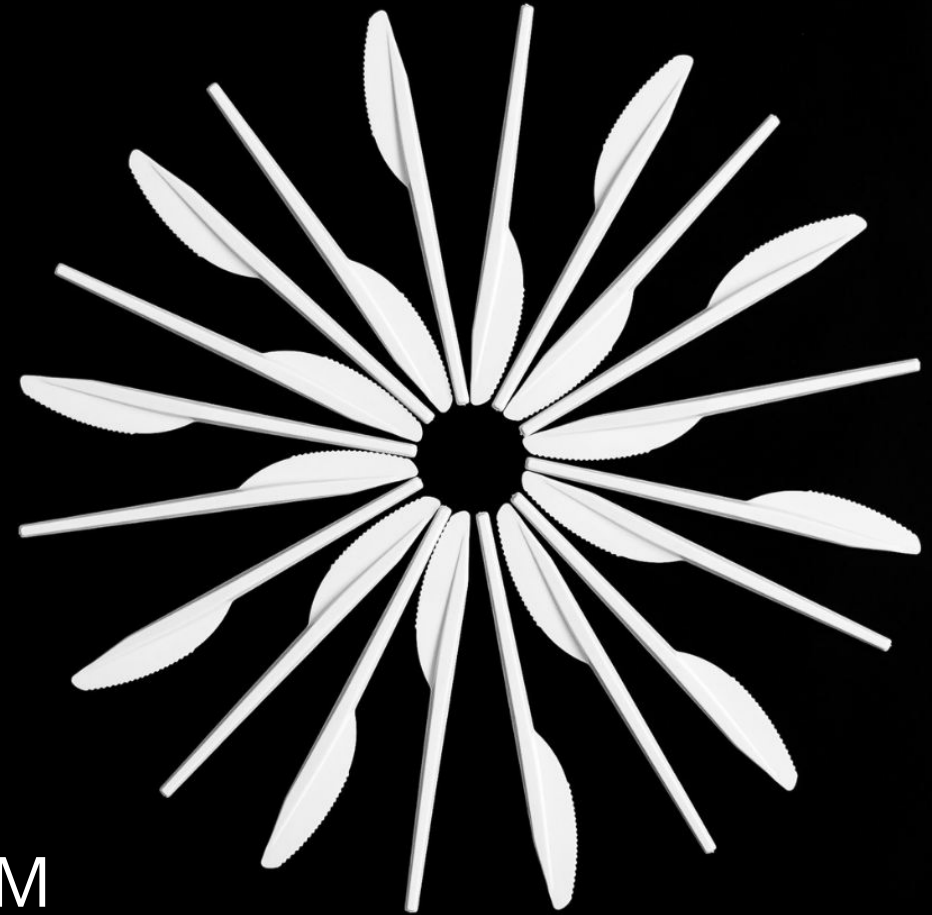


# *TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ARTS* *– GLOBAL EDITION*



PRACTICES AND POLICIES FROM  
EIGHT COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

DutchCu|ture



**Boekmanstichting**  
Kenniscentrum voor kunst,  
cultuur en beleid

# *TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ARTS* *– GLOBAL EDITION*

PRACTICES AND POLICIES FROM  
EIGHT COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

**May 2025**

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*‘Culture is the spirit that  
animates everything.’*

*From: Shirley Krenak / In: Culture as a Catalyst for Spreading Socio-Environmental Awareness in Brazil Luciane Coutinho*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Authors: Jelle Burggraaff, Marcel Feil,  
Thomas de Hoog and Jan Jaap Knol*

Photo: the process of block printing

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Boekman Foundation, together with DutchCulture, the Dutch Platform for international cultural cooperation, presents *Towards Sustainable Arts – Global Edition*, a new international publication building on the 2022 report *Towards Sustainable Arts: European Best Practices and Policies*. This expanded edition explores how arts and culture contribute to ecological sustainability, featuring case studies from eight countries around the world.

As the climate crisis intensifies, so too does the recognition of its global nature—and the importance of a collective response. Cultural institutions and artists across continents are increasingly engaged in the transition to sustainable societies. They do so by reducing their own ecological footprint, raising awareness among audiences, and developing creative responses to environmental challenges.

This publication brings together diverse perspectives from the cultural field, structured around four key themes: policy and resources, strategy and initiatives, raising awareness through art, and artistic solutions to the climate crisis. The contributions

illustrate how cultural policy and practice can reinforce ecological goals, while also offering inspiration and practical insights for international exchange and collaboration.

Aimed at policymakers, cultural professionals, researchers, and artists, *Towards Sustainable Arts – Global Edition* serves both as a source of knowledge and a stimulus for further action in the cultural domain.

The publication was coordinated by the Boekman Foundation in close collaboration with DutchCulture, who together selected and guided the contributing authors. By showcasing a range of international approaches, this edition underlines the essential role of culture in addressing the climate emergency and shaping a more sustainable future.

## Brazil

Brazil is increasingly integrating art and culture into its climate agenda, recognizing culture's power to inspire environmental awareness and behavioral change. With its rich biodiversity and diverse cultural heritage, Brazil is both an ecological and cultural

powerhouse. Government initiatives, including restored cultural funding and new SDGs, emphasize indigenous knowledge, creative expression, and climate action. Artists and organizations like Jaider Esbell, Ernesto Neto, and LivMundi lead climate-focused cultural work. Institutions like the Museum of Tomorrow and RegeneraMuseu promote sustainability. These efforts reflect Brazil's growing recognition of culture as a vital tool for addressing climate change and imagining regenerative futures.

## Canada

The Canadian arts and culture sector is increasingly prioritizing environmental sustainability through funding policies, programs and practical guides like the Creative Green Tools. Federal and provincial bodies, like in Québec, have integrated carbon tracking and green requirements into their support structures. Québec's Conseil des arts et des lettres (CALQ) now mandates carbon reporting and action plans for funded organizations. This reflects a broader provincial strategy rooted in sustainable development policies and legislation. With national efforts supported by key stakeholders and alignment with UN's



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Sustainable Development Goals, the sector is positioning itself as a leader in cultural responses to climate change.

## Ireland

Ireland has begun integrating climate concerns into arts policy, recognizing the power of the arts to raise awareness and inspire action. While national climate goals target net zero by 2050, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media introduced a framework centered on embedding, engaging and enhancing: embedding sustainability in cultural activities, engaging communities with the impact of climate change through art, and enhancing cultural infrastructure. Creative Ireland's Climate Action Fund supports local cultural projects addressing climate issues, and the Arts Council is developing its own climate strategy. However, challenges remain: insufficient capital investment, limited building retrofits, and unclear funding responsibilities between agencies. Despite slow progress, the Irish government has now recognized the need for an all of government approach in order to take sufficient action in the green cultural transition.

## India

India's traditional crafts sector is inherently sustainable, using natural materials and low-impact methods rooted in community practices. However, climate change, fast fashion, and market competition threaten these crafts. Post-independence, the government launched policies to revive and support artisans through training, marketing, and infrastructure. Programs like SFURTI and PM Vishwakarma aim to modernize and preserve crafts, while e-commerce and sustainability-focused laws enhance access and eco-consciousness. Despite efforts, digital barriers and limited outreach hinder policy impact. Case studies like the Pitchuka family in Kalamkari highlight the resilience of artisans, stressing the need for greater support, awareness, and innovation to sustain India's craft heritage.

## Sint-Maarten

Examples from Sint-Maarten feature a bottom-up approach, with community organizations taking the lead in addressing sustainability through artistic practices. The initiatives by Perpetual Plastics SXM, Recycle Art SXM, and Axum Art Café exemplify grassroots efforts to integrate

environmental consciousness with cultural expression. These organizations, despite limited government support, have responded creatively to local challenges like plastic pollution, waste management, and climate impacts. While the national policies recognize environmental concerns, they lack a cohesive framework for integrating culture into sustainability strategies. The grassroots momentum illustrates how local communities have stepped in to fill the policy gaps, showing the importance of creativity and social engagement in fostering environmental change.

## Turkey

In Turkey, despite a lack of national climate and cultural policies and an increasingly repressive political climate, arts and culture actors are actively addressing ecological and social crises. With limited public funding and significant risks for activism, artists and organizations focus on bottom-up initiatives that foster awareness, challenge consumerism, and promote sustainability. Projects like *Between Two Seas* and *Suyun Taşdıkları* use creative methods to engage communities and critique environmental degradation. Cultural institutions and some

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# INTRODUCTION

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local governments have started to collaborate on workshops, publications and visibility in public spaces. These grassroots efforts, though under-resourced, are vital in imagining just, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

## United Arab Emirates

The UAE is integrating culture into its sustainability agenda, recognizing the role of arts, heritage, and creative industries in climate action. Despite high per capita emissions and environmental challenges, the nation has launched major policies like the Net Zero by 2050 Strategy, Climate Law (2025), and the Emirates Declaration on Culture-Based Climate Action. Initiatives include grants for green cultural projects, education programs, and sustainable cultural infrastructure. While the need for broader collaboration is acknowledged, the approach clearly stems from government-led frameworks aiming to position the cultural sector as a vehicle for national climate objectives.

## Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean case shows individual artists, curators, and grassroots initiatives

taking the lead in addressing sustainability, often without—or even despite—state support. Artists like Moffat Takadiwa and Tapfuma Gutsa incorporate sustainable practices into their work independently, and exhibitions such as *Art and Ecology Laboratory of Ideas* are organized by individuals or supported by foreign cultural institutions rather than local policy. While there is growing environmental awareness within the arts community, national cultural policy lacks focus on sustainability, highlighting the disconnect between government frameworks and artistic initiatives.

## The value of global perspectives

This global edition of *Towards Sustainable Arts* does not aim to offer definitive answers, but rather presents a rich diversity of perspectives, approaches, and initiatives that reveal how sustainability in the arts takes shape in many different ways. The contributions collected here emphasize that sustainability is not a fixed concept within the cultural field, but a dynamic, context-dependent process—locally rooted, yet globally connected. They illustrate how artists, institutions, and policymakers around the world, each from their own realities, are

striving toward social justice, ecological responsibility, and more sustainable cultural practices. Some attempts are strikingly rooted in bottom-up initiatives by local communities (e.g. Brasil, St. Maarten and Turkey), while others are more supported by top-down designed policy frameworks (e.g. Ireland and Canada). What unites them is a shared belief in the vital role of the arts—not only as a mirror of society, but as an active agent in shaping a more sustainable future. At a time of growing global challenges, it is crucial to learn from one another, to build bridges across continents and disciplines, and to explore resilient models for the future of the arts together. With this publication, DutchCulture and the Boekman Foundation aim to contribute to that ongoing conversation—by bringing together voices from across the world, encouraging knowledge exchange, and opening space for new narratives that move beyond the boundaries of the familiar. *Towards Sustainable Arts – Global Edition* is both a snapshot in time and an invitation: to continue building a cultural field that is sustainable, inclusive, and just.



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# BRAZIL

## Culture as a Catalyst for Spreading Socio-Environmental Awareness in Brazil

*Author: Luciane Coutinho*

Photo: Susana Naspolini Park - Image © Rafael Salim

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# BRAZIL

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## INTRODUCTION

In his acclaimed book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, the Brazilian environmentalist, Indigenous leader, and philosopher Ailton Krenak states that telling stories is a way to delay the world's end (Krenak, 2020). Culture serves as a medium through which these stories can be shared—stories that connect us to our ancestry, values, and worldviews.

The climate crisis affects storytelling by threatening this rich reservoir of narratives and languages. However, little is discussed about how culture can help share stories that genuinely awaken a society's socio-environmental consciousness, fostering behavioral change.

This article presents initiatives integrating art, culture, and climate awareness in Brazil, aiming to inspire socio-environmental consciousness—stories that can delay the world's end.

## THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

### Brazil's Role in the Global Climate Agenda

Brazil is considered an environmental powerhouse for several reasons. First, 62% of the Amazon rainforest lies within its borders, containing 20% of the world's freshwater circulation, 10% of global animal species, 5,000 vascular plant species, and 1,500 bird species. This biodiversity is safeguarded primarily by the Indigenous and traditional communities inhabiting the region (Neves et al., 2021).

Additionally, Brazil's Constitution is one of the world's most advanced, with a dedicated chapter on biodiversity conservation<sup>1</sup>. Brazilian biomes such as the Atlantic Forest, Coastal Zone, and Amazon are recognized as national heritage, and Indigenous populations' cultural practices and lands are constitutionally protected (Garnett, 2018). This legal framework helps curb the harmful expansion of agribusiness and illegal deforestation.

Brazil hosted the landmark 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, setting the stage for global environmental negotiations, including sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). In 2024, Brazil assumed the G20 presidency, prioritizing climate issues, hunger, and poverty under the theme "Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet". Among its initiatives, the G20 established the Sherpa Cultural Track to explore culture's potential for fostering sustainable and inclusive development.

Finally, in 2025, Brazil will host the COP 30 Climate Conference in Belém do Pará, considered the gateway to the Amazon rainforest. Expectations are high for this conference, seen as humanity's last significant opportunity to establish effective climate crisis solutions.

Brazil's Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change is led by Marina Silva—a lifelong environmental advocate and close ally of the late Chico Mendes, one of the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.braziliannr.com/brazilian-environmental-legislation/brazilian-federal-constitution-chapter-vi-environment/>

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world's most influential environmental activists.

## THE BRAZILIAN CULTURE

*'Culture is the spirit that animates everything.'*  
Shirley Krenak

In Brazil's most recent Census, conducted in 2022 <sup>2</sup>, the majority of the population identified as multiracial ("parda"), representing approximately 45.3% or 92.1 million people. This ethnic diversity results primarily from the confluence of Portuguese colonizers, Indigenous peoples—currently divided into 305 ethnic groups across the country (IBGE <sup>3</sup>, 2010)—and Africans, primarily descendants of enslaved individuals. Brazil was the last country in the world to abolish slavery, in 1888.

In addition to these groups, there are traditional communities deeply connected to nature, such as the *quilombolas*—descendants

of escaped slave communities—and *ribeirinhos*, riverine communities that survive through natural resources.

This rich cultural fusion shapes a unique heritage, blending diverse traditions and social formations into a syncretic and singular culture that reveres its ancestry, symbols, and meanings (Ribeiro, 1970). Brazil's popular culture thrives in dance, music, folklore, and numerous cultural celebrations. A notable contribution comes from Amazonian folklore, rooted in the stories of Indigenous and traditional peoples. Legends such as Vitória Régia, Iara, and the Pink Dolphin weave nature into the heart of these narratives, making it the central character in their storytelling.

## THE BRAZILIAN CULTURAL POLICY

After setbacks suffered by the cultural sector under the previous government, which downgraded the Ministry of Culture to a Secretariat and curtailed federal investments,

the current administration restored its status, appointing Bahian singer Margareth Menezes as Minister of Culture. Today, the cultural sector and creative economy account for over 3% of Brazil's GDP, employing more than 7.5 million people<sup>4</sup>.

According to studies by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, every BRL 1.00 invested in culture generates BRL 1.59 in economic returns<sup>5</sup>. Since 2012, Brazil has operated a public cultural policy model integrating federal, state, and municipal governments to democratize the sector. For instance, the Ministry of Culture recently allocated BRL 3.8 billion to state and municipal governments to promote cultural activities through locally defined grant programs.

Additionally, for over 33 years, the Cultural Incentive Law (Lei Rouanet) has encouraged businesses to allocate a portion of their federal taxes to sponsor cultural projects, financing more than 60,000 initiatives during

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.br/secom/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2023/12/pardos-sao-maioria-da-populacao-brasileira-pela-primeira-vez-indica-ibge#:~:text=No%20Censo%20de%202022%2C%20mai>

<s,a%20popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20parda%20foi%20maioria>.

<sup>3</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.br/cultura/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/dia-nacional-da-cultura-em-pronunciamento-nacional->

<ministra-margareth-menezes-destaca-os-investimentos-historicos-feitos-no-setor>  
<sup>5</sup> <https://g1.globo.com/pop-arte/noticia/2018/12/14/lei-rouanet-da-retorno-de-r-159-ao-pais-para-cada-r-1-investido-em-projetos-diz-ministerio.ghml>



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this period. However, integrating cultural projects funded by the Lei Rouanet with the climate agenda remains challenging, as the country's largest tax-contributing companies operate in sectors conflicting with climate goals, such as fossil fuels and mining.

Among the 12 biggest corporate donors to Lei Rouanet, three belong to the fossil fuel industry, two to mining, one to energy, and six to the banking sector. Notably, over 50% of the donated funds come from Petrobras, Brazil's largest fossil fuel company, and Vale, the country's leading mining corporation.

The selection of funded projects by these companies follows structured public calls and spans various cultural sectors. Companies have the freedom to support initiatives that align with their brand identity or regional presence, making Lei Rouanet a crucial mechanism for democratizing culture in Brazil. This support sustains projects that might otherwise struggle to survive or maintain artistic quality.

It is important to highlight that all projects must first be approved by the Ministry of Culture through a rigorous and well-structured application process before they become eligible for sponsorship.

Finally, there are state- and municipal-specific Cultural Incentive Laws, allowing businesses to allocate portions of their local taxes to support cultural projects.

## AWAKENING CLIMATE AWARENESS IN BRAZIL THROUGH ART AND CULTURE

According to the *Culture and Climate* report by C de Cultura and Outra Onda Conteúdo, despite the profound impact of climate change on Brazil's cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—culture is still underrecognized as a valuable tool for fostering climate awareness <sup>6</sup>. However, initiatives led by the Ministry of Culture suggest this issue is gaining attention from the federal government.

One such initiative is the International Seminar on Culture and Climate Change, which explored the cultural sector's potential to combat climate change and promote a fairer, more resilient future. The event featured Brazil's Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Marina Silva, and Minister of Indigenous Peoples, Sônia Guajajara, highlighting the government's recognition of the intersectionality between identity, climate, and culture. In her address, the Minister of Culture emphasized the importance of preserving cultural diversity, Indigenous knowledge, and traditional cultural practices as critical components of effective climate action. She also noted that while cultural heritage is under threat from climate change, culture itself holds resources that can enable adaptation and mitigation <sup>7</sup>.

The Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Márcio Tavares, underscored culture's role in offering alternative ways of thinking and relating to the planet, particularly through Indigenous and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://culturaclima.com.br/en/o-que-e-o-cultura-e-clima/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gov.br/cultura/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/sala-de-imprensa/aviso-de-pauta/minc-realiza-seminario-internacional-sobre-cultura-e-](https://www.gov.br/cultura/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/sala-de-imprensa/aviso-de-pauta/minc-realiza-seminario-internacional-sobre-cultura-e-mudanca-do-clima-com-ativistas-mundiais-em-salvador-ba)

[mudanca-do-clima-com-ativistas-mundiais-em-salvador-ba](https://www.gov.br/cultura/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/sala-de-imprensa/aviso-de-pauta/minc-realiza-seminario-internacional-sobre-cultura-e-mudanca-do-clima-com-ativistas-mundiais-em-salvador-ba)

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traditional cultural expressions. He stressed the need to discuss how cultural projects can become more sustainable by reducing plastic use and other pollutants, especially large-scale events. These issues were also addressed in panels on building a creative industry beyond fossil fuels and reducing carbon footprints in cultural events. The seminar further examined the power of art and culture in civic mobilization and how creative narratives can shape public perceptions and drive climate action.

Another significant effort involves the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action (GFCBCA), led by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and co-chaired by UAE Minister of Culture Salem bin Khalid Al Qassimi and Brazil's Minister of Culture, Margareth Menezes. Comprising 33 countries and UN agencies, the GFCBCA advocates recognizing culture and cultural heritage as fundamental assets in shaping climate policies. Its mission includes fostering global political momentum, preserving cultural diversity amid climate challenges, and encouraging cultural exchange.

Finally, Brazil's government, supported by local universities, has symbolically adopted three new national SDGs: Racial Equality (SDG 18), Art, Culture, and Communication (SDG 19), and Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities (SDG 20), reinforcing culture's role in addressing climate challenges.



*Imagery Representations of National SDGs 18 (Racial Equality), 19 (Art, Culture, and Communication), and 20 (Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities)*

## THE CULTURE AND CLIMATE – BRAZILIAN ARTISTS

### The Insurgents

The response of Brazilian artists to climate change finds its strongest representation among the insurgents. Leading this movement are artists from Contemporary Indigenous Art, representing Brazil's

Indigenous peoples eager to unveil through art their millennial rituals, worldviews, and new ways of thinking, acting, and existence.

There is no direct word for "art" in Indigenous languages. The closest term is *hori*, meaning light, color, and vision. In this sense, Indigenous Art, once dismissed as naive, simplistic, or primitive, is *hori* in its essence.



*A conversa das entidades intergalácticas para decidir o futuro universal da humanidade (The conversation of intergalactic entities to decide the universal future of humanity), Jaider Esbell 2021*

*Image © Filipe Berndt*

The Indigenous artist Jaider Esbell asserts that Indigenous art awakens a consciousness

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that Brazil lacks about itself<sup>8</sup>. However, amidst the climate crisis and events that increasingly threaten the Amazon Rainforest, this art, once confined to ethnographic museums or Natural History museums, is now occupying more and more other art spaces.

The 2021 São Paulo Biennial, considered one of the three most important events in the international art circuit, featured the verse by Amazonian poet Thiago de Mello, "It gets dark, but I sing," as the foundation of its exhibition. Nicknamed "The Indigenous Biennial," it showcased the work of 34 Indigenous artists, curated by Jaider Esbell. In the event's catalog, the artist wrote: "Everything has spirit, so to speak, and we are poor in this."<sup>9</sup> He clarified that the art presented had a political function, seeking a global philosophy capable of addressing the ecological urgency.

The Biennial's manifesto, written by the event's curators, emphasized that the defense of the rights of ancestral peoples and cultural

preservation is a shared responsibility between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The edition aimed to present, through the art exhibited, intercultural dialogues on memory, resistance, and the future. In a collective narrative, works by non-Indigenous artists, symbiotically engaged with issues presented by Indigenous artists, connecting stories of colonization, spirituality, territoriality, and environmental crisis.

In addition to the Biennial, the inauguration of the Bienal dos Amazônias Cultural Center in the city of Belém, the host city of COP 30, should be highlighted. Covering 8,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the space aims to strengthen Amazonian artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by associating art and culture with a territory now globally recognized as an ecological powerhouse. Curiously, the Cultural Center is sponsored by an oil company and a mining company through the Cultural Incentive Law – Lei Rouanet, mentioned earlier in this text.

## *Ernesto Neto*

Ernesto Neto is a Brazilian urban artist whose three-dimensional work lies between sculpture and installation. In the early 2000s, Ernesto, already a recognized artist, began to connect with the Huni Kuin, one of the most remote Indigenous communities in the western Amazon. He was fascinated by the wisdom of these forest people. From this genuine connection, Ernesto developed a series of works in collaboration with the Huni Kuin. In 2014, for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao; in 2015, for the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna; and in 2018, for the Beyeler Foundation, with an installation set up at the Zurich train station, which became the most visited artwork in Swiss history. His work intersects art, spirituality, and Indigenous knowledge.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2021/11/03/jaider-esbell-arte-indigena-desperta-uma-consciencia-que-o-brasil-nao-tem-de-si->

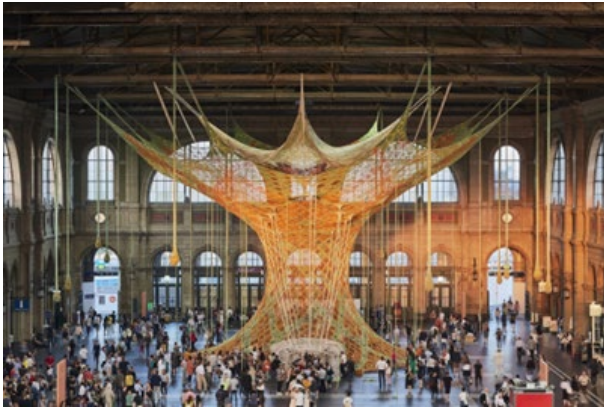
[mesmo#:~:text=Que%20as%20pessoas%20se%20manif%20estem,artista%20ao%20Brasil%20de%20Fato.](https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2021/11/03/jaider-esbell-arte-indigena-desperta-uma-consciencia-que-o-brasil-nao-tem-de-si-mesmo#:~:text=Que%20as%20pessoas%20se%20manif%20estem,artista%20ao%20Brasil%20de%20Fato.)

<sup>9</sup> <https://braziljournal.com/memoria-jaider-esbell-virou-uma-estrela/>

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*Gaia Mother Tree, by Ernesto Neto, at the Zurich Train Station*  
Image © Mark Niedermann

One could say that Ernesto was the first contemporary urban artist to deeply tune into the narratives of Indigenous peoples, creating immersive and sensory installations that ritualistically aim to evoke sensations dialoguing with the Indigenous mythical universe. Generating both estrangement and contemplation, the viewer is invited to participate by touching, smelling, or entering the space of the sculpture (Goldstein & Labate, 2017).

To write this article, I spoke with Ernesto to learn about his latest projects. He told me about his new work, which will be on display at Le Bon Marché department store in Paris starting in January 2025. It is a representation of the mythical scene of Adam, Eve, and the serpent, which will take the form of the infinity symbol ( $\infty$ ). In the exhibition material, Ernesto questions the symbolism of the serpent associated with original sin, as, in reality, it is thanks to the serpent that we exist as humanity. “What is understood, beyond good and evil, the symbolic or allegorical, is that the Enchanted Serpent gave birth to humanity; it breathed life into us!” (Ernesto Neto). Thus, Ernesto understands the serpent as nature, as our mother, and believes that we must reconnect with it to be healed. He emphasizes that the Western view has separated us from nature as superior beings: “From the Western model, we must position ourselves outside of nature to observe it objectively, without our subjective, poetic, mythical, or theological involvement” (Ernesto Neto). He invites us, with his new work, to promote a healing

process, a reconnection with the divinity that gave rise to our humanity, and thus with nature.

## Silvan Galvão

Silvan Galvão<sup>10</sup> is a young artist and socio-environmental activist, singer, and composer from the Amazon, as well as a Master of Carimbó. Carimbó is a dance characterized by spinning movements, typical of Pará, a state in Brazil's Northern region. The name refers to the *curimbó*, a type of drum played with the hands, made from a hollowed-out tree trunk. Pará's carimbó was brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans and later incorporated Indigenous and European influences.

Silvan presents an authorial body of work that explores rhythms from popular culture. His songs highlight the struggles of Amazonian peoples for the preservation and appreciation of their territory and culture, incorporating regional symbols as important references to the intimate relationship between people and nature. As a socio-

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<sup>10</sup> <https://open.spotify.com/artist/6yYc3coAmniuq2EP1sSAMO?si=mSaFu5AkQVHzHTPogNUF8A>



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environmental activist, Silvan has been composing songs that directly address the climate crisis in their lyrics, with contributions from individuals in other communication sectors. In the song *Emergência Climática* (Climate Emergency), Silvan collaborated with Brazilian actress Dira Paes, and in *O Tempo que Ainda Temos*<sup>11</sup> (The Time We Still Have), he featured Brazil's foremost environmental journalist, André Trigueiro, who recited scientific information related to the climate crisis, creating a beautiful connection between different actors from the arts and communication sectors.

## CULTURE AND CLIMATE – MOVEMENTS, SPACES, AND FESTIVALS

### RegeneraMuseu

RegeneraMuseu<sup>12</sup> is an organization founded in 2017 with the mission of collaborating with museums and professionals in the fields of art, heritage, and culture. Its primary focus

is strengthening museum programs, policies, and action plans, transforming them into agents of regeneration and sustainability for their visitors, while expanding their social and environmental impacts on the communities where they are located.

Among the projects led by RegeneraMuseu is the *HiperMuseus*<sup>13</sup> program, an innovation lab that brought together 49 museum leaders in Brazil to prototype projects with digital and socio-environmental impact. Another relevant project was the coordination of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan for the Museum of Tomorrow, where sustainable futures, climate mitigation, and adaptation were defined as central themes of the museum's activities.

### Museum of Tomorrow

The Museum of Tomorrow, in Rio de Janeiro, is one of the few museums in the world dedicated exclusively to addressing themes related to sustainability and climate change. Approaching its 10th anniversary,

the museum is part of the Dutch *Futures-Oriented Museum Synergies* (FORMS) network, which brings together museums with the future as their central theme.

Its permanent exhibition consists of five modules – Cosmos, Earth, Anthropocene, Tomorrows, and Us – which provoke the audience to reflect on the questions: Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we? Where are we going? How do we want to go? The exhibition primarily uses multimedia resources and multilingual approaches.

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<sup>11</sup>

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6uNhfgUVsmbtFDGr5qgpd?si=fefe78a573394506>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/regeneramuseu/#>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hipermuseus.com.br/>

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*Museum of Tomorrow - Image Wikimedia Commons*

For the writing of this article, I spoke with the curator of the Museum of Tomorrow, Fabio Scarano, and the Scientific Development Manager, Nina Pougy. I learned that a new museological plan will be implemented starting in 2025, motivated by the celebration of the museum's 10th anniversary and its desire to be a reference at COP 30. In addition to the renewal of the permanent exhibition, the UNESCO Chair in Planetary Well-Being and Regenerative Anticipation, in the field of Futures Literacy, was launched in partnership with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. This is the first UNESCO Chair hosted by a museum and aims to promote a deeper understanding of

the future through expanding ways of perceiving it. In this sense, the museum recognizes the importance of culture for raising awareness, deconstructing structuring futures based on predictive and technical models – which suggest a predetermined future we cannot escape – and instead fostering narratives and experiences that encourage collective imagination, projecting the futures we want through actions in the present.

In December 2024, the temporary exhibition *Dreams* will be inaugurated. Based on the reflection about the concept of intelligence – the ability to make good choices, to discern – and prompting the question of whether we have been making good choices, the exhibition invites a broader perception of multiple intelligences: Artificial Intelligence, the intelligence of plants and other living beings, and even dreams as a form of intelligence. “In many cultures, what is dreamed of is a mechanism for choice and decision-making. An intelligence that comes from sensitivity and intuition, and is therefore often overlooked by science, yet it

aligns with the projection of regenerative futures and planetary harmony.”

The Museum of Tomorrow is also sponsored by Shell and the mining company Vale, through the Federal Law for Incentive to Culture.

## *LivMundi*

LivMundi<sup>14</sup> democratizes information about climate and society through cultural initiatives. In the face of the climate crisis, it seeks to awaken socio-environmental awareness of all, fostering behavioral changes that are both urgent and necessary.

With the slogan “Multiplying Transgressors to Transform Worlds,” LivMundi offers a series of initiatives—from the LivMundi Festival to educational programs. All initiatives are free of charge and are deeply connected with local communities, amplifying the voices of those most affected by the climate crisis.

The LivMundi Festival has been held since 2016, bringing together over 100,000 people

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<sup>14</sup> <https://livmundi.org/> and <https://festivallivmundi.org/>

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across its six editions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it facilitated a historic virtual meeting between José Pepe Mujica and Noam Chomsky, where they discussed the climate crisis, the pandemic, and futures.<sup>15</sup>



*LivMundi Festival - Image © Larissa Franco*

LivMundi Educational Programs engage children, youth, and women in a transformative learning journey, deeply connected to the challenges of their local reality. Participants are invited to co-create

cultural productions—whether a photo exhibition, a theater play, a podcast, or another form of artistic expression—that serve as tools for mobilization and collective awareness, while fostering a shared learning experience about climate justice and citizenship. These initiatives empower them as agents of change in their territories, actively contributing to collective behavioral shifts and the awakening of socio-environmental consciousness.

## *Susana Napolini Park*

In one of the most underserved and hottest neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, the Susana Napolini<sup>16</sup> Park was inaugurated in 2024 with the purpose of creating a protection zone to reduce the local temperature. The project involved planting more than 3,000 trees, as well as a community garden, orchard, and architectural structures designed to promote local commerce and meet the needs of residents, including shops, classrooms, and event and workshop spaces. It encourages artistic occupations that raise

awareness, both by promoting peripheral leadership and by addressing climate change in the city.<sup>1718</sup>

The project aimed to create climate-resilient solutions, including rainwater harvesting through rain gardens and bio-swales. Supertrees, structures similar to those found in Singapore's Gardens by the Bay, were installed with a misting system to mitigate the heat in the area. All solid waste generated on-site is processed at the Eco-Point designed within the park.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LncB3r5Td6U>

<sup>16</sup> Susana Napolini was a reporter who hosted various TV programs focused on local communities in Rio de

Janeiro. She passed away at the age of 49 after a prolonged battle with cancer.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/1019057/parque-realengo-susana-napolini-ecomimesis-solucoes-ecologicas>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAOZTs6wISY>

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# BRAZIL

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*Susana Napolini Park - Image © Rafael Salim*

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article provides an overview of how Brazil has been addressing climate issues through its cultural landscape, highlighting the country's role in the global climate agenda, the particularities of its culture, and the state policies aimed at fostering the democratization of culture. Additionally, it explores Brazilian cultural initiatives that contribute to raising climate awareness. In this context, while aiming to present a diverse range of initiatives, I would like to use these final considerations to emphasize the role of Indigenous and traditional cultures in confronting climate challenges.

In Brazil, culture and climate intertwine in a meeting of forces that shape identities, landscapes, and ways of being unique to the world. On one hand, the country is an environmental powerhouse, with the Amazon playing a crucial role as a guardian of life on Earth. On the other hand, its cultural expressions—especially those of Indigenous and traditional peoples—offer worldviews that exist in a symbiotic harmony with nature.

Throughout history, dominant cultures have largely been shaped by economic forces (Duncombe, 2002), while the cultures of Indigenous peoples have often been regarded as secondary, less significant to human progress. This perspective, along with many other meanings produced by dominant cultures, has disregarded ancestral knowledge and alternative ways of being. In 19th-century evolutionary theories, so-called “primitive” societies were seen as outdated stages in the path toward progress. Lévi-Strauss was among the first thinkers to challenge this notion, critiquing the destructive impact of Western civilization and its disconnection from rituals and nature. For him, rediscovering our

connection to the natural world through these cultures is essential for our survival as a species (Lévi-Strauss, 2011).

From this perspective, the Amazon and the knowledge of its peoples should not be seen as peripheral but rather as a blueprint for a new model of the future (Brum, 2021). I hope this text contributes to the search for non-hegemonic cultural perspectives that respect planetary boundaries and promote a more just and prosperous society. Stories able to delay the world's end (Krenak, 2020).

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# BRAZIL

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# CANADA

## Best Practices and Emerging Policies in Environmental Sustainability in the Canadian Arts and Culture Sector

Photo: The performance Branché by Acting for Climate Montreal, with: Adrien Malette-Chénier, Catherine Beaudet, Mathieu Girard, Nathan Biggs-Penton, Samuelle McGowan-Richer, Sorrell Nielsen, Stefanie Fournier / Photo by Agathe Bisserier

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# CANADA

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The Canadian arts and culture sector is steadily moving toward a future where environmental sustainability is embedded in its practices, funding policies, and cultural outputs. With the continued support of funders, federal departments, and initiatives like the Creative Green Tools, the sector is poised to play a leading role in the national and global fight against climate change.

This article offers an overview of initiatives that have emerged in Canada in the field of culture and sustainability in recent years. The first part deals with federal programs. The second part contains more detailed information on policy and practice in the state of Quebec.

In 2013, Simon Brault, then Chair of the Board for the Canada Council for the Arts and later its CEO, joined Alison Tickell, Director of Julie's Bicycle, and Ian Garrett, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (CSPA), on a panel exploring how the arts and culture sector could engage with environmental sustainability. This early conversation laid the groundwork for Brault's later efforts as CEO, where he prioritized integrating

sustainability into the Council's operations. His leadership has helped to establish a strong foundation for environmental responsibility within the Canadian arts sector.

