/sustainability-and-sustainable-development.html>

According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), culture is who we are and what shapes our identity. No development can be sustainable without culture. In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 ambitious universal goals to transform our world. UNESCO ensures that the role of culture is recognised through the majority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those focusing on quality education, sustainable cities, the environment, economic growth, sustainable consumption and production patterns, as well as peaceful and inclusive societies, gender equality and food security.

From cultural heritage to cultural and creative industries, culture serves as both a catalyst and a vehicle for the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2023)⁶. Sustainable development thus rests on four pillars, also known as the “quadruple helix”, which represent the fundamental principles that guide action towards a sustainable future. These four pillars are interrelated and seek to balance the economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects of development.

The pillars of sustainable development

- The economic pillar: This dimension focuses on the economic dimension of sustainable development. It aims to ensure sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. This includes promoting economic efficiency, creating decent

file:///C:/Users/pc/Documents/article%20capital%20humain%20et%20d%C3%A9veloppement%20durable/ECOFRA08c.PDF 17/09/2023.

⁶- “Culture for sustainable development”, <https://fr.unesco.org/themes/culture-d%C3%A9veloppement-durable> 28/09/2023.

jobs, reducing poverty and fostering economic prosperity, while minimising negative impacts on the environment.

- Social Pillar: This pillar emphasises social equity, justice, inclusion and quality of life for people. It aims to ensure that people's basic needs are met, such as access to education, health care, housing and security. It also promotes diversity, non-discrimination and citizen participation.
- Environment Pillar: This pillar focuses on the protection of the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve biodiversity, manage water resources, combat pollution and promote sustainable practices in agriculture, industry and other sectors.
- Although less frequently mentioned, this pillar recognises the importance of culture and cultural identity in sustainable development. It promotes the preservation of cultural heritage, artistic creativity, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as key elements in enhancing sustainability.

These four pillars form a comprehensive framework that promotes a holistic approach to development, taking into account the interaction between these dimensions to ensure balance and harmony between economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, taking into account these four essential pillars.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals aim to address a wide range of global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, peace and justice, and the protection of the planet (UNDP, 2023)⁷. The 17 SDGs are as follows:

Table 2: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

- No poverty
- Zero hunger
- Good health and well-being
- Quality education
- Gender equality
- Clean water and sanitation
- Affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Reducing inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action
- Life under water
Life on land

⁷- United Nations Development Programme 2015-2030, <https://www.undp.org/fr/sustainable-development-goals> 17/09/2023.

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
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Partnerships for the goals

Source: UNDP 2015-2023 www.undp.org/fr/sustainable-development-goals

III. Cultural industries and sustainable development: Contributions and Impacts

III.1 Contributions of the cultural economy to sustainable development

The cultural economy can contribute to sustainable development in a number of ways. The following table presents the activities of the cultural economy and how they contribute to sustainable development:

Table 3: Contributions of the cultural economy to sustainable development

Actions	Contributions
Job creation	Cultural industries such as film, music, visual arts and literature create many jobs, especially for artists, technicians, producers and distributors. This can boost local employment and support communities
Cultural tourism	Cultural events, museums, festivals and historic sites often attract tourists. Cultural tourism can contribute to the local economy while promoting the preservation of cultural heritage
Innovation and creativity	Cultural industries stimulate innovation and creativity. Artists and creators bring new ideas and perspectives that can influence other sectors of the economy, thereby fostering overall innovation
Education and awareness	Culture plays a role in educating and raising public awareness on important issues such as environmental sustainability, human rights and diversity. Cultural works can serve as a powerful means of communicating important messages.
Creative economy	The cultural economy is often seen as part of the creative economy, which relies on intellectual property. This can stimulate innovation and long-term economic growth.

However, it is important to note that in order to maximise these benefits, it is essential to manage the cultural economy sustainably, ensuring fair

compensation for creators, preserving the environment and promoting equitable access to cultural goods (Verdugo, 2018)⁸.

III.2 Impact of the cultural economy on sustainable development

The impact of the cultural economy on sustainable development can be both positive and complex. Indeed, the cultural economy can have a positive impact on sustainable development by creating jobs, promoting tourism, strengthening cultural identity and stimulating innovation. However, it is crucial to manage this economy in a way that minimises environmental impacts, ensures equitable access to cultural goods and protects cultural heritage (Artcena, 2022)⁹.

III.2.1 Positive impacts

- Job creation and poverty reduction: The cultural economy creates a significant number of jobs, particularly for artists, craftspeople, technicians and workers in the creative industries. This can help to reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty, especially in regions where arts and culture are important economic sectors.
- Cultural tourism: Cultural attractions such as museums, festivals and historical sites attract tourists, stimulate local economies and contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism sector.
- Cultural identity and social cohesion: Culture plays a crucial role in strengthening the cultural identity of communities. It fosters social cohesion by preserving traditions, languages and customs, which can contribute to long-term social stability.
- Innovation and creativity: Cultural industries foster innovation and creativity, which can influence other economic sectors and stimulate long-term economic growth.

