

Culture's Compass: Deeply-Rooted Education and Sustainable Future

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Resumen

El Congreso Mundial de la Cultura en la Ciudad de México (28-30 de septiembre de 2022) ha permitido poner en el centro los valores de las personas y el papel de la educación cultural para el futuro de las generaciones más jóvenes. Este texto describe la reflexión propuesta en el marco del congreso por el

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grupo de estudio del proyecto pedagógico internacional "Reconnecting with your culture" para el desarrollo de enfoques metodológicos destinados a potenciar el patrimonio cultural local para hacer posible un diálogo internacional constructivo.

Palabras clave: Mondiacult, Políticas Culturales, Educación, Patrimonio Local.

Abstract

The World Congress of Culture in Mexico City (28-30 September 2022) allowed us to put people's values and the role of culture education for the future of the younger generations at the center. This text describes the reflection proposed within the congress by the study group of the international pedagogical project "Reconnecting with your culture" for the development of methodological approaches aimed at enhancing the local cultural heritage to make a constructive international dialogue possible.

Keywords: Mondiacult, Cultural Policies, Education, Local Heritage.

UNESCO-MONDIACULT-2022 World Conference took place in Mexico City from September 28 to 30, 2022. This timely initiative provides an excellent opportunity to recall some key developments in the past and examine the political and governmental cultural policies and practices that are necessary to come to grips with the difficult problems confronting humanity and the world at present and going forward into the future.

Foremost among the key developments in the past that have a fundamental bearing on the present and the future are: the *Charter of the United Nations* created in 1945 to promote international peace and security, create friendly relations between nations, respect equal rights and self-determination of people, promote international cooperation in economic, social and cultural matters, and confirm people's human rights and fundamental freedoms; as well as the *International Declaration on Cultural Policies* in Mexico City in 1982 that was designed to capitalize on the results of several major conferences and events convened by UNESCO before 1982, as well as to set the stage for many developments after 1982.²

² This historic Conference in 1982 was designed to sum up and capitalize on earlier UNESCO initiatives, including the *Monaco Round Table* in 1967; the first *Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative, and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies* in Venice in 1970; and the *Regional Conferences on Cultural Policies for Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America* convened in Helsinki in 1972, Yogyakarta in 1973, Accra in 1975, and Bogota in 1978. It also helped set the stage for the creation of the *UN World Decade for Cultural Development* from 1988 to 1997 and *World Commission on Culture and Development* from 1993 to 1995, the *World Conference on Cultural Policies for Development* in Stockholm in 1998, and celebrating the *UN Decade of Education for*

This historic Declaration also paved the way for the member states of UNESCO to endorse a substantially broader perception of culture that was defined formally as, "Culture ought to be considered today the whole collection of distinctive traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterize a society or social group. It comprises, besides arts and letters, modes of life, human rights, values systems, traditions, and beliefs."

This definition was not only helpful in defining culture as "the whole" composed of many parts and reducing some of the misunderstandings throughout the world over the nature and meaning of this essential term but also facilitated the articulation and affirmation of several articles in the 1982 Declaration such as Article 10 that stated:

Culture constitutes a fundamental dimension of the development process and helps to strengthen the independence, sovereignty, and identity of nations. Growth has frequently been conceived in quantitative terms, without taking into account its necessary qualitative dimension, namely the satisfaction of man's spiritual and cultural aspirations. The aim of genuine development is the continuing well-being and fulfillment of each and every individual.

As a result of these developments, there is more agreement throughout the world today that culture possesses the potential that is required to play a central rather than marginal role in the world. This is because it enables people to comprehend the important role culture plays in their own lives and their ability to reflect on themselves as individuals, members of communities and countries, and communicate effectively with others. It also endows people with critical judgment and a sense of moral responsibility, civic commitment, and community well-being, thereby enabling them to make wiser decisions and choices and respect the decisions and choices of others. It also connects people with other people and the natural environment, makes it possible for towns, cities, regions, and countries to become aware of themselves and strengthen their identities, recognize their shortcomings and take advantage of their strengths, create productive relationships between countries, and make valuable contributions to global development and world affairs.