Arts funding in Canada is decentralized across federal, provincial and municipal levels, with each jurisdiction having its own regional priorities, and artists and arts organizations sometimes receiving funding from all three jurisdictional levels. Since 2020, Canadian public arts funders have made significant progress in recognizing and addressing the need for environmental sustainability. One of the most notable advancements has been the adaptation and implementation of the Creative Green Tools Canada program. The Creative Green Tools were originally developed by Julie's Bicycle, a UK-based charity, and provide a framework for arts organizations to track, manage, and reduce their carbon emissions. Their introduction has marked a major shift in how arts organizations approach environmental impact. The Canada version of the tools were adapted for the Canadian context by the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts, Quebec Drama Federation, and Le Conseil

québécois des événements écoresponsables (CQEER) and many partners from 2020-2022, and have been in use since.

Several funding bodies have now incorporated sustainability into their grant programs, which has led to tangible benefits for the broader arts community. Across Canada, this shift is evident in various ways. Some funders have implemented policies requiring carbon reporting, while others are exploring how to embed these requirements within their specific jurisdictions. Despite differences in pace among federal, provincial, and municipal arts councils, the growing alignment across levels of government indicates progress toward a future national framework for carbon reporting in the arts.

One innovative approach to integrating sustainability into the arts has been through the use of financial incentives. For example, a pilot project by Calgary Arts Development (CADA) provided micro-grants to encourage Calgary-based arts organizations to engage with carbon reporting. This experiment aimed to gather feedback from arts organizations on their capacity to track their carbon footprint from



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things like energy and water consumption, travel, waste and materials, and to identify barriers or opportunities for further engagement. Similar to this are programs by the Conseil des arts de Montréal (CAM) and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ). The CALQ's program, which has been particularly ambitious by mandating carbon reporting in its core-funded organizations by the end of their 2024-2028 funding cycle, will be described in greater detail in the next section. The results of such pilots are useful to inform the design of future policies, where financial incentives act as catalysts for more widespread participation.

The federal government has also recognized the need to consider environmental sustainability in the arts. In 2020, the Department of Canadian Heritage convened a roundtable focused on the green recovery of the arts, culture, and heritage sectors, followed by additional consultations in 2022-2023 on the renewal of the Museum Policy, which also centered environmental sustainability as one of its main pillars. These types of discussions are critical in shaping the future of Canada's cultural policies,

providing a space for stakeholders to voice their perspectives on sustainability and recovery efforts. They also contribute to the creation of a cohesive national approach to carbon tracking and environmental responsibility.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has further facilitated the blending of environmental and cultural priorities. In 2021, the second phase of the Creative Green Tools' adaptation for the Canadian context received \$100,000 through a federal funding program designed to help Canada reach the SDGs, underscoring the importance of integrating environmental sustainability into cultural frameworks. The SDGs, particularly those focused on climate action and sustainable cities, have provided a useful lens through which cultural organizations can align their efforts with broader societal goals, enhancing the sector's role in promoting sustainability.

The Canadian arts and culture sector is steadily moving toward a future where environmental sustainability is embedded in its practices, funding policies, and cultural outputs. With the continued support of

fundors, federal departments, and initiatives like the Creative Green Tools, the sector is poised to play a leading role in the national and global fight against climate change.

## THE QUÉBEC ARTS COMMUNITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

### *Overview of policies and practices in Québec*

This section details the collaboration and results of implementing the Creative Green tools platform among organizations supported by the CALQ (Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec). It is important to first situate the place of culture in Québec, the CALQ's mission and the introduction of a sustainable development policy in the province. This provides context for the commitment of the CALQ, and the arts community it supports, to environmental responsibility.

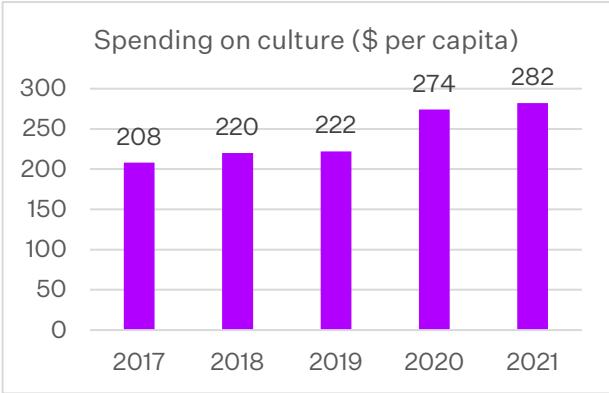
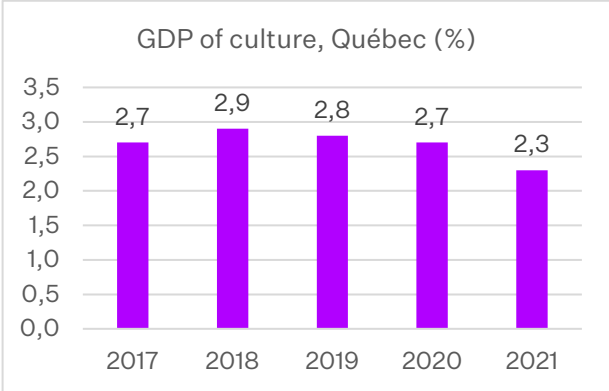
## 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE TO QUÉBEC

Culture is a highly valued sector of activity in Québec. It offers social cohesion between population groups, forges the province's identity, and is a great source of pride.

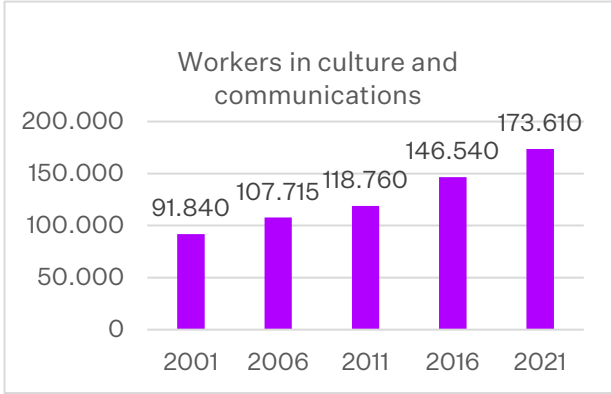
# CANADA

Québec culture keeps extending into new artistic horizons, and its reputation reaches far beyond its borders. Examples of this are Cirque du Soleil, which has unprecedented international influence, the conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain, Yannick Nezet-Seguín, who has received numerous awards, including the 2024 Grammy Award for best opera recording, and Louise Lecavalier, a choreographer and performer who has taken dance to new heights. And there are so many more examples. Emerging artists, for instance, who were hit hard by the pandemic, are showing inspiring determination as they resume their activities.

This artistic vitality and quality are demonstrated in the portrait of Québec's cultural economy. In 2021, culture's share of GDP was 2.3%, and spending on culture per capita was \$282.<sup>19</sup> We should note that this is total spending by the public administration per capita.



According to the most recent census in 2021, there were 173,610 cultural workers in Québec, a 19% increase over 2016. These workers represent 4% of the province's active population, a higher proportion than in the rest of Canada (3.2%).<sup>20</sup>



In 2022, 7.6 million people attended performing arts events, 11.3 million went to movies, and 10.6 million visited museums. Québec has an expansive cultural offer, and to ensure its vitality, economic growth, and influence, it must reach beyond its borders.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada  
(<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230626/dq230626a-eng.htm>)

<sup>20</sup> Optique culture, Observatoire de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, No. 93, February 2024

(<https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/fichier/professions-culture-communications-quebec-2021.pdf>)

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## 2. THE CONSEIL DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES DU QUÉBEC

In 1961, Québec created the first government department dedicated to culture, ensuring that French culture is visible in the Americas. In 1992, Québec adopted its first cultural policy, which created the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles – SODEC – and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec – the CALQ, among other efforts. This was the government response to the arts community’s desire to have new decision-making processes guide the allocation of public funds to protect the autonomy of organizations and the freedom of artists to create. A government corporation under the auspices of the Ministre de la Culture et des Communications, the CALQ officially opened its doors in 1994, 30 years ago. It has supported several generations of artists and cultural workers who have contributed and who continue to contribute to the development and vitality of Québec culture.

With a view to equitable, sustainable artistic development, the CALQ supports creation, experimentation, and production in the arts

and literature in all regions of Québec and promotes dissemination in Québec, Canada, and abroad.

### Disciplines recognized by the CALQ:

- Visual arts
- Digital arts
- Film and video
- Literature, spoken word, comic books and storytelling
- Performing arts (dance, theatre, music and pop music)
- Multidisciplinary arts
- Arts and crafts
- Architectural research

This support is delivered through grants to artists and not-for-profit arts organizations to enable them to make their mark in Québec and internationally. The CALQ is governed by a board of directors, whose members – mainly from the art world – are appointed by

the Minister of Culture and Communications’ Cabinet. It allocates public funds based on the recognition of excellence by peers, guided by the values of equity, excellence, and integrity.

In the past 30 years, the CALQ granted \$2.6 billion in support to the Québec arts community. A total of 12,000 artists have been supported to create over 35,000 projects, and 2,600 arts organizations have been funded to realize 39,000 projects, as well as support their operational needs. The CALQ has also given out 540 awards and honours over the decades, recognizing the excellence of Québec artists.

## 3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN QUÉBEC

Sustainable development is one of the Government of Québec’s priorities, particularly given that growing climate challenges are becoming increasingly complex. Québec has been part of global reflections on the issue from the start and has actively participated in discussions to position itself for the challenges of climate change and ensure sustainable

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environmental, social, and economic development for future generations.

In the mid-1980s, during the Brundtland Commission, Québec helped define the concept of sustainable development by producing the French-language edition of the working paper of the World Commission on Environment and Development for the international francophonie: “Mandat pour un changement, grandes questions, stratégie et plan de travail,” the translation of “Mandate for Change: Key Issues, Strategy and Workplan.” In 1988, the Government of Québec also disseminated the French version of the Commission’s report, “Notre avenir à tous,” first published in English under the title “Our Common Future.”

In 1991, the Ministère de l'Environnement created the *Comité interministériel sur le développement durable* (interministerial committee on sustainable development, or CIDD), made up of most government ministries and agencies involved in implementing sustainable development. Much was done over the course of the decade, including the creation of the *Fonds d'action québécois pour le développement durable*

(Québec action fund for sustainable development) in 2000, which has supported and guided not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and schools.

## Sustainable Development Act

The *Sustainable Development Act* was passed in 2006. “It defined principles, outlined challenges, and pointed to directions to take” (Lamari, 2011). It was founded on 16 major principles that must be considered when implementing structuring efforts. They cover environmental, social, and economic challenges in the governance of efforts by ministries and agencies. This law led to the first Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2008-2013, followed by a second iteration for 2015-2020.

The most recent Strategy covers a five-year period. Pursuant to the *Sustainable Development Act*, 110 ministries and agencies active in all spheres of society must produce an individual sustainable development action plan (SDAP) to help achieve the Strategy’s objectives, thereby ensuring consistency and complementarity in government efforts.

## THE ORIENTATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028

- Orientation 1  
Make Québec a centre of innovation and excellence in a green, responsible economy
- Orientation 2  
Promote nature and health
- Orientation 3  
Encourage everyone to participate in the sustainable development of Québec
- Orientation 4  
Develop communities sustainably
- Orientation 5  
Create an exemplary government that promotes innovation

“The purpose of the Strategy is to integrate sustainable development research in all spheres of government intervention, including in legislation, public policy, and programs, so that they can be part of the

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transition to a more prosperous, greener, and more responsible Québec.”<sup>21</sup> The Strategy is the Government of Québec’s formal response to the United Nations 2030 Program. It is based on five major orientations set out in 20 objectives. All ministry and agency SDAPs must relate to the Strategy’s objectives that concern their sector of activity.

## 4. THE CALQ’S SUPPORT FOR GREENER CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

### New green orientation

“Consultations<sup>22</sup> conducted by our team in recent months show that the community is highly responsive to environmental issues and that many arts organizations have adopted or intend to adopt greener practices.” Anne-Marie Jean, President and Executive Director of the CALQ from 2015 to 2024.

Using this momentum, in 2023 the CALQ adopted a new green orientation. With this commitment, it would like all organizations supported for the next multi-year funding cycle (from 2024 to 2028) to take concrete

action for the environment. The 446 organizations currently supported therefore committed to:

- registering for the Creative Green platform and producing, with the collaboration and support of the *Conseil québécois des événements écoresponsables* (CQEER<sup>23</sup>), detailed data about their carbon footprint;
- adopting a sustainable development action plan, with a green component.

### Creative Green Project

The Creative Green tools (CG tools) are a complete set of tools to calculate and report on the carbon footprint, created specifically for the arts and culture sector. This is a Canadian and Québec adaptation of tools developed in England in 2009 by the organization Julie’s Bicycle, tools that are recognized around the world as the most accessible and effective of their kind.

The CG tools enable arts organizations to understand their environmental impact and

track its evolution, with the goal of reducing their carbon footprint. They cover 17 artistic subsectors to evaluate the footprint of a site (office, cultural building) or a project (a production, tour, event, etc.). This data covers emissions by the organization (internal) as well as emissions generated by public travel, for instance (external). Organizations then receive a detailed report of their footprint and can compare their data to benchmarks. These results are benchmarks to help them identify their intervention priorities.

The Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (CSPA) and partner organizations launched the Creative Green tools across Canada on Earth Day 2022. From the outset of the project development and tool design, the CALQ demonstrated its interest and showed its support for this project, which will enable the arts community to take part in a concrete and structured effort in the fight against climate change. Since 2022, it has been financially supporting the CQEER and the Creative Green tools to guide Québec

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<sup>21</sup> Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2023-2028, p. 1

<sup>22</sup> Including the survey of organizations supported to identify the level of integration of green practices in their management, production, and presentation activities.

<sup>23</sup> Founded in 2008, the CQEER is a not-for-profit organization that facilitates and encourages environmentally friendly events in Québec.

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# CANADA

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organizations in their energy transition. In fact, all organizations that must enter their carbon data receive personalized guidance financed by the CALQ. In the coming years, they will need to ensure that they have the tools necessary to document their activities.

The most recent results from the platform were available this year.<sup>24</sup> The sample includes 88 organizations that have started to submit footprints. Among all disciplines, the result of this sample is 11,497.499 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions. At this stage, the organizations did not document all activities; this snapshot is an indicative breakdown. Not surprisingly, travel was responsible for the most emissions. Travel for the public, employees, and artists accounted for over 80% of the CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of organizations. It was also noted that the sectors that generated the most emissions are cultural buildings (responsible for most of audience travel), as well as tours (responsible for a majority of travel of artists by car and plane).

SECTOR	NUMBER OF FOOTPRINTS SUBMITTED	%	CO <sub>2</sub> E EMISSIONS (IN TONS)	%
Cultural buildings	52	30	6,472	56
Tours	51	29	4,268	37
Offices	34	20	174	2
Indoor events	18	10	234	2
Productions	11	6	2	0.5
Outdoor events	9	5	348	3
Total	175	100	11,498	100

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<sup>24</sup> Data from the report submitted to the CALQ for 2023-2024 (internal document).



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### Call for green projects

In 2022 and 2023, the CALQ invited organizations from the Montréal and Capitale-Nationale regions to submit projects to implement greener management. A total of 58 projects were supported: these include eco-design, adoption of action plans, environmentally friendly productions or tours, and public awareness workshops.

### Inspiring examples

- The Festival TransAmériques (FTA) is a festival of contemporary creation devoted to dance and theatre that presents on average 25 shows annually. The FTA offered its audience a [Festivalgoers' Sustainably Guide](#) to help them reduce their footprint during their visit.
- The Société des musées du Québec brings together and represents some 300 museum institutions (museums, exhibition centres, and interpretive sites), with 600 individual members across Québec. It offers its members [a space dedicated to the green transition](#), with references, tools, guides, and best practices.
- [Écoscéno](#) was founded in October 2019 to equip the cultural community in two main areas: eco-design and reuse. Through support and training, Écoscéno increases the resilience of the arts sector by creating progress in methods of design, production, and consumption.

For many years, Québec artists and arts organizations have been proud ambassadors of sustainable development practices. Sensitive to environmental and social issues, they propose concrete, decisive initiatives to better respect the environment, while getting involved in their communities and raising awareness among their audiences. As a funding body, it is the CALQ's responsibility to position itself for these challenges, by prompting more action and offering the cultural sector support in this much-needed green transition. This is why the CALQ aims to have its regular programs integrate sustainability criteria by March 31, 2028.<sup>25</sup> This is a commitment that is advancing the cultural sector even further in its fight against climate change.



Théâtre du Portage received CALQ support for the play *Plastique*. - Image © Vanessa Fortin

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<sup>25</sup> This is objective 10 of the *Plan d'action de développement durable du CALQ 2023-2028* (CALQ sustainable development action plan for 2023-2028): Increase the number of programs that include sustainability criteria.

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# INDIA

## Sustainability and Challenges in the Indian Craft Sector

Arts & Crafts in the Indian Context

*Authors: Lipika Bansal and Meera Curam*

Photo: Varun Pitchuka

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# INDIA

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## INTRODUCTION

The crafts sector in India has a long tradition of sustainability, deeply rooted in its practices, materials, and community-oriented production methods. Traditional artisans rely on natural and locally sourced materials such as clay, bamboo, cotton, silk, jute, and natural dyes, making their crafts environmentally conscious (Choudhary A., Mishra, P., 2022). Additionally, the production methods in Indian crafts have a low carbon footprint, as they are largely manual or involve simple tools that consume minimal energy compared to industrial manufacturing. Furthermore, many craft traditions follow zero-waste principles by maximizing resource efficiency and repurposing leftover materials. A notable example is Kantha embroidery and patchwork quilts, where fabric scraps are creatively reused to produce intricate designs. These sustainable practices support environmental conservation and uphold the rich cultural heritage of Indian crafts.

## THE SEAMLESS INTEGRATION OF ART, CRAFT, AND DESIGN IN INDIA

The handicraft sector is one of the critical economic drivers of India's rural economy. It has supported and complemented the major occupation of agriculture (Ranjan, A., & Ranjan, M.P., 2009). Within communities, craft practices emerged as expressions of these shared values and beliefs, shaping collective identities and fostering a tradition of communal crafting.

