Prof. Dr. Marie-Theres Albert

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Presentation on the launch of the 2nd pillar of the IHS: Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Potentials of Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development – A look back at the beginning


1. Introduction

Already in 2010, UNESCO and other national and international organisations declared culture as a decisive factor for sustainable development. Based on the work of the Australian researcher Jon Hawkes (**Hawkes 2001**) they developed a *Policy Statement on Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development* to promote the inclusion of culture as a fourth dimension into the concept of sustainable development (UCLG, 2010). Nevertheless, the concept of sustainability had already been defined in 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the so called Brundtland Commission - because it was chaired by the

former Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland -, realized a heavy deterioration of the human environment and natural resources worldwide.

Since then, sustainable development is broadly defined as a "development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations,1987). The definition describes a development on the basis of a usage of natural resources which guarantees the people of the future at least the same development possibilities as in the present. Before 2010, this definition was underpinned by three pillars, namely: economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The Three Pillars of Sustainability

Sustainability

Economic   Social   Environmental

Prof. Dr. Marie-Theres Albert
Director Institute Heritage Studies
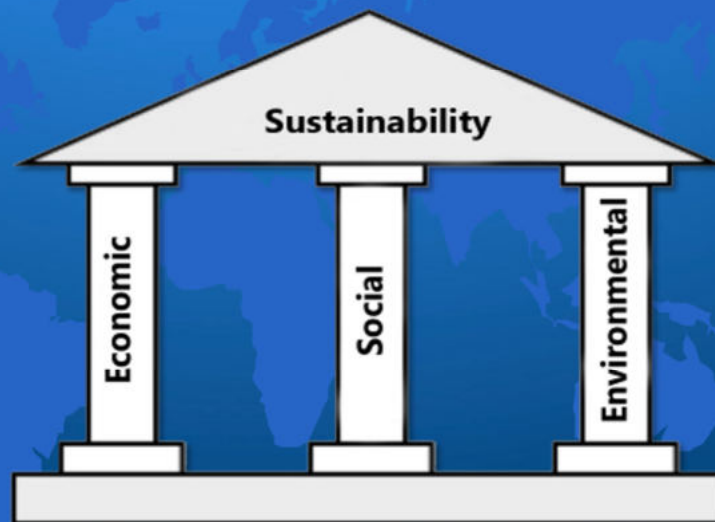
Economic sustainability means to create and establish economic structures which are not so much directed to short term profits but to a long term development of the economy. This includes public private partnership projects and/ or small and medium sized family based enterprises. With this direction the state introduced laws which prescribe environment-friendly means of production and or socially acceptable conditions of employment.

Social Sustainability calls for a systematic community participation and a strong civil society in policy making. Social Sustainability includes also widely accessible information and the consideration of ethical standards in all kinds of business and political activities. For example, it was stated that a democratic state system where people can freely express their opinion and actively influence politics with citizen's decisions would contribute to social sustainability. The concept of social sustainability was the precursor for the later developed participation strategies and the concepts of community involvement which were also included in the Hangzhou Declaration

Environmental Sustainability seeks to improve human welfare by protecting natural resources like water, land, air, minerals and ecosystems. With the concept of environmental sustainability it was expected that the use of raw materials for human

needs and human wastes did not exceed natural limitations. This included for example waste-recycling activities, the recirculation of old products or the use of public transport to save oil as a resource.

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Participation and the Empowerment of People as Source for Achieving Sustainable Development.

Capacity building
Source: http://groups.itu.int/Portals/32/images/other/capacity.jpg

Empowerment and participation through education
Source: http://www.unesco.org.uk/uploads/esd.jpg

Prof. Dr. Marie-Theres Albert
Director Institute Heritage Studies

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In this regard, concepts for sustainable development were elaborated already in the 1980s and 1990s and developed further. They were implemented in the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda (see slide below), which seeks to make development processes ecologically, economically and socially sustainable. Based on the highly emphasized idea of the participation of stakeholders in development processes through "capacity building" and "empowerment" was and still is the aim to give future generations the perspective of a dignified life.

The report 'Our Common Future', also known as the Brundtland Report (1987), enshrined these concepts and the three pillars of sustainability as patterns to be used in local, national and global strategies for development. At the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, the international community confirmed the goals developed by the Brundtland commission. They agreed that all states have to adapt their development policies to save the environment for future generations and to reduce inequalities in terms of worldwide living standards. In other words, the Rio summit consolidated the three pillars as the paradigm of sustainable development, emphasizing a balanced growth and the improvement of living standards worldwide.

However, in the course of time, the international community recognised, that these three dimensions alone cannot reflect the complexity of the current society. They realised that the diversity of cultures and their manifold cultural expressions build also constituent factors in every society's life. They accepted the most important function of culture which is its immanent dynamic. Culture is the basic source for human development. Therefore, the inclusion of culture as the fourth pillar of the sustainable development model was decided and implemented in the international policy.