It is apparent from these developments that culture also possesses the potential to come to grips with some of the world's most complicated, dangerous, and life-threatening problems, most obviously global warming, climate change, and the environmental crisis, huge disparities in income and wealth, conflicts between different races,

Sustainable Development (2005-2015) [see, Chalkey, Haigh, & Higgitt 2014], and other major accomplishments.

countries, cultures, and civilizations, and interactions among people, groups, and countries with very different customs, beliefs, traits, and traditions. This is coming at a time when there is a growing realization throughout the world that culture is the "change agent" that is needed to deal with these problems, as well as to create more sustainability, stability, equality, and inclusion in the world.

As a result of these developments, and others, this is an ideal time for UNESCO-MONDIACULT-2022 to capitalize on past achievements, assess present conditions, and chart new paths and directions for the future. This is not only necessary for the UNITED NATIONS, UNESCO, and their various agencies and member states, but also for political and governmental authorities and institutions and their operating procedures and practices as well as their planning processes and cultural policies.

This is especially important concerning culture's ability to facilitate the creation of new worldviews, values, value systems, lifestyles, and ways of life that are imperative to deal with the aforementioned problems, institute changes that are systemic rather than piecemeal, pay close attention to the educational needs of people in general and young people in particular, and institute developments from the "bottom up" and not only the "top down." In recent years, these needs have been recognized by the UN Secretary-General in terms of working out concrete arrangements with municipal authorities and governments to address the needs of their constituencies and citizens. This has also been addressed in the ICOMOS 20GA resolution in 2019 – "People-Centered Approaches to Cultural Heritage" – which is proving to be beneficial in helping people to connect with their heritages and communities, generate intercultural and intergenerational dialogues and exchanges, promote safety and security, and improve people's overall health, welfare, and well-being.

Schafer (2022) considers the various manifestations of culture that have evolved over the centuries, painting a fascinating panorama; those manifestations include culture as cultivation of the soul, which originated with Roman statesman and scholar Marcus Cicero; culture as the arts, the humanities, and the heritage of history; culture in the context of personality development; the anthropological and sociological manifestations of culture; and, most recently, ecological, biological, and cosmological conceptions of culture. Culture's embrace of holism, its attention to the total pattern of human life, and its incorporation of artistic and humanistic modes of thought make it the ideal organizing principle for a brighter and more sustainable future. Schafer concludes by considering how the world as a culture might be brought into existence in the years ahead.

In 1982 the Declaration on Cultural Policies in Mexico City declared that it is "culture" that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is the culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed

with critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices (UNESCO 1982). It is through the culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings, and creates works through which he transcends his limitations. Without culture, we cannot build the future of the countries and a better world, because without culture we cannot foster "ecological citizenship" (Duxbury, Kangas, De Beukelaer, 2017).

The classical model of Sustainable Development (Brundtland, 1987 - WCED; Fig. 1) has been critically examined over time and comprehended under the umbrella of the Universal Forum of Cultures 2007, emphasizing the base of Developing Civility – culture, language, and religions for inter-faith dialogue. Three modes-model for culture and sustainable development has been structured engulfing sustainability (Fig. 2): **So**, Social; **En**, Environment; **En**, Economic; where the three roles of Culture in Sustainable Development (the three circles representing the three pillars, **So**, **En**, and **Ec**), are envisaged. In this model Culture is *added* as the fourth pillar (a), Culture *mediating* between the three pillars (b), and Culture as the *foundation* for sustainable development (c). The arrows in the model indicate the ever-changing dynamics of culture and sustainable development (Dessein, et al., 2015, p. 29).

Fig. 1. The basic frame of Sustainability (after Brundtland Report, 1987).