While craft supported trade and met local or personal needs, it was also an act of reverence and celebration of nature. Crops providing fibre and food, rivers sustaining the land, and animals aiding in agriculture were all considered sacred. Prof. Shastri<sup>26</sup> explains in a video presentation that the community's faiths, beliefs, and traditions were reflected in crafted objects, lending a unique regional identity to their form.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Indian textiles became highly popular in Western markets, with fabrics such as chintz, muslin, and calico valued for their exceptional quality and intricate patterns. However, colonial rule also contributed to the decline of traditional crafts, as mass-produced goods created stiff competition, leading to a significant transformation in the livelihoods of Indian artisans.

This trend of fast making processes and industrialization has major implications on the local environment. Climate change in India is leading to alarming rises in temperatures, erratic monsoons, severe droughts, and extreme weather conditions that threaten agriculture, water security, and biodiversity. These environmental shifts impact livelihoods and significantly affect the craft and cultural sector. Traditional craft practices, particularly those reliant on natural resources like textile dyeing, pottery, and weaving, are increasingly vulnerable due to water scarcity, loss of raw materials, and

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<sup>26</sup>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Scm8RFiwUZk>

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shifting ecosystems. The artisanal communities, already economically fragile, are struggling to sustain their heritage practices in the face of climate-induced displacement and market disruptions. Addressing these challenges requires integrating sustainable practices, promoting ecological resilience, and supporting adaptive strategies to ensure the continuity of India's rich cultural traditions in a changing climate.

## POST-INDEPENDENCE REVIVAL OF ARTS AND CRAFTS IN INDIA

After India gained independence in 1947, the arts and crafts sector underwent significant transformation as the nation sought to rebuild its cultural and economic identity. Recognizing the intrinsic connection between crafts and India's heritage, the government initiated several programs to revive and support the crafts sector, which had been marginalized during colonial rule. The handicraft development programs implemented by the government focused on four key objectives:

1. Encouraging the growth of handicrafts
2. Conducting research and fostering design innovation
3. Enhancing technical skills and capabilities
4. Facilitating marketing opportunities

In the 1950s and 60s, various centers, cottage industries emporium, regional state handicrafts and handloom development corporations were set up in every state to support and promote India craft communities. One is the renowned *All India Handicrafts Board*, set up in 1952, and established by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (Sethi., R., 2019). The board aimed to support and promote traditional crafts, improve artisans' livelihoods, and facilitate the marketing of handicrafts.



*Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay*

During the 1960s, the craft sector experienced a revival with the introduction of the cooperative movement. This initiative enabled individual artisans to come together and form small enterprises, helping them benefit from economies of scale and access government subsidies. India was among the first developing countries to integrate artisans and crafts into its national economic development strategy (Banerjee, A., Mazzarella, F., 2022). However, this development remained incomplete. Many financially vulnerable artisans lacked the necessary training to innovate and strengthen their small businesses, and they were not equipped to handle market and financial

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# INDIA

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risks. Additionally, government assistance in areas such as marketing, quality standardization, and product innovation was insufficient. By the 1990s, traditional craftsmanship had become outdated due to global economic changes and Indian policymakers' efforts to align with the Western notion of mechanization as a symbol of modern progress.

Secondly, the government also recognized the need of establishing museums, to preserve authentic resources and materials, providing a sound base for research and study of the history of crafts. It was also identified that the craftspeople required support with new design ideas to suit the taste of urban consumers and abroad. Hence various centers were established providing design and technical guidance. Another example is the establishment of India's first design institute in 1961, The National Institute of Design<sup>27</sup>, with the visionary advice of Charles Eames. Eames suggested that the Indian designers learn from the

attitude, skills and knowledge available in the Indian craft traditions, and give it new relevance in the industrial age that was emerging in post-Independence India.

Next, the government aimed to set up training-, research centers and educational institutes to offer craftspeople technical support, to enhance their skills and integrate craft techniques into modern applications. Appointing designers who possess both aesthetic sensibility and technical expertise was crucial, balancing respect for tradition with an acute understanding of contemporary trends—qualities essential for creating innovative and well-crafted designs.

Finally in order to promote the crafts industry, the government recognized the need to include specialized approaches and measures to market handicrafts. Marketing handicrafts is a challenging task, as these skilled handmade products must compete with mass-produced items created by machines.

In 1948, the *All India Cottage Industries Board* recommended the establishment of *Emporia* at both the central and state levels to promote the marketing of cottage industry products. Consequently, the *Central Cottage Industries Emporium* was set up in Delhi in 1949, and many states followed suit, establishing their own emporia. These emporia were set up to promote and sell high-quality handicrafts and served as a platform for artisans to showcase their work directly to consumers. Today, there are approximately 250 emporia across the country, alongside various Khadi Bhandar outlets and other showrooms dedicated to selling hand-spun, hand-woven fabrics, and handmade products.

Other schemes include festivals, awards and schemes for crafts. Whereas in the past craftspeople were recognized by royal patrons, post-independence the All India Handicrafts Board started to honor artisans by presenting the annual *National Awards to Master Craftsmen of Exceptional Skill*. Each awardee receives a plaque, an angavastram

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<sup>27</sup><https://www.nid.edu/about#:~:text=Today%20the%20National%20Institute%20of, and%20Industry%2C%20Government%20of%20India>



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(ceremonial shawl), and a cash prize from the President of India. This moment is rare and highly anticipated in the life of a craftsperson.

Despite these efforts to preserve and promote various arts and crafts, significant challenges persist. Artisans continue to face competition from machine-made products, which often dominate the market due to mass production and lower costs. Additionally, limited access to broader markets and effective distribution channels further hampers the growth of the handicraft sector.

## SUSTAINABLE CRAFT PRACTICES AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

While there is no single overarching policy exclusively dedicated to sustainability in culture, various government policies and initiatives have increasingly emphasised sustainability in recent decades to align with global environmental concerns and support artisans' livelihoods. Below are a few key aspects of existing frameworks.

One such initiative is the revival of natural dyes, such as indigo in handloom weaving, which helps reduce chemical pollution and supports traditional, environmentally friendly dyeing techniques (Ministry of Textiles<sup>28</sup>). Additionally, cluster development schemes like *SFURTI*<sup>29</sup> (Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries) foster local, community-based production, minimizing transportation emissions and providing sustainable livelihoods for artisans (Government of India, 2021). The recognition of *Geographical Indication*<sup>30</sup> (GI) products further encourages sustainable practices by promoting region-specific crafts, ensuring that traditional, eco-friendly methods are preserved and valued (Geographical Indications Registry, 2022). Moreover, the *Development Commissioner* (Handicrafts)<sup>31</sup> plays a crucial role in advancing green practices by offering skill training and providing artisans with eco-friendly tools and techniques (Handicrafts Annual Report, 2021). These policy measures collectively contribute to a more

sustainable and environmentally responsible craft sector in India.

Furthermore, India is actively promoting slow and ethical fashion by supporting traditional crafts and integrating sustainability into policy initiatives. The government not only advocates for handloom and khadi products as eco-friendly and ethical alternatives to fast fashion through campaigns like *Make in India*<sup>32</sup> and *Vocal for Local*<sup>33</sup>, highlighting the importance of sustainable craftsmanship (Aiaca, 2017).

There are also laws and regulatory frameworks in India that enforce sustainability and ethical practices in the textile and craft industries. These laws address issues such as environmental impact, fair labor practices, and sustainable production methods.

Examples of legal frameworks for sustainability in the fashion and crafts sector are The Environment (Protection) Act

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<sup>28</sup> <https://texmin.nic.in/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://sfurti.msme.gov.in/SFURTI/Home.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> <https://ipindia.gov.in/gi.htm>

<sup>31</sup> <https://handicrafts.nic.in/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.makeinindia.com/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2014411>

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(1986)<sup>34</sup>, where it takes measures to control pollution caused by textile dyeing and production and the use of hazardous chemicals in textiles. Then there is the Extended Producer Responsibility<sup>35</sup> under the Plastic Waste Management Rules, which encourages recycling and responsible disposal of textile waste and promotes eco-friendly alternatives to plastic-based textiles. The Minimum Wages Act<sup>36</sup> & Child labour Act<sup>37</sup>, regulate wages and ensure fair compensation for artisans and textile workers, and also prohibit child labour in hazardous industries, including textile manufacturing. However there are loopholes in enforcing these laws, as many of these industries are informal.

To further enhance market access, e-commerce platforms such as India Handmade Bazaar connect artisans directly with consumers, reducing the carbon footprint by eliminating intermediaries. In addition to promoting ethical fashion, policies addressing climate change have also

incorporated the craft sector. *The National Action Plan on Climate Change*<sup>38</sup> (NAPCC) integrates crafts into initiatives like the *National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture*, which supports using natural fibres and bio-based materials. Furthermore, the government provides incentives such as subsidies and financial assistance to encourage the adoption of sustainable materials and eco-friendly production processes. These efforts collectively foster a more sustainable and ethical approach to fashion and craft production in India. While India's traditional crafts sector inherently promotes sustainability, it faces systemic challenges from fast fashion, labor exploitation, and environmental degradation. A combination of stricter enforcement of labor laws, sustainable fashion movements, and greater market access for artisans will be necessary to address these issues.

## ANALYSING GOVERNMENT WEBSITES WITH SCHEMES FOR CRAFTSPEOPLE

*How accessible are the schemes for the craftspeople?*

A significant portion of the Indian economy's unorganised sector comprises handicrafts. It is primarily a rural sector that operates in remote and underdeveloped locations. Handicrafts were first practised in rural regions as a part-time occupation.

However, strong local and international market demand has evolved into a thriving economic activity. The handicraft industry has considerable potential for expansion, supporting both the thousands of current artists and numerous newcomers to the craft industry. However, in addition to other limitations, including a lack of money, knowledge, exposure to new technologies, market intelligence, and a weak institutional

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<sup>34</sup> <https://cpcb.nic.in/env-protection-act/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.eprplastic.cpcb.gov.in/#/plastic/home>

<sup>36</sup> <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/doc1.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <https://clc.gov.in/clc/acts-rules/child-labour-act-1986>

<sup>38</sup> <https://dst.gov.in/climate-change-programme>

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framework, this industry has suffered since it is not organised.

Government websites provide vital information on schemes for craftspeople, including skill development, financial assistance, market access, and social security. But there is a disconnect between policymakers and the targeted groups, such as artisans, weavers, and craft communities. Information about sustainable practices, resource conservation, and climate adaptation is often shared through reports, digital platforms, or institutional channels that may not reach or be accessible to those working in traditional and often rural settings. Without localized dissemination strategies, capacity-building programs, and financial incentives, these policies risk remaining theoretical rather than transformative.

Some of the schemes include<sup>39</sup>:

- National Handicrafts Development Programme (NHDP): The National Handicrafts Development Programme (NHDP) scheme offers millions of handicraft artisans end-to-end support. The Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM-VIKAS) scheme will also help artisans improve the quality, scale, and reach of their products.
- Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY): It is a cluster-based programme overseen by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).
- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP): Implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), PMEGP offers financial assistance to artisans and entrepreneurs for setting up micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.
- Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS): Introduced in 1950, CTS aims to ensure a steady flow of skilled workers in various trades by providing vocational training to artisans.
- PM Vishwakarma Scheme: This initiative empowers artisans and craftsmen who work with their hands and tools, such as carpenters and boatmakers, by providing them with financial support and skill development opportunities.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.india.gov.in/information-national-handicrafts-development-programme-nhdp?page=1>



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Government websites like the Ministry of Textiles and Development Commissioner for Handicrafts provide vital information on schemes for craftspeople, including skill development, financial assistance, market access, and social security. However, their accessibility in the Indian context faces significant challenges:

- **Language Barriers:** Many members of the crafts community are comfortable with regional languages and local dialects. However, most may not be formally educated, and limited regional language support makes them less inclusive.
- **Connectivity Issues:** Poor internet access and slack of electricity in rural areas hamper usage of the websites.
- **Digital Literacy:** Many craftspeople struggle to navigate complex websites due to low digital literacy.
- **Website Design:** Complicated layouts and outdated information reduce usability.

- **Navigating the application process:** Some schemes require completing complex forms, requiring multiple steps, excessive documentation, and unclear instructions, creating additional barriers for craftspeople.
- **Awareness:** Craftspeople are often unaware of these resources due to insufficient offline outreach.

## A CASE STUDY – PITCHUKA FAMILY AND THE KALAMKARI TRADITION

The discussion around sustainability in artisan crafts highlights the need to balance environmental, economic, and social factors to ensure the preservation of traditional art forms (Kesaboyina, V., M., Vishweshwari, Tiwar, V., Sade, A., 2024). Sustainable approaches, such as utilizing natural dyes, sourcing local materials, and adopting eco-friendly production methods, help minimize environmental harm while improving the social and economic conditions of artisan communities.

In the case of Kalamkari<sup>40</sup>, adopting to sustainable practices has been recognized as essential for its continued existence and development. Studies have shown that returning to natural dyes offers significant environmental advantages, such as reducing water pollution and minimizing health hazards for artisans. Furthermore, the focus on sustainability aligns with the growing global demand for ethical and eco-conscious products, creating new opportunities for Kalamkari in international markets. In this section, we share the story of Varun Pitchuka, a third-generation Kalamkari artisan and how their family tradition keeps evolving to cater to contemporary markets.

More than 100 years ago, Pitchuka Vullakki, a skilled weaver from Pedana, Andhra Pradesh, would walk to nearby villages to sell his handmade products.

His son, Pitchuka Veera Subbaiah<sup>41</sup>, was born into this humble weaver's family in a small village. Despite their modest means, he

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<sup>40</sup> Kalamkari art, a distinguished traditional Indian textile art form, embodies the confluence of cultural richness and historical

depth, manifesting through its intricate designs and the harmonious use of natural dyes

<sup>41</sup> <https://pvskalamkari.wordpress.com/>

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received a good education—an achievement in those days. He began his career as a clerk in a handloom business firm, which required him to travel across major cities in India to market handloom sarees. During one of his trips to Mumbai, he learned about Kalamkari art, which once flourished in Machilipatnam. Determined to revive this traditional craft, he faced significant challenges in locating artisans and materials. However, with perseverance and numerous experiments, he successfully reintroduced Kalamkari in the 1970s in Pedana. Today, Kalamkari has become a vital occupation in the region, alongside weaving and agriculture, providing a livelihood to many men and women.



Pitchuka Srinivas

Pitchuka Srinivas, the son of Pitchuka Veera Subbaiah, grew up surrounded by his father's Kalamkari work, though he was initially unaware of their family's prior involvement in the handloom business. While attending school, Srinivas assisted his father in his work. However, after the untimely passing of his father at the young age of 16, he had to discontinue his studies and fully dedicate himself to the family occupation. Determined to carry forward his father's legacy, Srinivas continued experimenting with new colors

and techniques. He also pursued his father's unfinished dream of dyeing organic yarn with natural colors—a goal that had previously yielded no successful results. Through persistence and innovation, Srinivas ultimately achieved this breakthrough. Another aspiration of his father was to take Kalamkari to the international market, a goal that Srinivas successfully realized by venturing into exports.

Now in the third generation, Pitchuka Veera Naga Varun Kumar is carrying forward the family's artistic tradition. After completing his studies, Varun Kumar joined the family business, continuing the legacy started by his grandfather. Together, the father and son have achieved new milestones, including the creation of the iconic *Tree of Life* design, which was meticulously crafted using 212 hand-carved blocks—an unprecedented achievement in block printing.

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*Blockprinting area*

When talking with Varun, he explained that the Kalamari artisans face several challenges that threaten the sustainability of their craft. One major issue is water scarcity, which poses a significant obstacle as the art of Kalamkari heavily relies on water for dyeing and processing fabrics. Additionally, there is a lack of interest among the younger generation in learning the intricate techniques of block printing, leading to concerns about the art's continuity. Another challenge artisans face is the seasonal variation in natural dye colors, which makes it difficult to achieve consistent shades. Customers often demand identical colors, but due to the natural dyeing process,

meeting such expectations becomes nearly impossible.

While dealing with these challenges the Pitchuka family is dedicated to using only natural raw materials to create eco-friendly products that are appreciated worldwide. They are committed to bring awareness, preserve and continue Kalamkari in its original, pure form for future generations.



*Blockprints*



*Handskill process*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The story of the Pitchuka family exemplifies the resilience, dedication, and innovation required to sustain traditional crafts in the face of modern challenges. Their journey underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary demands. As they continue to uphold the values of eco-friendly production and craftsmanship excellence, their efforts serve as an inspiration to the broader artisan community.

Despite the numerous challenges faced by artisans—resource scarcity, the reluctance of younger generations to take up crafts, and



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the changing market trends—their commitment to sustainability remains unwavering. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including greater support from government initiatives, increased consumer awareness, and the integration of modern technology without compromising traditional methods.

The future of Indian crafts depends on a collaborative effort involving artisans, policymakers, designers, and consumers. Promoting ethical consumption, such as the establishment of craft villages by the government serve as hubs where artisans can work, produce, and sell their products. These villages promote eco-friendly practices and provide tourists with authentic experiences, thereby supporting sustainable livelihoods for artisans. But enhancing access to training and financial resources, and leveraging digital platforms for market expansion can equally ensure that traditional crafts like Kalamkari not only survive but thrive in the global marketplace.



*Kalamkari rumal deccan golconda*

Ultimately, sustainability in the craft sector is not just about environmental responsibility; it is also about cultural continuity, economic empowerment, and social well-being. By fostering a deeper appreciation for handcrafted products and the stories behind them, we can contribute to the preservation and evolution of India's rich artistic legacy for generations to come.

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## Irish Arts and Climate Policy

*Author: Paraic Mc Quaid*

Photo: Deirdre O'Mahony, *The Quickening* (2024). Installation view, *The Quickening*, The Douglas Hyde Gallery of Contemporary Art, 2024. All images courtesy of the artist and The Douglas Hyde, Dublin. Photography by Louis Haugh.