III.2.2 Complex impacts

- Environmental impact: Cultural production can have an impact on the environment, particularly in terms of the energy and resources used to create and distribute cultural works. However, some initiatives aim to reduce this impact by adopting sustainable practices.
- Equitable access: For the cultural economy to contribute to sustainable development, it is important to ensure equitable access to cultural goods and that artists and creators are fairly remunerated for their work. Inequalities in access and remuneration can pose challenges to sustainable development.
- Protecting cultural heritage: The preservation of cultural heritage is essential for sustainable development, but can sometimes conflict with economic interests. Finding a balance between cultural preservation and economic development can be challenging.

⁸- Verdugo F. "The role of culture in sustainable development: An Overview of Debates and Analysis of the SDGs," thesis submitted as a partial requirement for a Master's in Political Science, University of Quebec, January 2018.

⁹- Artcena. "Cultural Issues, Culture and Sustainable Development," 03/02/2022, <https://www.artcena.fr/magazine/enjeux/culture-et-developpement-durable/quel-role-pour-la-culture-dans-le-developpement-durable> 26/09/2023.

IV. Initiatives and concrete examples

IV.1 Eco-responsible practices in the cultural industries

The cultural industry can adopt various eco-responsible practices to reduce its environmental impact and contribute to sustainable development. These examples illustrate how the cultural industry can actively promote eco-responsible practices while continuing to inspire, entertain and educate the public (Cadieux, 2009)¹⁰. Here are a few examples of these practices:

- Use of sustainable materials: When designing exhibitions, theatre sets or costumes, the cultural industry can prioritise the use of sustainable, recycled or recyclable materials. For example, the use of FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council) wood from sustainable sources in the construction of sets.
- Reducing energy consumption: Cultural venues such as theatres, museums and concert halls can implement energy efficiency measures such as the installation of low-energy LED lighting, intelligent heating and cooling management and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Waste reduction: Artistic productions can adopt waste reduction strategies by reusing set materials, avoiding unnecessary packaging, and promoting recycling of materials used.
- Green transport: Artistic tours and cultural events can opt for eco-responsible transport methods such as carpooling, using public transport or choosing low-emission vehicles.
- Environmental awareness: Cultural institutions can integrate environmental awareness messages into their exhibitions, performances and educational programmes to inform the public about environmental issues.
- Digitisation and dematerialisation:
The music and film industries can promote digital distribution to reduce the use of physical media such as CDs and DVDs. This will reduce the waste and emissions associated with physical production and distribution.
- Use of environmentally friendly materials: Artists and creators can choose to use environmentally friendly art materials in their work, such as water-based paints and environmentally friendly inks.
- Recycling of costumes and accessories: In the performing arts, costumes and accessories can be reused from one production to another, reducing the need for new production.
- Carbon offsetting programmes: Some cultural institutions implement carbon offsetting programmes to offset the greenhouse gas emissions generated by their activities by investing in emission reduction projects.
- Eco-responsible partnerships: Cultural organisations can work with companies and organisations that share their values on sustainable development to promote joint initiatives.

IV.2 Sustainable cultural projects or businesses

There are numerous initiatives and concrete examples of sustainable cultural enterprises that integrate environmentally, socially and economically responsible practices. Here are some examples:

¹⁰- Cadieux A. "For an eco-responsible cultural industry", 2009, <https://novae.ca/pour-une-industrie-culturelle-ecoresponsable/> 28/09/2023.

Table 4: Sustainable cultural projects

Projects	Characteristics
Eco-responsible theatres and venues	Some theatres and performance venues are committed to reducing their environmental footprint. They use renewable energy sources, implement recycling programmes and encourage public transport for visitors
- Green film studios	Film studios have adopted green practices such as using sustainable filming materials, reducing production waste, and offsetting carbon emissions associated with film production.
- Sustainable cultural events	Many music, film and visual arts festivals adopt sustainable practices. They reduce waste, promote carpooling, and use clean energy sources to power events.
- Sustainability labels	Certain labels and certifications, such as the Green Arts Initiative label in the UK, recognise cultural organisations that are committed to sustainable practices. Cultural organisations can earn these certifications by meeting specific sustainability criteria.
Environmentally responsible music production	Music labels are adopting sustainable strategies for the production and distribution of music. They are reducing the use of plastic in the manufacture of records, using recyclable packaging and encouraging artists to minimise their environmental impact when touring.
- Green museums	Some museums are implementing sustainable development initiatives by using LED lighting, reducing water consumption, adopting conservation practices and promoting environmental awareness.
- Ethical art galleries	Art galleries highlight artists who address social and environmental issues. They may also support artistic projects that promote sustainable values.