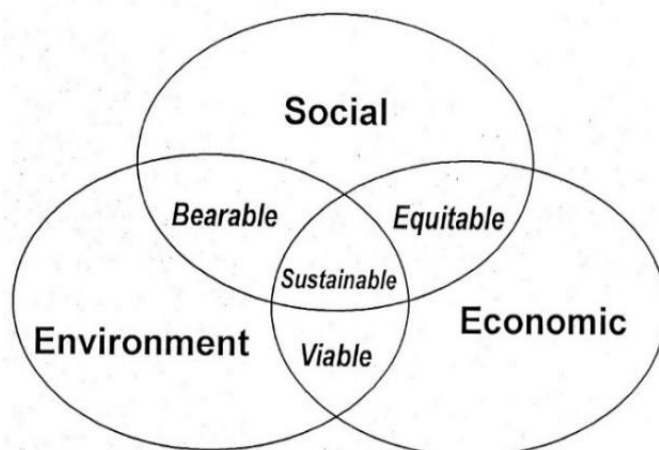
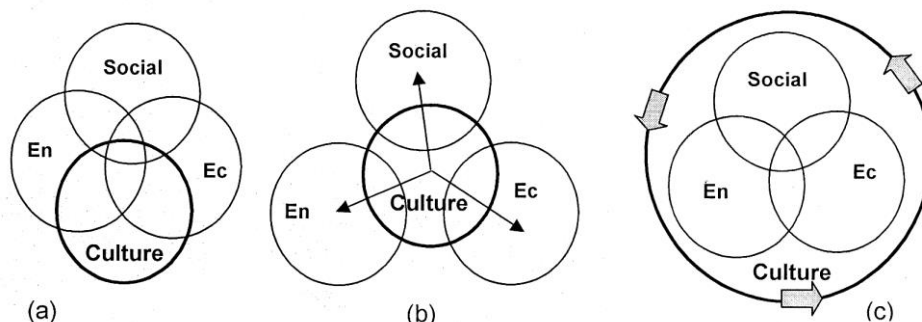


Fig. 2. Culture and Sustainable Development: Three Models - (a) Culture *in* sustainable development, (b) Culture *for* sustainable development, (c) Culture *as* sustainable development (after Dessein et al. 2015, p. 29).

Culture and Sustainable Development: Three Models



In the recent thought process of sustainable research and its implication policy, the use of “culture” is implicitly visible and is of vital importance, where the following three basic roles of culture have been discerned (see Fig. 2, Dessein, et al., 2015; see Singh, Niglio, & Rana 2022):

1. *Culture in sustainable development* vis-à-vis social, environmental, and economic attributes or pillars. This way cultural aspects need to be considered in the development processes alongside the above attributes to fulfil the criteria of sustainability.

2. *Culture for sustainable development.* Culture is considered a mediating force between the three classical pillars of sustainability (society, environment, and economy). In other words, it is accepted that culture processes, facilitates, and translates sustainable development, and therefore cultural aspects should always be present in sustainability assessments, policies, and planning.

3. *Culture as sustainable development.* Implies that culture is an overarching concept, it contains and influences social, environmental, and economic actions within sustainable development. Sustainability needs to be embedded in the culture and cultural transition is needed on our way to a more sustainable society.

In late 2020, *Reconnecting With Your Culture* (RWYC) was created in response to needs and requirements like this, especially in terms of providing opportunities for young people and future generations in elementary and secondary schools throughout the world to learn more about culture in general and their diverse cultures and heritages in particular, as well as those of their classmates. The timing of the creation

of this rapidly-expanding educational program internationally could not have been better in terms of stimulating opportunities for young people when and where they are needed most, namely at a crucial time in their lives and in their localities and schools working in close cooperation with their teachers, parents, and educational experts.

RWYC is a visionary mission of awakening youth and preparing them for Global Understanding and Environmental Conscience, human service, and preserving our cultural heritage in the cosmic frame of Nature-Culture interfaces through the quality and deeply-rooted Education and dialogues: a march re-appraising interconnectedness between Locality and Universality – Holiness (*humanity*) to Wholeness (*sublimity*). RWYC attempts to awaken and envision—**E**ducation *for* life; **E**ducation *through* life; and **E**ducation *throughout* life. Moving further, it also strengthens the scope and practice of deep-ecology, Gaia, and ecospirituality (see Singh 1995).

From the outset, RWYC has been designed to assist young people to learn about their cultures and heritages and those of their classmates in places where they are growing up and having numerous experiences with their parents and families at home and their friends and teachers at school. The pedagogical requirements for these experiences are set out clearly and concisely in a *Guide Book* prepared specifically for this purpose. It is available in several languages, divided into three distinct phases, and described as a “cultural treasure hunt” because young people are encouraged to *explore* their culture, cultures, and heritages and those of others in their localities as a means of broadening and deepening their knowledge, understanding, awareness, and appreciation of their cultures and heritages and becoming responsible citizens through serving, sharing, and their sustenance.