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## INTRODUCTION: CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF ARTS POLICY

Climate change is a pressing reality and the impacts are already clear. It is agreed at an international level that governments must act fast to the issue of global warming.<sup>42,43,44</sup>

But what can arts policy do to save the planet when the arts are not one of the major contributors to the problem? To assume that arts policy has a role to play is to assume that an all of government approach to climate policy is necessary outside of a mere advocacy role. This requires that all ministries including arts give adequate consideration to the impacts of policies on climate change. Arts and climate policy is required to ensure there is adequate support

for artists and communities who are motivated to take climate action through the arts. The following article aims to review the current arts policy in Ireland in relation to considerations of climate change. A review of the cultural policy of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (TCAGSM) will be conducted. This will be followed by a review of the Creative Ireland programme and then Road policy related to climate change. First let us take a look at the Irish government's approach to the issue of climate change.

## THE IRISH GOVERNMENT CLIMATE ACTION POLICY

The Irish Government has committed to goals to reduce the carbon footprint of the

nation. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan, 2018-2020<sup>45</sup> focused on raising awareness, participation, support and policy alignment around the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals of 2015<sup>46</sup>. The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication's (ECC) Climate Action Plan 2024, sets out the actions required to meet the government's climate objective of "pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022<sup>47</sup>." The legally

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<sup>42</sup> UNFCCC (2018) *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC). United Nations. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement#:~:text=It%20entered%20into%20force%20on,above%20pre%2Dindustrial%20levels> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>43</sup> Van Westen, Kliphuis and Dijkstra (2024) *Physics-based early warning signal shows that AMOC is on tipping course*, Science Advances, Vol. 10, No. 6, Available at: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adk1189> (Accessed 20.01.25) According to Van Westen et al.

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<sup>44</sup> UNFCCC (2018) *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC). United Nations. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement#:~:text=It%20entered%20into%20force%20on,above%20pre%2Dindustrial%20levels> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>45</sup> Government of Ireland (2018) *Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7cde9f-the->

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<sup>46</sup> United Nations, (2015) *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties*. Paris, United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>47</sup> Government of Ireland, (2024) *Climate Action Plan 2024 Annex of Actions*. Dublin, Government of

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bound commitment from government is to lower emissions by 51% by 2030 and to get to net zero by 2050. This target is slightly less ambitious than the EU target of 55% by 2030<sup>48</sup>. Ireland has fallen short of its own target of reduced emissions set for 2023 while most EU countries have met targets<sup>49</sup>. But on a positive note, there has been a significant mobilisation of climate action under the three-party coalition government up 2020-2024, which included the Green Party. The last time the green party were in government was between 2007-2011. While climate policy is a broadly shared ambition of all Irish political parties the level of ambition is significantly lower in the two centre right and centre left parties of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. With no Green party representation in the new government coalition of 2025 and only one elected representative in opposition it may prove

challenging to sustain the climate policy momentum gained during the past four years.

## ARTS MINISTRY LEVEL CLIMATE ACTION POLICY

“Culture and sustainability” is mentioned in the final draft of the National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025: Culture 2025 (2020). “The cultural sector, through its artists, performers, writers, designers, developers, educators and others, can also harness their intellectual leadership and the power of their creative expression to raise awareness of sustainability and climate threats and to promote alternate approaches to meeting the related challenges for their own sector, for the public at large, and for actions across all relevant public policy areas.” (p14)<sup>50</sup> The Government Department stepped up specific

policymaking in relation to Arts and Climate in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 the Minister for TCAGSM established a special taskforce to look at the recovery of the arts sector. This taskforce produced a report advising government on best routes to recovery for the arts sector<sup>51</sup>. Within the “Facing Forward” section: Issue number 10 of 10 is “Addressing the Environmental Impacts of the Arts, Cultural and Events Activities/Recommendations”. They recommended the establishment of a Creative Green Programme to advise and support existing creative sector and offer Creative Green Certification for best practices. They also recommended industry benchmarking, and raising public awareness. All recommendations assume a coordinated approach between the Department of Environment (ECC) and Department of Culture (TCAGSM).

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<sup>51</sup> Arts and Recovery Taskforce (2020) *Life Worth Living: The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce*. Dublin, DTCAGSM. Available at: [https://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/All/Life-Worth-Living\\_-The-Report-of-the-Arts-and-Culture-Recovery-Taskforce/](https://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/All/Life-Worth-Living_-The-Report-of-the-Arts-and-Culture-Recovery-Taskforce/) (Accessed 20.01.25)

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Looking at the current cultural policy in Ireland in relation to acknowledgement of climate change at the Government Department level (Department of TCAGSM) the most significant action has been a Culture, Creativity and Climate Policy Framework Survey released in June 2023<sup>52</sup>. This survey has informed a forthcoming new climate policy related to culture to be published early 2025. It is worth noting that the arts and climate policy of the Irish government is a rare example of arts policy acknowledgement of climate responsibility internationally. There are not many international examples of arts and climate policy. It is easy to tell the true intentions of a policy response to climate crisis by how upfront it foregrounds the reality of climate crisis and the necessity for real change. The introductory text of this document makes clear the major climate issue we are facing. The Survey preamble sets out three themes to how the Department of TCAGSM intends to address the issue of climate change: **Embedding**, **Engaging** and

**Enhancing**. This is a good organisational strategy and communicates clearly between different roles that culture can play to react to climate change. With “**embedding**” the intention is to make sure that all policy and strategy, schemes, practices and activities have environmental sustainability as a core principle. By doing this it ensures a constant reminder to consider the impact of arts and cultural activities and policies on the environment and encourages organisations to work to reduce impact. But the framework does not necessitate through legislation that organisations, funded by the department, produce a climate policy at organisational level and set targets before receiving funding. As such, it is an encouragement, but stops short of a legal necessity at this time. This is partly because the Department is aware of the tight resources and capital at arts organisation level that make it difficult to make changes towards sustainable practices currently. The second theme is “**engaging**”. The aim here is to harness “the power of culture and creativity to provide a vision for

the future”. The department believe that new narratives can be created through the arts to communicate the challenges and impacts of climate change. This theme is largely informed by a belief in the role of participatory art. The aim is to “support practitioners to reach and connect with diverse audiences” and to “encourage creative engagement with and solutions to environmental issues.” This theme is built on the belief that art has a power to change society by changing the direction of the discourse. This is not the first time that art has been used to address social issues. There is a delicate balance here to play between supporting artists who are already committed to a vision that addresses the issues of climate change, and instrumentalising the funding. The danger of the latter has been seen in past instrumental use of (participatory) arts to address problem policy goals outside of culture. For example urban regeneration is not an arts policy problem but a housing and planning problem. There is nothing wrong with utilising the creativity of the arts to help

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<sup>52</sup> Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, (2023) *Culture, Creativity and Climate Policy Framework Survey 2023*. Dublin, DTCAGSM. Available

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with such policy problems. The problem occurs when the arts are left to fill gaps in policy solutions like an arts bandage. The artist becomes the mediator and often takes a heavy burden of responsibility for absent instigators. On the positive side there have been some great examples of how artists can contribute through engagement. Artist Deirdre O'Mahony's exhibition entitled "the Quickenings" was on display in the Douglas Hyde Gallery Dublin from March to June 2024. Her practice is informed by research collaborations in which she has engaged with farmers and environmental experts to open new dialogues about the future of farming in Ireland. This is an excellent example of how art can effect change through "engagement". However, it is worth noting that the example came about because of the merit of the artists work and not because of specific environmental supports or policies within the department or Arts Council.



*Deirdre O'Mahony, The Quickenings (2024)*

**"Enhancing"** is the third theme to the approach of the department towards Climate change. This will involve "empowering the culture and creative sector to reduce emissions and enhancing cultural infrastructure in line with key spatial policies, including the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework... Supporting the sector in the just transition to a low carbon economy." This theme represents a major opportunity for the Department to act on climate change. It is the department that has had responsibility to fund capital investment in infrastructure since the mid 1990's in Ireland. The majority of arts and cultural centres in the country

were built between 1994 and 2006. But very few of these buildings were built with consideration of their environmental impact or their environmental sustainability. While we anticipate the publication of the climate policy, it is worth noting that very little capital has been allocated from the capital budget of the Department of TCAGSM to reducing the carbon footprint of existing cultural spaces and other infrastructure. There was an allocation of €1.5million towards retrofitting schemes in 2024. There are no details announced in the 2025 budget speech of capital allocations towards this aim. The government Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has set a target of upgrading all public buildings to B building energy rating but how the funding on this lines up with the Arts Department is not made clear. The Departments €1.5 million allocation for retrofitting in 2024 did not have full uptake. Arts centres are resource stretched operating with tight budgets and understaffed. In the absence of clear policy actions or guidance to date some individual centres are taking initiative on the issue. Siamsa Tíre, a theatre and arts centre and home to the National Folk Theatre in County Kerry, explored



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options to improve the environmental performance of the theatre and has now achieved a Creative Green Certification from arts and environment charity Julie's Bicycle. To achieve this they retrofitted their building at a cost of €205,000 which was funded by the Department of Culture. The works included installation of renewable energy technologies resulting in a 26% reduction in emissions and 11% decrease in energy use. This was complemented by the implementation of sustainable practice policies. But this is one of the very few examples of retrofitting from a total number of between 138 year round (full-time) arts venues in Ireland (Arts Council, 2019<sup>53</sup>). The Siamsa Tíre retrofitting came about at a time it was lead with a vision and knowledge of sustainability policy by CEO Catriona Fallon from 2013 to 2019. She has since founded the Green Arts Initiative of Ireland in association with Theatre Forum. There is now an Irish version of the Theatre Green Book which began in the UK and has been adapted by **Catriona Fallon** from **Green Arts Initiative in Ireland**, and is supported

by **Sinéad Wallace** and **Mike O'Halloran**. This provides a roadmap for creating more sustainable theatre productions in Ireland at every level, from Basic to Net Zero. This has been developed in collaboration with sustainability experts and theatre professionals to help the theatre sector reduce environmental impact while maintaining creative excellence.

Under the Climate Action Mandate of 2024 there are now legal requirements for public bodies, including arts and cultural organisations. Installations of EV car charging options, procurement of clean vehicles. All new buildings from 2018 are required to be “nearly zero emissions”. Energy management and monitoring is required with an audit every 4 years. The Green book guidelines 2024 as well as the Arts Council guidelines 2024 have helped organisations see the steps towards meeting climate targets. But evidence of uptake of guidelines in real change is light. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) offers guidance as well as grants to

transform Irelands energy consumption in line with climate goals. The authority have a number of strands of support related to improving the energy efficiency of public buildings, which includes the arts sector. However, while there are clear guidelines and a clear mandate towards this aim, supports towards retrofitting of arts buildings have not resulted in major infrastructural change to arts public building stock. While help is there in terms of guidance there is a lack of clarity on whether the capital for such retrofitting and energy upgrade projects should come from the SEAI, or the Department of TCAGSM.

## CREATIVE IRELAND CLIMATE ACTION POLICY

Creative Climate Action is one of five pillar goals pursued by the Creative Ireland programme, that operates from within the Department of TCAGSM. The programme delivers an all of government response to culture and wellbeing attempting to “transform places and communities through

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<sup>53</sup> Arts Council (2019) *Review of Arts Centres and Venues Report*. Dublin, Arts Council. Available

at: [https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Publications/Research\\_reports/Review%20of%20Arts%20Centres%20and%20Venues%20June%202019.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Publications/Research_reports/Review%20of%20Arts%20Centres%20and%20Venues%20June%202019.pdf) (Accessed 20.01.25)

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creativity.” After a review in 2019 of the potential of the programme to engage the public on climate change<sup>54</sup>, 15 projects were funded in 2021 under the Creative Climate Action fund of €2 million “bringing a creative approach to illustrating and making the changes needed to fight climate change.” The fund was the first of its kind and largest in Europe. The number of projects increased in 2023 to 24 projects funded under the Creative Ireland funded Spark Creative Climate Action Fund II which aims at “piloting new ideas for public engagement at a local, community level, or communities-of-practice.”<sup>55</sup> The Creative Ireland programme team is well placed to act on climate issues. Since the establishment of the programme in 2017 they have established networks at numerous levels across government departments, between national and local government and between cultural agencies and local arts centres and

community groups with aims such as increasing wellbeing through cultural participation. There is an understanding of delivering and sustaining complex policy briefs at these multiple levels. The Spark Creative Climate Action fund has delivered some results in line with the departments themes of “engaging” and “embedding”. The impact of the first round of the Spark fund was analysed in a report led by MaREI, The Research Ireland Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine. The Report found that Creative Climate Action events had a significant impact on audience members and participants in terms of increased awareness, positive engagement and motivation to act in relation to climate change, and provided new ways of engaging and new spaces for connecting and communicating in relation to the environment and climate change. Participants strongly agreed that the arts/ creative community has a role to play in

addressing climate change and that artistic/ creative events can inspire people to take positive environmental action.<sup>56</sup> In the second report by MaREI assessing the impacts of 42 projects funded under Creative Climate Change Fund II researchers found further evidence of positive results of Creative Ireland funded projects with project participants gaining inspiration, hope, empowerment and connections through such projects. However, the short-term nature of the current Creative Climate Action funding model (1-2 years) is seen as an obstacle to long-term impact. The momentum built by the initiatives waned due to the project funding ending. It’s clear from the research that true engaging and embedding takes time. Co-design of projects with citizens is emphasised. The report recommends the continuation of Creative Climate Action project funding with an emphasis on longer-term funding.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Creative Ireland, (2019) *Engaging the Public on Climate Change through the Cultural and Creative Sectors*. Available at: <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Engaging-the-Public-on-Climate-Change.pdf> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>55</sup> Creative Ireland, (2025) *Creative Climate Action Fund Projects*. Available at: <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/blog/creative-climate-action-fund-projects/> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>56</sup> Nyhan, Revez, Mac Mahon, Burke, Hogan (2023) *Creative C-Change - Analysing the Impact of the Creative Climate Action Initiative on Climate Change Awareness, Engagement & Action in Ireland*. MaREI The Research

Ireland Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine on behalf of Creative Ireland. Available at: <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2023/05/Creative-Climate-Action-Creative-C-Change.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Nyhan, M., Mac Mahon, J., Burke, M. and Lydon, M. (2025). *Creative Climate Change II – Analysing the Impact of the Creative Climate Action II: Agents of Change Initiative on Climate Change Engagement, Action*

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## ARTS COUNCIL CLIMATE ACTION POLICY

The Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the semi-state agency with responsibility for developing the arts in Ireland. They are the main provider of financial assistance (except for capital funding) to artists and arts organisations. They also publish research and information as an advocate for the arts and artists (Arts Council, 2024<sup>58</sup>). They are funded by the Department but are autonomous. The current cultural policy strategy governing the activities of the Arts Council is the 2016-2025 Strategy (Arts Council, 2016<sup>59</sup>). In this overarching cultural policy governing all actions undertaken by the Arts Council there is no mention of sustainability, environmental action, climate action, just transition etc. It is clear that at the time of writing the policy in 2016 it was assumed that the environment was a policy

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and Behaviour Change in Ireland – Report Year One. University College Cork. Available at: [https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2025/05/Creative-Climate-Change-II-Report-Year-One\\_Final-for-web-1.pdf](https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2025/05/Creative-Climate-Change-II-Report-Year-One_Final-for-web-1.pdf)

responsibility outside of arts policy. However, the role of the arts and the environment has featured more prominently in more recent policy documents. The Arts Council has stepped up significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2022, the council engaged the expertise of Julie’s Bicycle EU and conducted a consultation regarding how the Arts Council could support the arts community to take action. The Arts Council have published their Climate Action Roadmap in 2024 that lays out the climate actions of the Arts Council related to how they do their business. However, the broader Arts and Climate Action and Environmental Policy is due to be published in 2025.”

Based on the findings of the survey the Arts Council acknowledge a need to do more to support the role of arts in addressing climate change. The results of the survey demonstrate that the climate and nature

<sup>58</sup> Arts Council webpage, *About, Our role*. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.ie/about/Our-role/> (Accessed 20.01.25)

<sup>59</sup> Arts Council (2016) *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland – Arts Council Strategy 2016-2025*. Dublin, Arts Council.

crisis is an issue of major concern to the arts community and the majority want to accelerate climate action. There is already action being undertaken by the arts community but the survey demonstrates that there is an appetite to do more. The lack of capital investment is noted as well as a lack of capacity to support action. There is a belief amongst the arts community that “the arts can offer unique opportunities for a green, just and inclusive transition.”<sup>60</sup> The arts and climate policy has certainly developed increased attention since the survey but this has yet to transform into clear climate actions throughout the ecology of arts organisations.

## CONCLUSION

Although Ireland has been slow to take action in relation to the climate crisis, the government has stepped up policy recognition of the problem expanding to an

<sup>60</sup> Arts Council, (2022) *Climate Action Policy Consultation Summary*. Dublin, Arts Council. Available at: [https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Arts\\_in\\_Ireland/Strategic\\_Development/Arts%20Council%20Climate%20Action%20Policy%20Consultation%20Summary%20Final%20Eng.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Arts_in_Ireland/Strategic_Development/Arts%20Council%20Climate%20Action%20Policy%20Consultation%20Summary%20Final%20Eng.pdf) (Accessed 20.01.25)

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all of government embedded policy approach. Arts policymakers have started included consideration of climate and environmental impacts since 2020, coinciding with the Green party participation in the last coalition government.

Some areas require more attention. Better baseline data on the energy performance of public arts building would help to benchmark targets within arts and climate policy. Further policy and strategy clarifications are still required on government capital allocations related to climate resilience and retrofitting of public buildings especially related to how the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media will work together in allocations of funds for retrofitting.

Art can certainly play a role in reducing the impacts of climate change through raising awareness and inspiring collective action. There are clear examples, some of which are highlighted in this article, of how the sector is already actively showing how the policy of embedding, engaging and enhancing can

have impact in response to climate change. It is important to have policy and programme supports ready to support the work of artists and arts institutions motivated to take actions. The first step has now been taken with Ireland's first policies for arts and climate currently being published this year but effective actions will now require clear and sustained programmes of funding to support a just transition to a sustainable future for the arts.