This new approach works on utilising culture for sustainable development through dual means:

Firstly: through the development of the cultural sector itself. This includes tangible and intangible heritage, the sector of cultural industries and crafts and last but not least a huge investment in the development of the cultural tourism;

Secondly, by ensuring that culture has its rightful place in all public policies, particularly those related to education, the economy, science, communication, environment, social cohesion and international cooperation.

With the four-pillar-model of sustainability the world acknowledged a change in the perception of the most important components for development. For the first time ever, sustainable development was also understood in terms of its potential for human development: This enabled processes, which were not focusing exclusively on an economic valorisation of lived traditions, but also rediscovered, for example, the potentials of craft traditions with regards to identity building. Culture became a medium for diverse development goals. But what do we mean when we talk about culture?

According to the quote, culture means a set of variable practices which help people to live their lives by giving them orientation and identity. Culture is continually created and re-created by the people in interaction with each other. The people use their cultural practices to structure and understand their social world and to communicate with other people. As such, culture is the unavoidable bases for dialogue, for peace and progress as it is intrinsically connected to human development.

While UNESCO emphasizes the duty to promote the continuity of the culture of the past, it also encourages the dialogue of old traditions with new creativity, contributing to the preservation of identity and diversity and to the creation of new cultural expressions. Therewith, culture has been identified as an inexhaustible resource nourishing society and economy. As a fourth pillar for sustainable development, culture creates bridges with the other three dimensions of sustainable development.

2. Culture as a factor for (sustainable) development

To declare culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability is the expression of UNESCO's long-existing conviction that culture must be a constituent part of development. A milestone – and this before in 2015 the 17 goals were adopted – was the trend to recognise culture's value in development processes through the 8 **Millennium Development Goals**

The eight Millennium Development Goals are based on agreements by all the world's countries and the world's leading development institutions. They want to achieve a better and a sustainable world. The main focus lies on the fight against poverty, which is not seen as a lack of income, but as a lack of possibilities and chances of a

person to live his/her life the way he/she wants to. In September 2000, 191 UN member states agreed to reach the following goals by 2015.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:

From 2000 until 2015, the international community aims at halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger. They work together to develop national nutrition plans and policies. Indeed, there is evidence that there are improvements in children's nutritional status. The percentage of underweight children is estimated to have declined from 25% in 1990 to 15% in 2012.

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2. Achieve universal primary education:

Many children are still denied their right to primary education. So the international community agreed that by 2015, children everywhere - boys and girls alike - will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. However, if current trends continue, the world will not meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015. Globally, 123 million youth (aged 15 to 24) lack basic reading and writing skills; 61 per cent of them are young women. This already hints at the next goal:

3. Promote gender equality and empower women:

This goal aims at women's social, economic and political participation. The UN member states work towards the building of gender-equitable societies. Girl's education is a critical factor in terms of gender equality: girls still account for 55% of the out-of-school population. Also, the income of women in comparison to men is still below parity in all countries for which data are available. Consequently, the UN member states support gender-responsive policies and programmes.

4. Reduce child mortality:

MDG number 4 works towards reducing the mortality-rate of children under 5 years by two-thirds until 2015. In 2012, 6.6 million children under five years died. Reducing child mortality requires effective and affordable interventions: care for new-borns and their mothers; infant and young child feeding; vaccines; prevention and case management of pneumonia, diarrhoea and sepsis; malaria control; and prevention and care of HIV/AIDS. In countries with high mortality, these interventions could reduce the number of deaths by more than half.

Source: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

5. Improve maternal health:

Globally, an estimated 287 000 women died during pregnancy and childbirth in 2010. Still, this is a decline of 47% from levels in 1990. Most of them died because they had no access to skilled routine and emergency care. The UN member states work on strengthening health systems and coordinating research that focuses on improving maternal health in pregnancy and during and after childbirth. Since 1990, some countries in Asia and Northern Africa have more than halved maternal mortality.

Source: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:

At the end of 2012, 35.3 million people were living with HIV. That same year, some 2.3 million people became newly infected, and 1.7 million died of AIDS, including 230 000 children. The international community worked towards preventing people becoming infected with HIV or providing the best care for people living with HIV/ AIDS and their families. The incidence of HIV is declining steadily in most regions. The same holds for malaria and tuberculosis where incidence is falling very slowly.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability:

Global greenhouse gas emissions are still rising steadily, confirming the need for immediate action. The UN member states cooperate to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. This includes activities to stop the loss of biodiversity and to provide people with clean drinking water. Since 1990, protected areas have increased in number by 58 per cent and the world has met the target of halving the proportion of people without access to clean water, five years ahead of schedule.