The first phase in this exploration and discovery process involves preparing students properly for their treasure hunts. This requires selecting a suitable place or community to explore, creating an appropriate route and timetable in conjunction with their teachers and parents, and acquiring all the materials that are needed to document their findings. The second phase involves documenting their experiences with their cultures and heritages in a variety of ways, such as creating sketches and drawings, taking photographs and painting pictures, conducting interviews with seniors and long-time residents, writing stories, drawing maps, composing music, performing dances, and so forth. The third phase involves creating exhibitions, displays, and other types of presentations with the help of their teachers and parents and sharing them with groups, organizations, and cultural and heritage institutions in their communities as well as with RWYC, ICOMOS, UNESCO, ACLA, Chakra Cultural Foundation (Jakarta, Indonesia), the UNESCO Chair in

Global Understanding for Sustainability (Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany), and others.

In the course of its work, RWYC also created the *Tokyo Charter* (August 2021) to assist with developments in this area by conveying its mission, goals, and objectives in several languages. This charter consists of a general preamble at the beginning, and nine specific articles that emphasize local examples of cultures and heritages, respect for the diversity of cultural and heritage expressions in communities, institute commitments to citizenship and sustainability, address matters dealing with cultural knowledge, consciousness, and respect, develop inclusive and holistic capabilities and competencies, promote local cultural practices and policies, and several others.

This brings us to the most important issue of all. Why is cultural and heritage education so essential at present and going forward into the future?

Given the difficult problems that exist in the world today as well as the international experiences of RWYC and other organizations over the last few years, it is apparent that this is the perfect time to be focusing on broadening and deepening young people's - and indeed all people's - education and training in this area, as well as the need for synergistic actions and relations between cultures and cultural policies as well as the creation of the requisite teaching methods and techniques. This should be complemented by creating educational systems, curriculums, courses, and models that are designed to serve and respond to local needs, investing in community cultural and heritage projects, developing teaching methods and techniques that improve students' and people's skills and capabilities, and providing internship and employment opportunities in cultural organizations and heritage institutions.

This should also include education in the natural and 'cultural tangible, intangible, and transitory heritages' of the diverse countries in the world and humankind as a whole, studying the valuable role that the UNITED NATIONS and especially UNESCO have played and continue to play in building up and promoting these historical and contemporary achievements throughout the world and capitalizing on all the available technological devices, digital techniques, and communication channels that are available for these purposes. This will require the implementation of projects aimed at knowing, protecting, and enhancing the cultural diversity of all nations and the sustainability of all countries through innovation, conservation, creativity, imagination, and the development of the cultural value chain proposed by RWYC's international programme <http://esempidiarchitettura.it/sito/edakids-reconnecting-with-your-culture/>.

In order to fulfill its mandate and commitment to the development of a deep-seated education in culture and heritage as well as the