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# SINT MAARTEN

## Island Alchemy: Community, Creativity and Climate in St. Maarten

*Author: Ludmila Duncan*

Photo: Plastic Pelicans - Perpetual Plastics (Photo courtesy of Breanna Barrie)

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Like many small island developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean, St. Maarten has long struggled to formulate and implement effective environmental policies, let alone integrate sustainability into the cultural sector. The island's acute vulnerability to climate change, compounded by economic dependence on tourism and high population density, has placed immense strain on its natural resources and infrastructure. Over the decades, this has exposed significant gaps in governmental capacity, leading to persistent systemic and sociopolitical challenges.

Yet, St. Maarten is also seen as a vibrant, multicultural haven—colorful, creative, and community-driven. In the absence of comprehensive public policy, local nonprofits and cultural organizations have stepped up, forging innovative, bottom-up strategies to promote sustainability. Out of necessity, the island has become a fertile ground for climate-conscious creativity.

This article explores the work of the community-based organizations at the forefront of St. Maarten's sustainable arts movement, through their own words. It highlights the challenges they face and the possibilities they are crafting; reimagining the island's future as a beacon for climate action that is deeply rooted in resilience, creativity, and collective care.

## IN CONSTANT CRISIS

St. Maarten has the highest per capita rates of municipal solid waste in the Caribbean, estimated at 9.7 kilograms per day<sup>61</sup>. A key factor contributing to this high rate is the island's thriving tourism industry, which attracts around 3.4 million visitors each year, in addition to a resident population of over 40,000. The sheer volume of waste generated by this combination of residents and tourists places immense strain on the island's waste management infrastructure.

In September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated St. Maarten, causing an estimated US\$2.7 billion in total damages

and losses<sup>62</sup> negatively impacting the island's environment and cultural sector. These recurring crises have spurred local communities to respond with resilience, fostering innovation, inclusion, and creative approaches to addressing both climate challenges and cultural expression.

However, this grassroots momentum has often emerged in the absence of comprehensive government policy. The lack of coordinated public strategies around waste management, environmental resilience, and cultural preservation has created significant gaps, leaving communities to shoulder much of the responsibility themselves.

## ABSENCE OF NATIONAL POLICIES

The protection of St. Maarten's natural, tangible, and intangible heritage is becoming increasingly important to its people and rightfully so. As climate change intensifies, hurricanes grow more severe, and tourism-driven overdevelopment accelerates, public awareness of the need to safeguard cultural and environmental resources has grown.

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<sup>61</sup> <https://ser.sx/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Letter-of-Advice-better-waste-management-for-Sint-Maarten.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/17bc030c3c2954b1a1dc52d4935d8c7c-0370012023/original/WB-Sint-Maarten-semi-annual-report-10-05-final.pdf>

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These pressures have led to shifts in how heritage is perceived, valued, and experienced. Yet, despite this growing concern, sustainability and culture have traditionally been treated as separate domains.

St. Maarten's Nature Policy Plan<sup>63</sup> (Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure) acknowledges the cultural value of nature and biodiversity but lacks a structured or explicit framework for integrating culture or the arts into its sustainability strategy.

Conversely, the Integrated Cultural Policy Framework<sup>64</sup> (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport) does reference the environment, recognizing that the island's landscapes, seascapes, and ecosystems are central to its cultural identity. The policy supports the protection of natural assets such as beaches, hills, flora, and fauna, and it encourages traditional agricultural practices and heritage tourism that align with environmental respect. However, while it

affirms the importance of sustainable development and the role of culture in environmental awareness, it stops short of presenting a concrete, actionable plan for systematically embedding sustainability into cultural policy or practice.

Since 2017 however community organizations have stepped in to lead the way—developing initiatives that integrate environmental consciousness with cultural expression.

## PERPETUAL PLASTICS SXM

In 2024, in response to the growing problem of plastic pollution on the island, *Perpetual Plastics SXM*<sup>65</sup> was founded by Fleur Hermanides and Islaya Streefkerk. Drawing inspiration from the open-source recycling movement Precious Plastic (originating in the Netherlands), they launched the initiative under the local NGO EPIC—Environmental Protection in the Caribbean. Their goal was not only to address plastic waste, but also to create a space for social inclusion, creativity, and education.

For Fleur and Islaya, the project reflects a broader circular vision for life on the island; *“nothing is wasted, everything has value.”* Using type-2 and type-5 plastics, collected materials are processed with recycling machines and transformed into a range of handmade items such as beads, rings, earrings, pendants, and keychains. Many of the pieces feature beloved national symbols like the yellow sage flower and the brown pelican.

What sets *Perpetual Plastics* apart is its combined focus on sustainability and social impact. The organization provides hands-on workspaces for people with disabilities, mental health clients, seniors, and youth. As Fleur explains, *“There’s not enough space for people who have disabilities or are just not recognized as capable enough for the regular, traditional labor market; we wanted to do this as a social endeavor as well.”* Working closely with groups like the White and Yellow Cross Foundation and the Mental Health Foundation, the project now engages more than a dozen community members each

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<sup>63</sup><https://www.sintmaartengov.org/Documents/Policies/Nature%20Policy%20Plan%20Sint%20Maarten%202021-2025.pdf>

<sup>64</sup><https://www.sintmaartengov.org/Documents/Policies/Nature%20Policy%20Plan%20Sint%20Maarten%202021-2025.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> <https://epicislands.org/where-we-work/projects/perpetual-plastics/>

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week. Within the workspace, even routine tasks like cleaning bottle caps become acts of pride and therapeutic rhythm.

Breanna, a volunteer with *Perpetual Plastics*, didn't expect to find herself deeply involved in environmental work. *"I can't say I love nature and then my actions don't align,"* she shared. Motivated by the experience, she began separating plastics at home and encouraged her family to join in. As part of her involvement, she also helped lead a school workshop introducing children to the environmental harm of plastic waste and the potential of creative reuse. *"They got so excited when they saw what could be made. They were like, 'You made that out of plastic?'"*

For Breanna, transformation begins with hands-on learning, early engagement, and a message of hope. Still, she's realistic about the hurdles: *"Behavior change is always going to be a problem... People ask, 'What difference does my little action make?' But if everyone thought that way, nothing would change."* This skepticism is common on the island, where high poverty rates and vulnerability often

overshadow conversations about sustainability. As a result, sustainable practices are frequently deprioritized. With increased government support or international investment, however, projects like *Perpetual Plastics* could expand their reach and impact.

Like many community-driven initiatives on St. Maarten, *Perpetual Plastics* operates primarily through regional and international funding. *"We work grant to grant... we can't take on too much, or we'll implode,"* Fleur notes. While agencies such as the National Recovery Program Bureau have shown interest, local government engagement remains limited. The challenge of scaling is especially evident with PET plastics (like water bottles), which their current machines are unable to process. Fleur remains grounded: *"We're keeping it smaller scale, because otherwise we'd drown in the demand."* To date, the team has processed over 700 kilos of plastic waste.

Fleur's vision for the future is both hopeful and practical: more machines, extended

opening hours, deeper youth engagement, and strengthened community partnerships. She dreams of a St. Maarten *where "all waste has worth,"* a place where recycling, art, and care intersect. The project also collaborates with similar initiatives in Curaçao and Aruba, fostering shared knowledge and support across the Kingdom.

*Perpetual Plastics*, like other grassroots organizations featured here, illustrates that sustainability in St. Maarten is more than an environmental goal, it is a cultural commitment grounded in resilience, creativity, and collective care.

## RECYCLE ART SXM

Founded by Nascha Kagie in January 2020, *Recycle Art SXM*<sup>66</sup> is an initiative dedicated to promoting environmental sustainability and social inclusion by transforming discarded materials into handcrafted, functional art. Rooted in the philosophy of circular design, the project gives waste a new life through personalized panels, illustrated coasters, creative lamps made from license plates,

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<sup>66</sup>[https://www.facebook.com/naschakagierecycleartsxm/?locale=lv\\_LV](https://www.facebook.com/naschakagierecycleartsxm/?locale=lv_LV)

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decorative items, and tote bags, each product designed with the intent to have an infinite lifecycle.



Lamp made from recycled wood and licence plates – Recycle Art SXM

Nascha's transition into this work was deeply personal, catalyzed by the devastation of Hurricane Irma. *"I saw so much debris on the island. I wanted to change everything up that I was doing,"* she recalled. With a background in engineering, she pivoted into upcycling through early collaborations with initiatives like Waste to Work, eventually establishing her own non-profit, *Recycle Art SXM*.

Her work is grounded in three pillars: recycling, engineering, and cultural storytelling. From lamps crafted from reclaimed wires and license plates to vibrant murals in public spaces, each piece reflects a distinct sense of place. *"I always try to incorporate something St. Maarten in there,"* Nascha explained, referencing recurring symbols like the flamboyant tree, hibiscus, and moko jumbies. Her designs are often community-specific, such as signage for the Diabetic Foundation made entirely from recycled materials, or a countertop for the Freegan Food Foundation constructed from boat wreckage.

More than just creative reuse, Nascha's work centers inclusion. She collaborates with individuals with disabilities, champions neurodiverse participation, and partners with fellow grassroots organizations like *Perpetual Plastics*. *"Every human being wants to be included... wants to feel worthy,"* she said. For Nascha, accessibility is not an afterthought but a core value.

Still, she is candid about the economic challenges faced by those working at the intersection of sustainability and creativity.

*"This does not earn a lot,"* she admitted. *"Many people start out passionate but quickly abandon it when faced with the financial pressures of island life. Recycling cannot be a rich man's thing. If it is, then most people will always be opposed to it."* She advocates for a systemic shift, one that supports collaboration, provides financial infrastructure, and removes barriers for those committed to this work.

Reflecting on the progress made since Irma, Nascha offers a cautious optimism: *"To be very positive, I would say yes... but it goes slow."* She emphasizes the need for culturally specific outreach in a highly diverse society. With over 120 nationalities represented on the island, she and Fleur highlight the importance of tailoring sustainability messaging for each community; a strategy that could meaningfully inform future public policy.

On an island facing mounting waste and climate pressures, Nascha's approach remains grounded and human. Her creations may be made from discarded materials, but they tell stories of resilience, value, and



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belonging—transforming what was once waste into symbols of hope and connection.

## AXUM ART CAFÉ

In the heart of Philipsburg, Axum Art Café<sup>67</sup> has stood as a cornerstone of St. Maarten’s cultural scene for over 30 years. Known for its commitment to community and creativity, the venue hosts art exhibitions, live music performances, and workshops that encourage artistic exploration across a variety of mediums. Under the guidance of Menelik Arnell, Axum continues this legacy—evolving into a space that not only fosters artistic expression but also champions environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

*“We don’t really have a choice,” Menelik explained when asked about the urgency of climate action on the island. “The climate is something we really must be sensitive to because we live on a small island... the waters are rising to the point where people living on the shores can’t really live there anymore because of erosion... and I don’t like to live in denial. It’s*

*something we should think about now rather than later when it becomes an emergency.”*



*Workshop at Axum Art Café*

At Axum, sustainability is embedded in what Menelik describes as a “three-layer” approach. The first layer involves practical choices—reducing plastic use by opting for biodegradable materials like bamboo utensils. The second layer is educational and programmatic: Axum regularly hosts events focused on environmental issues, including art workshops that use recycled materials such as bottle caps, newspapers, and magazines. The third layer involves seeking

funding for larger-scale sustainable projects. Over the past few years, collaborations with local environmental organizations such as Nature Foundation and EPIC (Environmental Protection in the Caribbean) have steadily increased.

A standout example of Axum’s growing role in climate awareness was its partnership with the Climate Justice Camp<sup>68</sup> in March 2024. St. Maarten hosted the camp’s first regional edition, bringing together 120 young leaders from across the Caribbean to strengthen a collective regional voice for climate action. Axum and the surrounding alley were used to accommodate up to 150 participants. The event featured three key components: a poetry segment exploring climate justice themes; an exhibition showcasing local artists including Mark Martelly (nature photography), Jimmy Sabas (Carib heritage and graffiti), and Jimmy Lucero (climate-themed seascapes); and an open-mic music jam session that encouraged participation and creative exchange. The event was further grounded in sustainable practice, with locally

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.axumartcafe.com/>

<sup>68</sup> <https://greenandbeyondmag.com/islands-rise-as-one-a-deeper-look-at-the-climate-justice-camp-caribbean/>



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sourced vegan food and natural refreshments served throughout.

Menelik acknowledges that sustainability is not always easily accessible to the local population. *“A lot of us are stuck in this kind of survival mode... especially the artists,”* he says. While many want to make environmentally conscious choices, the cost can be prohibitive. He argues that greater policy support is needed—especially to recognize and strengthen the economic potential of the cultural sector. *“Art and culture can be an economy. We have a lot of talented people per square meter on this island. We just need to give them an opportunity. It will also counterbalance the dependency on tourism.”*

Despite the challenges, Menelik believes that creativity is a powerful tool for change. *“Creativity makes the subject easier to digest. When you use art, it’s a more fun way... where people not only learn more about the environment but also get involved.”*

Looking ahead, Menelik envisions a large-scale, sustainability-centered art festival. *“A space where you can celebrate culture, celebrate local artistry, and throughout the event, only sustainable practices,”* he says, outlining a

vision that includes music, poetry, exhibitions, and hands-on workshops. While securing funding remains a major hurdle, Menelik remains optimistic: *“I believe in it. It’s got to happen!”*

## THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE ARTS

On St. Maarten, current approaches to sustainable arts are entirely community-led and community-powered. These initiatives revolve not only around artistic expression but also prioritize the inclusion of vulnerable groups. They are driven by the need to innovate in the face of persistent challenges, particularly the ongoing waste crisis and the recurring devastation caused by hurricanes.

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity for government policy to integrate creative and cultural approaches into environmental education and heritage conservation. Any meaningful strategy must consider the insights and experiences of organizations like *Perpetual Plastics*, *Recycle Art SXM*, and *Axum Art Café*—all of which are leading efforts on the ground. These groups are not on the sidelines; they are at the frontlines of the island’s sustainability movement.

For the NGOs featured in this article, long-term survival and the ability to scale will depend on expanding local partnerships and deepening their networks. Equally crucial is securing consistent funding from regional and international sources, including those in the Netherlands.

For St. Maarten, a SID on the frontline of climate change, the future of sustainable arts lies in everyday people and the use of a kind of island alchemy; waste into meaning, vulnerability into strength, and creativity into collective change.

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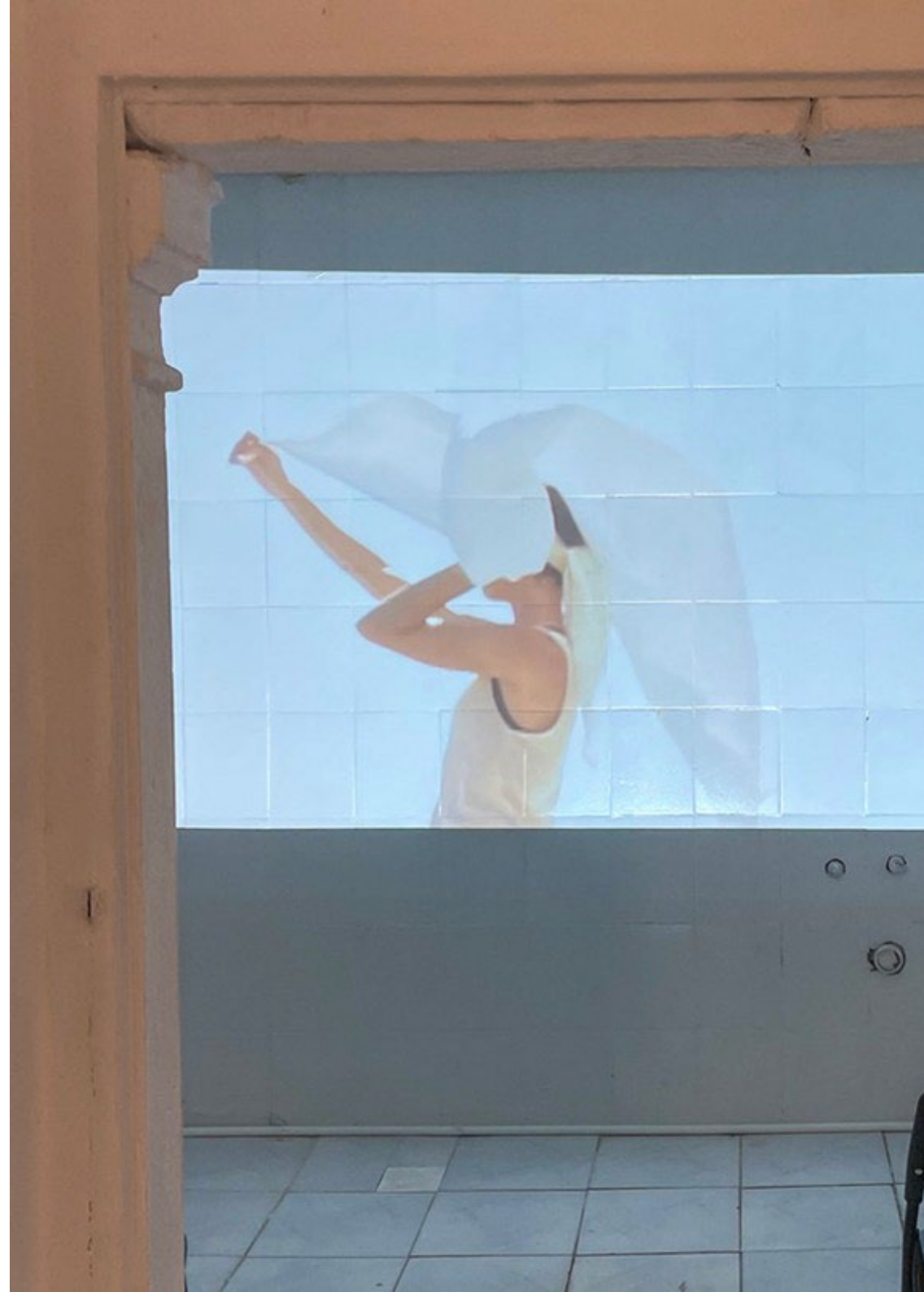
# TURKEY

## Arts and culture and the ecological crisis in Turkey

*Author: Hande Paker*

Photo: 'Creative approaches to flood awareness', a project to pilot a creative engagement project in Aberdeen exploring how the arts could be used to raise levels of flood awareness and preparedness in flood risk communities.