Targets MGD 8:

a) Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
b) Address the special needs of least developed countries
c) Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
d) Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries
e) In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
f) In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Source: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

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8. Develop a global partnership for development

This goal includes the establishment of a rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Especially the needs of the least developed countries are addressed, including the debt problems of developing countries and the worldwide availability of new technologies. To reach this goal, the UN member states are promoting debt relief, developing IT infrastructure, expanding trade agreements, improving access to affordable drugs and increasing poverty-reducing expenditures.

Based on this understanding of the potentials of culture as an enabler for economic development, the next step to achieve this goal, the international community met from 15 May until 17 May 2013 in Hangzhou, China, to discuss the important role of culture for sustainable development.

3. Hangzhou Declaration (2013)

The conference was financed by the Chinese government and organized in cooperation with UNESCO. Representatives of cultural institutions met to present and discuss the manifold contributions of culture to development.

In plenary sessions, they examined whether sustainable development could be achieved regardless of culture, how culture makes the difference in peace and reconciliation politics, how it should be applied in local governance and in which ways culture contributes to economic growth and social cohesion.

The outcome of this conference was the *Hangzhou Declaration* which advocates for placing culture at the heart of public policy. The Declaration urges governments, civil society and the private sector to harness the power of culture in addressing the world's most pressing developmental challenges, such as environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability, poverty reduction, education for all, and social inclusion and others.

The Hangzhou Declaration is a key step in UNESCO's advocacy to integrate culture into sustainable development strategies, as the international community shapes a new global agenda for sustainable development after 2015. Among others, it recommends to:

- Integrate culture within all development policies and programmes, as equal measure with human rights, equality and sustainability
- Mobilize culture and mutual understanding to foster peace and reconciliation
- Leverage culture for poverty reduction and inclusive economic development
- Build on culture to promote environmental sustainability
- Capitalize on culture to foster innovative and sustainable models of cooperation

  (UNESCO, Hangzhou Declaration 2013)

In brief, a selection of the manifold potentials which the world community attributes to culture as development factor will be given now. One of the most obvious ways is:

Cultural Tourism

Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island Circle Line Ferry, USA
Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/esquerda/109648082/

Mass tourism in Angkor Wat, Cambodia
Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/jaewalk/5854482353/

Locals and immigrants from neighbouring countries use the World Heritage Site of Victoria Falls to sell their locally produced goods
Source: http://www.africaholidaysandsafaris.com/wpcontent/gallery/africa/12-victoria-falls-flea-market.jpg

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Tourism in general, became a mass phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century and functioned as an industry fully integrated into the international market economy. Without question, it became an important source of income for many states

However, UNESCO also identified the "greatest paradox of tourism" in its "capacity to generate so many benefits and yet, at the same time, create pressures and problems." (Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, UNESCO 2006, preface). For example, cultural tourism with regards to World Heritage Sites, has at some sites fatal effects on the environment, on tangible and intangible heritage and on local populations. Some heritage sites mutated into sites of commerce where not the actual meaning of heritage is at the centre of attention but mostly economic interests.

"We believe that tourism, which brings individuals and human communities into contact, and through them cultures and civilizations, has an important role to play in facilitating dialogue among cultures. Tourism also has the capacity to assist the world's inhabitants to live better together and thereby contribute to the construction of peace in the minds of men and women (…)"
(UNESCO 2006)

Tourists in the Rapa Nui National Park, Chile
Source: http://portal.unesco.org

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Tourism has become a topic for reflection and action and the aim of UNESCO's tourism, culture and development agenda is to contribute to the creation of a type of tourism that recognises the principles of cultural diversity, the preservation of cultural and natural resources, their mobilisation for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and the expression of socially differentiated cultural identities. As UNESCO is understanding culture as a means of sustainable development, it is promoting cultural tourism as a tool for sustainable development.

Culture and Creative Industries

Another way in which culture can become the basis of economic development are the

cultural industries which include publishing, music, cinema, crafts and design continue to grow steadily. In the first decade of the 21st century in the European Union 6.3 million people worked in this sector (BMWi 2012).

The European Commission is convinced that the cultural and creative industries are important drivers of economic and social innovation. The European Competitiveness Report (2010) highlighted that creative industries are increasingly a source of growth in the EU. They account for 3.3% of the European GDP and make up 3% of the overall employment (EC 2010, p.15). For example, publishing and film industries, software and games industries or literature and music bear a huge innovative potential that also pushes other economy sectors.

One of the most important developments in transforming culture as tool for development is the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

2003 Convention

This Convention does not only define intangible cultural heritage as a "mainspring of cultural diversity", it also perceives it to be "a guarantee of sustainable development." The connection between intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development provides new opportunities for the stimulation of sustainable development in the sense of all UN Resolutions on Culture as innovative factor for sustainable Development and as we have seen already in the project *Cultural Capital Counts* carried out around 10 years after the convention has been adopted in 2003.