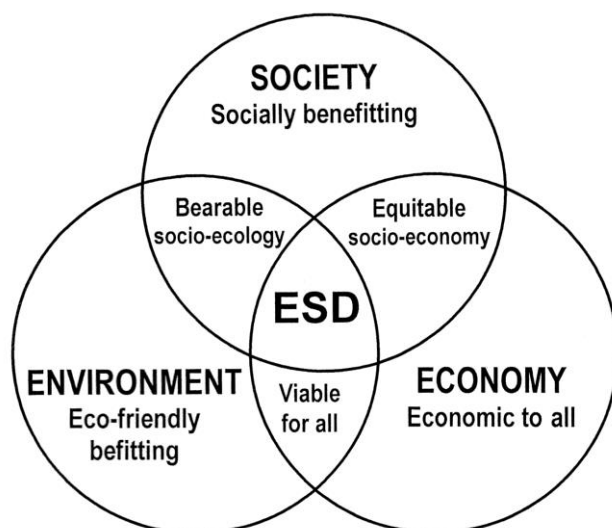
realization of a sustainable future, RWYC has been complementing its programs and courses in communities and schools with several closely related pedagogical activities. Included here are international seminars and conferences on subjects such as *Culture as an Idea and Reality* in conjunction with ICOMOS (April 18th. 2021), *Reconnecting With Your Culture in the World* with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (November 20, 2021), and *Culture: Key to Systemic Change and Sustainable Development* (April 23, 2022); the creation and circulation of exhibitions of young people's drawings in Italy, Japan, India, Mexico, Columbia, Indonesia, Venezuela, Brazil, Morocco, Germany, Canada, USA, and other countries in the world; distribution of periodic newsletters and comprehensive bulletins; creating collaborative arrangements with such organizations as EDA International Research Centre, New European Bauhaus, American University of Europe, and others, and promoting such relevant and recent publications written by prominent RWYC associates, dealing with regenerating cultural religious heritage (Niglio 2022), emerging cultural geographies (Singh, Ravi, et al. 2022), placemaking and cultural landscapes (Singh, Niglio, & Singh 2022), culture and cultivation in understanding the cosmic whole (Schafer 2022), and sacrality and pilgrimage places (Singh & Niglio 2023). In a similar vein, using the platform of a bi-annual *International Journal of Architecture and Engineering: EdA Esempi di Architettura*, the two volumes have covered the themes of historic cities and cultural-religious heritage: preservation & regeneration (Singh & Niglio 2022), and reconnecting culture, heritage, and architectural symbolism (Singh & Niglio 2023); both the volumes are represented with contributions from different parts of the earth.

These activities are intended to ensure that young people and future generations get the education and training in culture and heritage in general - and exposure to specific cultures, heritages, and their values, value systems, aspirations, and ideals in particular - to become committed adults and responsible citizens. It is hoped that these activities will eventually lead to the creation of the requisite pedagogical foundation, framework, curriculums, and principles in cultural and heritage education that are required to contribute to the realization of a more sustainable, peaceful, harmonious, and secure world.

Education is considered one of the most vital strategies for maintenance and continuity of the process of achieving and maintaining sustainability, which Gandhi has already provoked in the early 20th century; he said, 'there's enough in the world to meet the needs of everyone but there's not enough to meet the greed of everyone' (Gandhi, *CWMMG*, vol. 39, p. 197). By education, Gandhi means "an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit that makes the world harmonious, happier and peaceful" (Gandhi, *CWMMG*, vol. 25, p. 390). Gandhi was, the real provocateur of education of sustainable

development; his thoughts can be better befitted into the three sets of three attributes of sustainability, viz. Society (S), Environment (E), and Economy (C), which by the interaction of their essence converges into three sub-sets, i.e., Bearable socio-ecology ($E \cap S$), Equitable socio-economy ($S \cap C$), and Viability for all ($E \cap C$), which at the next level of cross-interaction result into ESD, Education for Sustainable Development (see Fig. 3), in terms of set representation as $ESD = S \cap E \cap C$.

Fig. 3. Education for Sustainable Development



This makes activating *Culture's Compass* through **UNESCO-Mondiacult-2022** in Mexico City and other means and initiatives the key to opening the doors to a much different era in global development and human affairs. We at RWYC feel very privileged to participate in this process and make a presentation at this timely Conference and its ability to chart a new course for humanity and the world in the months, years, and decades ahead.

Let us join our co-pilgrimage on the pathway of RWYC:

Let us believe CULTURE will save our common heritage.

Let every day we work together, also realise together.

Let us follow on, proceed on, march on this sacred path.

Let us join hands in helping the universal community to realise.

Let us have a dream with action, vision, and be into action.

Let our emotions be awakened through our inner light.

Let our CULTURE be a vital force to feel God in all the life-forms.
Let this way awaken humanity to meet with sublime divinity.

"A religion is one that teaches respect for the dignity and sanctity of all nature. The wrong religion is one that licenses the indulgence of human greed at the expense of non-human nature" (Toynbee and Ikeda 1976, p. 324). We need a religion that promotes pantheism, a variety of forms, and a variety of inherent meanings as exemplified in Hinduism where all forms of nature and its objects are manifested with a distinct sanctity, and somehow at some point accepted as part of worship. The moral ethics and religious values provoked in almost all religions agree that there is one true religion, which is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with that earth spirit sacred power/God (Clark 1994, p. 127). Heritage ecology is the vision and way in this, and RWYC is a path and process of awakening.

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