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# TURKEY

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Despite growing frustration, effective and transformative policies to avert the climate crisis are either not being made or implemented properly. Repetitive cycles of insufficient measures, fossil fuel dependencies, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions have urged civil society organizations, movements, citizens, and scholars to look beyond technocratic changes and understand political, social, and cultural dynamics that obstruct decisive climate action. In that regard, the role that arts and culture can play in addressing the climate crisis is now much better recognized.

Turkey is a particularly difficult context for sustainability and cultural policy, for a number of reasons. One crucial factor is the prioritization of economic growth regardless of social and ecological costs. The hegemony of economic growth constitutes a problem everywhere, but in Turkey it has taken a particularly severe toll on landscapes, local

communities, and ecosystems under the current regime as a result of its predatory energy, construction, and extractive policies. Relatedly, Turkey has no meaningful climate policy and is classified as a ‘critically insufficient’ country.<sup>69</sup> Turkey’s CO2 emissions rose by 86% between 2000-2022, making Turkey the 16<sup>th</sup> biggest emitter in 2023 according to World Resources Institute data.<sup>70</sup> Another reason that makes meaningful sustainability a distant goal in Turkey is the growing authoritarianism over the years which has shut down the civic sphere, which in turn makes it extremely risky for civil society and arts and culture actors to push for change. Moreover, there is little reliable public funding for arts and culture in Turkey and what does exist is not distributed transparently or justly.<sup>71</sup>

Given the lack of national policies that integrate arts and culture and sustainability, I will focus on arts and culture actors that

work in the sphere of civil society in this contribution. There are many bottom-up initiatives, artists, and cultural institutions in Turkey which respond to the ecological crisis. I will also discuss the importance of instances of collaboration between arts and culture actors and local governments in the context of a lack of policy framework, strategies, and support/funding at the national level.

## CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

One of the most important roles arts and culture play is to tell new stories that make space for novel ideas and mobilize people for change.<sup>72</sup> Creative content is vital to making climate change a tangible problem of concern to everyone. Through creative work, arts and culture actors can convey the imminence of the issue and the urgency of taking action. By raising questions and offering new

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<sup>69</sup> Climate Action Tracker, 2023.

<sup>70</sup> International Energy Agency, <https://www.iea.org/countries/turkiye/emissions>; World Resources Institute, 2023, <https://www.wri.org/insights/interactive-chart-shows-changes-worlds-top-10-emitters>.

<sup>71</sup> Bayraktar, 2024. Local Cultural Ecosystem in Türkiye. 11th report of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV); <https://www.iksv.org/en/reports/local-cultural-ecosystem-in-turkey>.

<sup>72</sup> Paker, 2021. Arts and Culture for Ecological Transformation.

9th report of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV); [https://www.iksv.org/i/content/16512\\_1\\_Arts-and-Culture-for-Ecological-Transformation\\_2021.pdf](https://www.iksv.org/i/content/16512_1_Arts-and-Culture-for-Ecological-Transformation_2021.pdf).

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perspectives through artistic methods, they help create alternative imaginaries to the accepted ways of living that have proved to perpetuate ecological destruction and social injustices. New conversations are ignited around artistic projects and spaces which facilitate building dialogues about the climate crisis, sustainability, nature-human relationship, fossil culture, extraction, and implications of economic growth.

Many artists and artists' collectives have been thinking about and working on various aspects of the ecological crisis. Resulting works, exhibitions, performances, and spaces all contribute to raising awareness on the need to re-think the conditions that are creating the ecological crisis and the imperative to come up with alternatives. One example that can be given is the work *Between Two Seas* in which artist Serkan Taycan uses various means such as walking, photography, mapping, and video to explore and draw attention to the damaging ecological and urban transformations.<sup>73</sup> The walking route passes through the shifting

landscape and participants observe and experience directly the adverse impacts of neoliberal developmentalism at the periphery of Istanbul as they walk by construction sites, industrial zones, lignite mines, excavation dump sites, and rural and forest areas (large parts of which have turned into the megaprojects such as the third bridge and the third airport and the rest is set aside for the planned canal Istanbul project). The artist performs it at once as an artistic and activist project because the walk becomes a means of making connections and creating a dialogue on the costs of unlimited economic growth and energy extraction. Between Two Seas has been exhibited multiple times to reveal what is defined as an 'attack on both city and nature'.<sup>74</sup> Another example is Sarı Denizaltı, an independent art initiative based in Bergama founded by artists and curators Günseli Baki and Yücel Tunca. One of the most recent exhibitions of the initiative is *Suyun Taşıdıkları* which is constructed around the Selinos brook, to trace cultural memory, stories of water, and the relationship of people who live around it to

the brook with a view to understanding the destruction of nature and cultural heritage.<sup>75</sup>

Artists also ask us to think about our relationship to nature, pushing societies to reflect on their priorities such as economic growth and consumerism and what that means for well-being. For instance, artist Elmas Deniz works on the value and conception of nature, subjectivities attached to nature, the effect of different value systems on nature, and capitalism's adverse impact and the resulting ecological crisis, in particular consumerism.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Artist Yasemin Özcan uses ceramics to question the relationship of living beings to land. Mordem Arts Center (Mordem Sanat Merkezi) in Diyarbakır starts with the observation that human-nature relationship is broken and looks for ways of re-establishing harmony with nature through the rediscovery of pre-modern notions of nature via play, theater, and festivities.

In the Wallowland project with which artist/activists Daniel Fernández Pascual and

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<sup>73</sup><http://serkantaycan.com/files/serkantaycanworksamples.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.serkantaycan.com/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.saridenizalti.com/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.elmasdeniz.com/>



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Alon Schwabe participated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial, they turned the spotlight on water buffalos and their disappearing habitat in the periphery of Istanbul. Highlighting the cultural and ecological importance of water buffalos, they analyze the ecological footprint via food production and consumption, recurring themes in their collective Cooking Sections. This project also inspired a water buffalo festival in which visitors had the chance to muse on nature, wetlands, and food as well as the intense human-made pressures on ecosystems and the climate.<sup>77</sup>

In all of these examples, we find the push to reflect on the burden of human (capitalist) activity on nature and how we can imagine a new relationship with it.

Cultural organizations and museums have also started to contribute to creating awareness on the ecological crisis and its

impacts with exhibitions and public programs that they organize. Some examples include CLIMAVORE: Seasons Made to Drift by Salt, 16<sup>th</sup> (2019) and 17<sup>th</sup> (2022) Istanbul Biennials organized by Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV)<sup>78</sup>, and the Climate Museum which is a permanent part of Müze gazhane, in addition to its temporary exhibitions that consider arts and sustainability. CLIMAVORE takes the audience to different ecosystems ranging from the disappearing wetlands of Istanbul to seas struggling with pollution to make explicit the relationship between climate change and food production and consumption.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial's predominant theme was expressed as 'the 7<sup>th</sup> continent' which conveyed the overwhelming scale of plastics pollution. The 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial was also inspired by nature as the introduction in the curatorial statement shows: "Rather than

being a great tree, laden with sweet, ripe fruit, this biennial seeks to learn from the birds' flight, from the once teeming seas, from the earth's slow chemistry of renewal and nourishment."<sup>79</sup> Müze gazhane is the recently renovated urban cultural space created as a result of collaboration between Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and civil society. It is designed as a cultural space to bring people together to engage with crucial issues of the day, in particular the climate crisis through arts and culture. Another example of a cultural organization which cooperates with municipalities is K2 Contemporary Art Platform and the activities it organizes in public spaces in İzmir. These examples are noteworthy for sustainability and arts and culture since cultural organizations have the potential to create a big impact because they have a wider reach.<sup>80</sup> This reach can be extended when municipalities provide room for arts and culture to be visible/performed in public

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<sup>77</sup> <https://bienal.iksv.org/tr/haberler/17-istanbul-bienali-mandalarin-izini-takip-ediyor>.

<sup>78</sup> IKSV is one of the biggest non-profit cultural organizations in Turkey. It regularly organizes the Istanbul festivals of Music, Film, Theater, and Jazz Festival, the Istanbul Biennial, the Istanbul Design Biennial, and autumn film week FilmEkimi. It contributes to cultural policy studies,

networking in the culture sector and has recently supported many local arts and culture initiatives all around Turkey.

<sup>79</sup> <https://bienal.iksv.org/en/17th-istanbul-biennial/curatorial-statement>

<sup>80</sup> This reach is still limited due to issues with accessibility. First, they are located in large cities such as Istanbul and

İzmir. Second, there are economic and cultural barriers. Cultural organizations such as IKSV work on various measures to increase accessibility including taking many arts and culture events to various cities in Turkey and providing affordable tickets to students.

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spaces, which in turn increases public participation and inclusion of local communities.<sup>81</sup>

Festivals that also play an important role in raising awareness and presenting new stories include Sürdürülebilir Yaşam Film Festivali (Sustainable Living Film Festival), Festtogether, and Bozcaada Uluslararası Ekolojik Belgesel Festivali (Bozcaada International Festival of Ecological Documentary- BIFED). They bring the climate crisis to the attention of their audiences. For instance, BIFED aims to be a platform that supports the local and the planet in the face of overconsumption and accordingly, presents films to the audiences of their festivals that are about the climate crisis, workers' rights, food, and harmony with nature. Dialogues are nurtured in follow-up conversations, panels, and workshops.

## INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES

A transformation towards sustainable societies also requires addressing racial, gender, colonial inequalities and lack of democratic participation. Many artists, grassroots initiatives, collectives, CSOs, and cultural organizations see justice, solidarity, and participation as integral parts of ecological transformation.<sup>82</sup> This, in effect, means that intersectionality is crucial to the work of arts and culture actors.<sup>83</sup> Looking at the arts and culture field, we can see that there is an understanding of how climate change is a multi-dimensional crisis and as such, artists, grassroots initiatives, and culture organizations work simultaneously at achieving ecological sustainability and reducing social inequalities. This is why empowering the local, advocating inclusion, improving democratic participation, ensuring climate justice, and fostering cooperation and solidarity all inform new practices and alternative imaginaries.

In Turkey as well, arts and culture actors which prioritize ecological transformation and sustainability also work on social justice, human-nature relations, and supporting the local. They increasingly adopt new practices that entail connections, solidarity, new ways of being together, and participatory approaches. In this sense, they can be performative because they offer a glimpse of the alternative imaginary that artists envision. These practices also include taking steps to decrease their own ecological footprint. Arts and culture actors underline that approaches that enable participation and co-creation are crucial for effective policies that can address the climate crisis.

Accessibility is just as crucial. A number of grassroots initiatives recognize and emphasize the importance of considering the local in understanding the full impact of the climate crisis as well as developing inclusive and creative responses to it. To give one example, Gola Culture Arts and Ecology Association (Gola Kültür Sanat ve Ekoloji Derneği) in

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<sup>81</sup> Paker, 2021. "Ekolojik Dönüşüm için Kültür ve Sanat: Türkiye'den Örnekler", Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts.

<sup>82</sup> Paker, 2021. "Ekolojik Dönüşüm için Kültür ve Sanat: Türkiye'den Örnekler", Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts.

<sup>83</sup> Intersectionality was originally conceptualized by Crenshaw (1991) to show that various sources of inequalities such as race, class, gender crosscut one another, increasing their toll.

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the Eastern Black Sea Region works on the protection of local cultural heritage and nature by researching oral history, organizing festivals, and carrying out projects to increase civil society inclusion in cultural policy of municipalities, and build ties in the immediate region. Cultural organizations also recognize the importance of the local. IKSv's *Ortaklaşa: Culture, Dialogue and Support Programme* implemented with the support of the European Union aims to develop cooperation between civil society working in arts and culture at the local level and municipalities. Within the scope of the project, seven regional round table meetings, seven search conferences, and seven networking meetings with hundreds of participants were organized in various location in Turkey, generally focused on empowering arts and culture actors at the local with an emphasis on inclusion and diversity.<sup>84</sup> Other examples of support by cultural organizations for local projects which facilitate creating a widespread impact in raising awareness are *Vaha* implemented by Anadolu Kültür (Anadolu Culture) and *Space of Culture* (Kültür için Alan).<sup>85</sup>

## CHALLENGES AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING THEM

Turkey's current economic and political situation presents severe challenges for arts and culture actors who wish to take action to protect the climate and stop the degradation of ecosystems and local communities. The current political regime implements particularly regressive energy and growth policies that deepens fossil fuel dependency, adds to CO2 emissions, extracts, appropriates land, water, forests, and commons, and displaces local communities. In addition, it resorts to extremely repressive measures towards any actor that contests the government's position, making it very risky for civil society to develop alternatives. Furthermore, the government does not have a meaningful climate or cultural policy. Finally, the deepening economic crisis squeezes the already very tight funding opportunities for arts and culture.

It is in this adverse context that arts and culture actors create, build networks, and connect with the local. These conditions

make the proliferation of examples similar to the ones discussed in this piece difficult. Even though the bottom-up initiatives in Turkey that I presented in this brief contribution are not yet in a position to push policy makers for broad-based transformation and do not yet reach masses, they are inspirational and lay the groundwork for the future. More support is needed to widen and strengthen their impact. One important step in this regard is the collaboration they undertake with some local governments. Municipalities such as Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Marmara Municipalities Union, Nilüfer Municipality in Bursa, and others have started working on climate change together with arts and culture actors.

They open up space (e.g. Müze gazhane), facilitate networking through workshops and meetings, produce publications, and provide visibility in public spaces. Projects such as *Ortaklaşa* discussed above have contributed to increasing interactions between civil society and municipalities.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://ortaklasa.iksv.org/en/mainpage/>

<sup>85</sup> <https://vahahubs.org/>; <https://kulturicinalan.com/>.

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Another important process that empowers arts and culture actors have to do with making connections that proliferate networks. In a workshop that IKSİ organized in collaboration with the British Council and Julie's Bicycle in 2021, artists, culture professionals, broadcast journalists, climate activists, civil society organizations, academics, and municipal policy makers who came together and shared views, information, and experiences especially emphasized the need for new spaces in which artists and initiatives can work/produce and engage one another. They stressed that networks enable co-learning and sharing of vital information, experience, and know-how as well as the dissemination of information, while they also create opportunities for further cooperation. Through networks, visibility of and access to funding can be increased and made more inclusive, which is another crucial point in strengthening the influence of arts and culture. It is also the collective suggestion of arts and culture actors who are keen on highlighting problems of funding.<sup>86</sup>

Horizontal ties established across borders are also crucial for sharing experience and information, broadening solidarity, and accessing financial resources.

The contribution of arts and culture actors is crucial for hearing a new story about humans and nature, understanding what the climate crisis actually does, and becoming inspired to mobilize for change. Even under repressive and adverse conditions as in the case of Turkey, arts and culture offer a much needed respite and plays an indispensable role for the comprehensive transformation towards sustainable and just societies to come.

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<sup>86</sup> Paker, 2021. "Ekolojik Dönüşüm için Kültür ve Sanat: Türkiye'den Örnekler", Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts.



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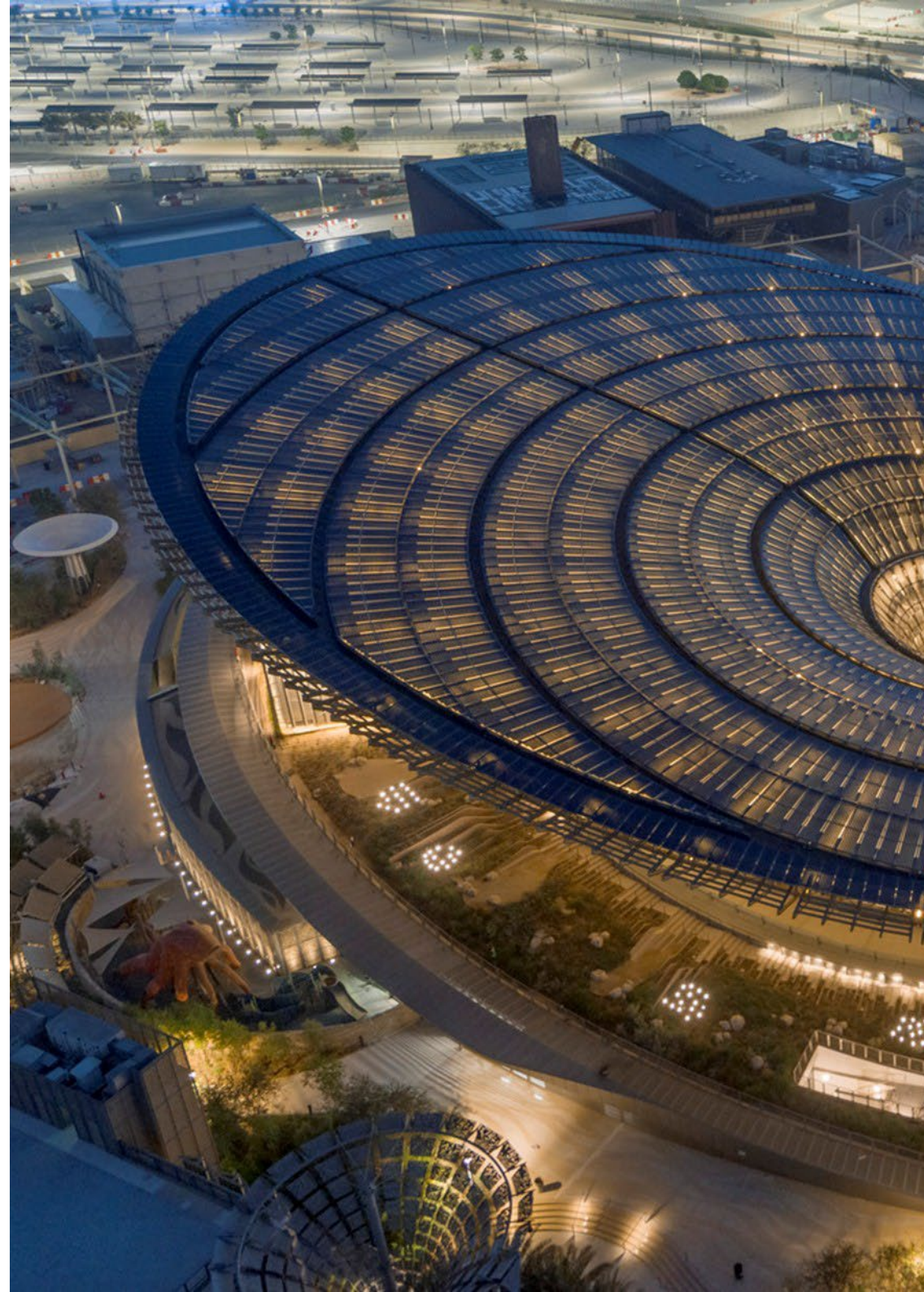
## Integrating Culture into National Climate Change response in the UAE

Bridging Tradition, Innovation, and  
Climate Action

*Authors: Jorge Pinto and Mahnaz Anwar  
Fancy*

Photo: courtesy of Grimshaw Architects / Expo 2020 Dubai

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## INTRODUCTION

This article examines the UAE's approach to climate resilience and cultural sustainability, analysing key policies, initiatives, and opportunities that integrate cultural heritage and creative industries into climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a federation of seven emirates - Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah - has undergone remarkable transformation since its establishment in 1971. Evolving into a global centre for trade, tourism, and innovation, the UAE is governed by a federal monarchy dedicated to economic diversification, modernization, and sustainability. Given its extreme desert climate, high energy consumption, and coastal vulnerabilities, the country faces critical environmental challenges that demand urgent action:

### High Carbon Footprint and Energy

**Demand:** Historically dependent on fossil fuels due to its oil-based economy, the UAE has one of the world's highest per capita carbon emissions. As of 2022, the UAE had per capita carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of approximately 20.25 metric tons. This places the UAE among the countries with the highest per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally. For context, Qatar leads with 42.6 metric tons per person, followed by countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia<sup>87</sup>. In comparison, the global average per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is around 4.7 metric tons<sup>88</sup>. This indicates that the UAE's per capita emissions are significantly above the global average. However, the UAE has been actively investing in renewable energy projects to mitigate its carbon footprint. Initiatives like the Noor Abu Dhabi solar park and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai are steps toward reducing emissions. While these projects are promising, their full impact on per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will become more evident in the coming years.