These examples show that the cultural industry can actively engage in sustainable practices while continuing to thrive artistically and economically. These initiatives help to raise public awareness of sustainability issues and demonstrate that cultural creativity can be

compatible with a more environmentally respectful future (UNESCO, 2023)¹¹.

V. Challenges and opportunities

V.1 Barriers to sustainability in the cultural economy

Achieving sustainability in the cultural economy is often hindered by several obstacles. Here are some of the key challenges:

- Economic pressures: Cultural organisations can face significant financial pressures that can lead them to prioritise short-term profits over sustainability. Budgetary constraints can make it difficult to invest in more sustainable practices.
- Resource use: Cultural production can require significant amounts of resources such as energy, water and materials. Reducing this consumption while maintaining artistic quality can be a challenge.
- Carbon emissions: Creative industries, particularly those related to film and music, are often associated with high carbon emissions due to travel, filming and events. Reducing these emissions while continuing to create can be complex.
- Access and equity: Ensuring equitable access to cultural goods while maintaining sustainable practices can be difficult. For example, digitisation may broaden access, but not everyone may have access to the internet.
- Intellectual property: Intellectual property laws can pose a challenge to sustainability by restricting the re-use and re-interpretation of existing works, potentially stifling cultural innovation.
- Commercial pressures: The pressure to produce cultural works in line with commercial trends can discourage creativity and artistic diversity, which can be detrimental to cultural sustainability.
- Resistance to change: Cultural industries often have well-established traditions and can be resistant to change. Adopting sustainable practices may be perceived as disruptive.
- Education and awareness: There may be a lack of education and awareness of sustainability issues within the cultural industry, which can delay the adoption of more environmentally and socially responsible practices.

Despite these barriers, many cultural organisations are actively seeking to integrate sustainability into their activities and overcome these challenges. Increased awareness of sustainability issues, government incentives, public pressure and the long-term benefits of sustainability are helping to drive this cause within the cultural economy (Taoudj, 2020)¹².

V.2 Opportunities for sustainability in the cultural economy

Integrating sustainability into the cultural economy offers opportunities for economic growth, artistic innovation, social responsibility and positive social and

¹¹- <https://fr.unesco.org/creativity/rapports-suivi/rapports-periodiques/exemples-innovants> 29/09/2023

¹²- Taoudj J. "Culture and Sustainable Development: Challenges and Perspectives", www.revues.imist.ma 25/09/2023 .

environmental impact. It also fosters a better connection with audiences that are increasingly interested in sustainability (Ochai, 2022)¹³.

- New markets and audiences: Sustainability can attract a growing audience that is increasingly aware of environmental and social issues. Cultural enterprises that incorporate sustainable values can expand their customer base.
- Artistic innovation: Sustainability can stimulate artistic innovation by encouraging artists to explore new forms of expression and address important social and environmental issues.
- Long-term cost reduction: Adopting sustainable practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and the use of renewable energy sources can result in long-term savings for cultural organisations.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Sustainability initiatives enhance the reputation of cultural organisations as responsible corporate citizens, positively influencing their brand image.
- Partnerships and collaborations: Sustainability can foster collaboration between cultural enterprises and other sectors, including technology companies, environmental organisations and educational institutions.
- Targeted grants and funding: Many government agencies and private organisations offer grants and funding specifically to support sustainable cultural projects.
- New opportunities for content creation: Sustainability offers new opportunities for content creation around environmental and social issues that can engage engaged audiences.
- Managing environmental footprint: Cultural organisations can reduce their environmental footprint through sustainable practices, which is essential to address growing concerns about climate change.
- Cultural leadership and influence: Cultural enterprises can take a leadership role in sustainability by influencing public attitudes and behaviour towards environmental responsibility.
- Supporting social and environmental causes: Cultural enterprises can use their platforms to raise awareness and funds for social and environmental causes, contributing to positive change.

V.I Conclusion

In conclusion, the cultural economy has a fundamental role to play in building a sustainable future, combining creativity and responsibility through a range of practices, including responsible energy use, the use of sustainable materials and waste reduction. The opportunities it offers, from innovative artistic creation to raising awareness of social and environmental issues, are immense. However, challenges remain, including economic pressures, energy consumption and resistance to change.

It is vital that governments, cultural stakeholders and society at large work together to promote environmentally and socially responsible practices while maintaining the vibrancy and creativity of the cultural industry. In doing so, we can ensure that the cultural economy not only thrives, but also makes a meaningful contribution to a sustainable future.

¹³- Ochai O. "New Opportunities and New Challenges for Inclusive Cultural and Creative Industries in the Digital Environment", 2022, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380495_fre 24/09/2023.

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