Still, despite its evident benefits, intangible cultural heritage is frequently overlooked in development circles and policies. It is reduced to folklore and rituals and it's potentials only seen as relevant only to the economics of tourism and handicrafts. In some cases, it is even associated with harmful, static and archaic customs.

However, in Cultural Capital Counts it has been demonstrated that it has much more functions than that. For instance, it bears the potential to improve the living conditions and the health here in Steirisches Vulkanland, as will be demonstrated by Michael Fend and Christian Krotschek later in this conference. They established a network between traditional healthcare providers and regional development bodies for the

promotion of holistic healthcare products. With that, they want to raise the regional awareness on natural healthcare and healthy nutrition. The healthcare providers exchange their traditional medical knowledge and work together to develop new recipes and medical products. Through this, they intend to improve the people's health status and their body awareness. This in turn, improves the living quality here in the region and brings in economic benefits from the growing demand for natural healthcare products.

In that sense, Cultural Capital Counts played a pioneering role, because it practically demonstrated, that the 2003 Convention can be the basis for innovative projects fostering a sustainable development.
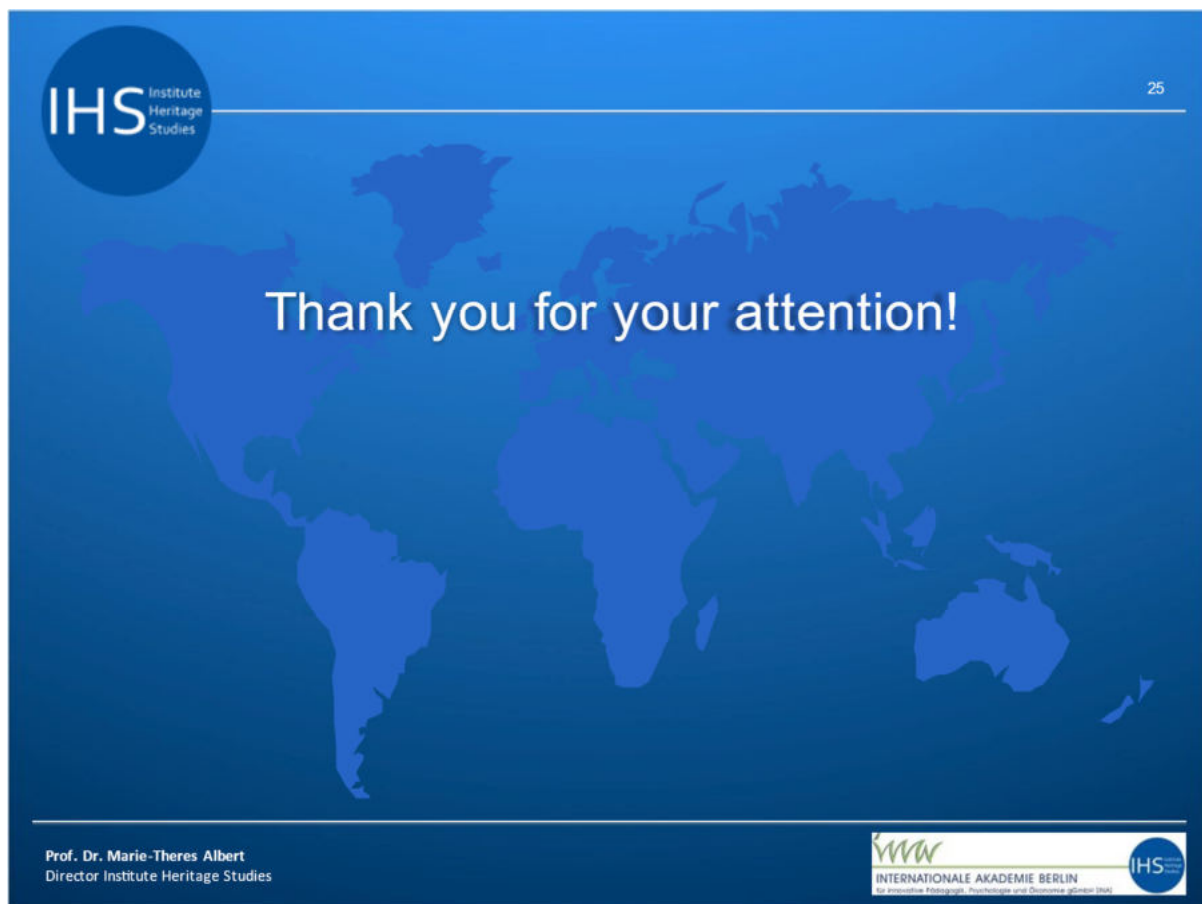
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