### Water Scarcity and Desalination

**Dependence:** With limited freshwater resources, large-scale desalination is essential but energy-intensive, leading to ecological issues such as marine habitat disruption.

**Rapid Urbanization:** Iconic developments such as the *Burj Khalifa* and *Palm Jumeirah* exemplify ambition but highlight the environmental costs of resource-intensive construction.

**Biodiversity at Risk:** Fragile ecosystems, including mangroves, coral reefs, and desert habitats, face ongoing threats from pollution, urbanization, and climate change.

**Energy-Intensive Cooling:** High temperatures throughout the year make cooling systems a major energy consumer, underscoring the need for innovative and sustainable solutions. For context in Dubai (the biggest city of the UAE) the hottest month is August, with an average high temperature of 41.8°C and an average low of 31.6°C.

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<sup>87</sup>Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270508/co2-emissions-per-capita-by-country/>

<sup>88</sup>Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-carbon-emissions-per-capita-by-country/>

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Despite these challenges, the UAE has demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through initiatives such as the *UAE's Energy Strategy 2050*<sup>89</sup> which strives to balance energy needs with sustainability goals with targets for increasing clean energy to 50% and reducing power generation's carbon footprint by 70% by 2050; and the United Arab Emirates first long-term strategy *Demonstrating Commitment to Net Zero by 2050*<sup>90</sup> submitted to the UNFCCC in January 2024, where it is stated:

*“De-carbonising the UAE’s economy will require a whole-of-society effort, with the involvement of corporations, civil society, NGOs and academia, alongside federal- and emirate-level government entities. It calls for adequate financing, innovation, capability building, and consideration for the role of education and culture, as well as vulnerable groups (...)”*

This policy provides a foundation for embedding sustainability within the cultural and artistic sector, including events such as festivals and public art installations, which

increasingly leverage renewable energy, recycled materials, and low-impact resources, in alignment with the broader national framework for sustainability.

## 2.A COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES FRAMEWORK

The UAE has progressively strengthened its climate policies over the past decade. The *UAE Vision 2021*, introduced in 2010, established six national priorities, including a focus on environmental sustainability and infrastructure. This was followed by the *UAE Green Growth Strategy (2012)*, which positioned the country as a leader in green economic investment, and the *UAE Green Agenda 2015-2030*, which set a roadmap for long-term sustainability.

A significant milestone came with the *Paris Agreement (2016)*, where the UAE was among the first signatories, reaffirming its commitment through subsequent updates to its *Nationally Determined Contributions*

(*NDCs*). The country further expanded its regulatory framework with policies such as the *UAE Circular Economy Policy (2021)* and the *Net Zero by 2050 Strategy (2023)*. The *UAE Climate Law (2025)*, set to take effect in May 2025, will introduce mandatory emissions reporting and climate financing mechanisms to support sustainable initiatives.

Dubai's hosting of *COP28 UN Climate Change Conference* in 2023 marked a significant milestone, drawing global attention to the integration of arts and culture into public discourse on sustainability by emphasizing the role of creative expression in bridging scientific understanding and public engagement. However, COP 28, also faced criticism for the strong presence of fossil fuel interests, reflected on the record number of industry lobbyists that attended the event and raising concerns about the dominance of oil and gas interests over climate commitments and the integrity of the negotiations.

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<sup>89</sup> See: [https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/uae-energy-strategy-2050)

[visions/environment-and-energy/uae-energy-strategy-2050](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/uae-energy-strategy-2050)

<sup>90</sup> See: <https://unfccc.int/documents/636722>

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COP28 marked a turning point in the recognition of culture – encompassing the arts, creative industries, heritage, and indigenous knowledge systems – in international climate change policy at the UNFCCC, led by two significant UAE-led efforts:

- The adoption of the *UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience*<sup>91</sup> for the implementation of the *Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA - 2/CMA.5)* inserted culture into the UNFCCC process through the inclusion of cultural heritage as one of the seven thematic targets.
- The launch of an international cooperation initiative, the *Group of Friends for Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC (GFCBCA)*<sup>92</sup> at the first High-Level Ministerial Dialogue on Culture-Based Climate Action co-chaired by the Ministers of

Culture of the UAE and Brazil. The event marked the first major convening of ministers of culture during a COP and culminated in the unanimous endorsement of the *Emirates Declaration on Culture-Based Climate Action*<sup>93</sup>, committing to accelerate recognition of the socio-cultural dimensions of climate change.

In parallel with COP28, the UAE outlined several commitments at the nexus of culture, arts, and sustainability. Led by the *UAE Ministry of Culture (MoC)* and adopted as part of the *GFCBCA Terms of Reference at the High-Level Ministerial on Culture-Based Climate Action during COP29*, all member parties committed to complementing their international advocacy efforts by implementing similar initiatives at the national level. Through a collaboration with the *UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCAE)* on the development of the *UAE National Adaptation*

*Plan*<sup>94</sup> the Minister of Culture is developing a national policy on culture-based climate action based on the belief that culture has the capacity to support public education about climate change, strengthen resilience amongst the most vulnerable communities, and drive behaviour change across all parts of society to underscore the nation's commitment to sustainable development and dedication to preserving the planet for future generations, while fostering a culture of shared responsibility.

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<sup>91</sup> See: <https://unfccc.int/documents/636722>

<sup>92</sup> GFCBCA knowledge partners include UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, CHN, Julies' Bicycle, the British Council, the EU, ICESCO, and ALESCO, amongst others.

<sup>93</sup> See: <https://www.europeanheritagehub.eu/document/emirates-declaration-on-cultural-based-climate-action/>

<sup>94</sup> See: [https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/national-climate-adaptation-action-plan)

[visions/environment-and-energy/national-climate-adaptation-action-plan](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/national-climate-adaptation-action-plan)

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## RELEVANT CHRONOLOGICAL POLICIES INITIATIVES IN THE UAE

YEAR	POLICY INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
2010	UAE Vision 2021	Established six national priorities, including environmental sustainability and infrastructure.
2012	UAE Green Growth Strategy	Positioned the UAE as a leader in green economic investment.
2015	UAE Green Agenda 2015-2030	Set a roadmap for long-term sustainability.
2016	Paris Agreement	UAE was among the first signatories, reaffirming its commitment through subsequent NDCs.
2018	Culture Agenda 2031	Integrated cultural heritage into sustainable development strategies.
	Federal Law No. 12 on Integrated Waste Management	Regulated waste disposal to protect heritage sites from environmental degradation.
2021	UAE Circular Economy Policy	Guidelines for sustainable consumption and production practices.
2022	Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency Report	Highlighted the role of the cultural sector in reducing carbon footprints.
2023	Net Zero by 2050 Strategy	Set a roadmap for carbon neutrality, expanding renewable energy adoption and emissions reduction targets.
	COP28 - Emirates Declaration for Culture-Based Climate Action	Inserted cultural heritage into the UNFCCC Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).
	UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience	Aligned cultural policy with climate action through traditional knowledge and indigenous practices.
	2030 Climate Solutions: An Implementation Roadmap	Provided a holistic and integrated strategy for the UAE's net-zero transition.
2024	UAE Net Zero 2050 Charter	Signed by local governments across the emirates to commit to implementing climate action measures.
2025	UAE Climate Law	Introduced mandatory emissions reporting and climate financing mechanisms.

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### 3.ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED IN THE UAE

Both federal and emirates-level government agencies in the UAE have rolled out multiple initiatives recognising that creative professionals can play a pivotal role in advancing the *UAE's Green Agenda 2030*<sup>95</sup> and leveraging the transformative power of culture:

**Funding Green Cultural Projects:** The announcement of an expanded *National Grant Program for Culture and Creativity*<sup>96</sup> for environmentally themed art projects aimed at promoting the adoption of sustainable practices by artists. In its first cycle, launched in August 2023, the program allocated AED 1.8 million to support 26 Emirati creatives across various cultural and creative fields. The second cycle, commencing in April 2024, saw a substantial increase, with AED 3.3 million distributed among 43 creatives. As of now, specific financial details for the third cycle, which began in September 2024, have not been publicly disclosed.

#### **Sustainability of Cultural Infrastructure:**

Actions were implemented to integrate renewable energy and environmentally friendly materials into the construction and renovation of cultural spaces.

#### **Global Collaborations for Cultural**

**Sustainability:** Enhanced partnerships with organizations sought to facilitate knowledge exchange and implement best practices. A notable example is the *UAE's Culture Agenda 2031*,<sup>97</sup> launched in 2018, which outlines seven strategic objectives, and 75 initiatives aimed at integrating culture into sustainable development strategies. This agenda emphasizes strengthening cultural infrastructure, building a holistic and sustainable cultural ecosystem, and enhancing the role of culture in international relations. These efforts are fully aligned with UNESCO's goals of safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting cultural diversity.

#### **Education and Advocacy through Art:**

New programs integrate climate education into cultural initiatives, utilizing workshops, exhibitions, and public art campaigns to engage communities and promote

environmental awareness. As an example, the UAE has partnered with UNESCO to support arts and culture education, announcing the launch of grants and an international mobility program for teachers, as well as capacity-building efforts for African Member States.

**Heritage and Adaptive Reuse:** Building upon heritage preservation efforts, the UAE has committed to transforming historic sites into functional, sustainable cultural spaces. For example, the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism created the *Culture and Heritage Sustainability Guidelines* in line with UNESCO's "Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention."

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<sup>95</sup> See: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030>

<sup>96</sup> See: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030>



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Photo courtesy of National Pavilion UAE / Courtesy of Architectural Record

Beyond the abovementioned initiatives, other UAE based organisations have also implemented initiatives and actions, that demonstrate the role of culture in advancing the sustainability agenda of the country:

The **UAE National Pavilion** at the Venice Biennale, frequently addresses ecological issues, was awarded the Golden Lion Award for best national participation at Biennale Architettura 2021 for Wetland curated by Wael Al Awar & Kenichi Teramoto. The award recognised the UAE National Pavilion for being “a bold experiment that encourages us

*to think about the relationship between waste and production on a local and global scale and opens us to new construction possibilities between craft and high technology.”<sup>97</sup>*

Expo 2020 Dubai, the **Sustainability Pavilion** (Terra) highlighted innovations in renewable energy and biodiversity conservation, adhering to sustainable design principles, including solar energy utilization and water recycling systems. As a permanent educational facility, it reinforces UAE’s commitment to sustainable development.

*The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi’s* **restoration of Al Ain Oasis** utilizes traditional agricultural practices and sustainable irrigation techniques, ensuring the site retains its UNESCO World Heritage designation while fostering ecological responsibility.

The **Zayed Sustainability Prize**<sup>98</sup> enhances these initiatives by rewarding projects that demonstrate innovation in energy, water, and sustainability education. Although it initially

concentrated on technological advancements, the prize has expanded to include cultural and artistic projects that raise awareness and encourage tangible change. An illustrative example is the 2025 award to *Te Pā o Rākaihautū*, a school in New Zealand. The school was honored in the *Global High Schools – East Asia & the Pacific* category for its *Puku Māra* project, which integrates indigenous Māori biocultural knowledge to address challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and land degradation. This initiative combines traditional practices with modern solutions to restore ecosystems and strengthen communities, benefiting over 100,000 people, including students, their families, and wider community networks. The project promotes food sovereignty, carbon sequestration, land restoration, waste reduction, and cultural empowerment, exemplifying how cultural initiatives can drive sustainable change.

**Louvre Abu Dhabi:** Designed by architect Jean Nouvel, the museum features a vast dome composed of eight layers of steel and

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<sup>97</sup> See: [https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030)

[visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030](https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030)

<sup>98</sup> See: <https://zayedustainabilityprize.com/>

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aluminum, creating a 'rain of light' effect. This design not only offers a unique visual experience but also reduces energy consumption by shading the outdoor plaza and providing passive cooling to the buildings below. The museum has achieved a Three Pearl Estidama Design Rating, reflecting its commitment to environmental excellence.<sup>99</sup>

**Jameel Arts Centre:** Located in Dubai, this contemporary art institution has implemented a comprehensive Sustainability Charter. The center has conducted Greenhouse Gas Audits to assess its emissions and has taken steps to reduce its carbon footprint. Initiatives include optimizing energy use, minimizing waste, and adopting climate-positive practices in exhibition curation and artwork conservation ( [artjameel.org](http://artjameel.org) ).

**Sharjah Architecture Triennial:** This platform fosters global discourse on pressing environmental issues such as desertification and climate change. Through commissioned artworks and research, the triennial explores

the modernization of traditional, eco-friendly construction techniques, promoting sustainable architectural practices that are both innovative and rooted in cultural heritage ( [sharjaharchitecture.org](http://sharjaharchitecture.org) ).



Photo via Sharjah Architecture Triennial / ArchDaily

**Alserkal Avenue:** A prominent arts district in Dubai, Alserkal Avenue exemplifies sustainable practices through the implementation of green building techniques and energy-efficient systems. The venue hosts eco-friendly workshops, such as "Greening the Arts," which educate

participants on integrating sustainability into artistic practices and daily operations ([alserkal.online](http://alserkal.online)).



Photo courtesy of Alserkal Avenue / The Greening Story

## 4. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS – SOME EXAMPLES

Education is essential for integrating sustainability into the cultural landscape of the UAE. Institutions like *New York University Abu Dhabi* and the American University of Sharjah incorporate sustainability themes into their art programs, motivating students to explore ecological issues through their creative work.

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<sup>99</sup> [www.burohappold.com](http://www.burohappold.com)

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Additionally, public outreach efforts play a significant role in raising awareness. The Abu Dhabi Culture and Arts Foundation ( [culturalfoundation.ae/](http://culturalfoundation.ae/) ) conducts workshops and exhibitions aimed at educating the public about climate change and conservation, while *Tashkeel's Green Art Lab* ( [tashkeel.org/](http://tashkeel.org/) ) offers hands-on training in the use of sustainable materials, cultivating a new generation of artists who are environmentally aware.

The legacy of Expo 2020's Sustainability Pavilion continues to influence education by serving as a platform for engaging school groups and the public in conversations about renewable energy and sustainable practices. Local institutions, such as the *Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre*<sup>100</sup>, enhance these initiatives by providing immersive experiences that inform visitors about the UAE's natural environment and the necessity of safeguarding its ecosystems. These programs emphasize interactive learning, making sustainability education both

accessible and effective for a wide range of audiences.

Finally, the *Masdar Institute of Science and Technology* ([masdar.ac.ae](http://masdar.ac.ae)) reinforces this educational commitment by partnering with cultural organizations to advance sustainability-focused research. This collaboration offers students and researchers the chance to link environmental issues with artistic expression, promoting innovation at the crossroads of science and culture.

## 5.OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### Opportunities

The UAE's cultural sector is uniquely positioned to drive sustainable transformation by leveraging its heritage, innovation, and global partnerships. One key opportunity lies in the integration of traditional knowledge with modern sustainability practices. Techniques such as earth architecture and sustainable irrigation, historically rooted in the region, can inspire contemporary approaches to ecological challenges. Incorporating these methods into

cultural projects not only preserves heritage but also offers low-impact, locally relevant solutions.

The nation's current policy frameworks provide a strong foundation for embedding sustainability into cultural initiatives. Aligning cultural activities more closely with these policies presents a chance to amplify the impact of the arts and heritage sector in achieving national and international sustainability goals. Incentives, grants, and recognition for institutions adopting sustainable practices are available and can encourage further innovation.

Global collaborations present another significant opportunity. By continuing to partner with international organizations the UAE can exchange knowledge and implement global best practices.

Education and community engagement also offer transformative potential. Expanding existing and future programs that integrate climate education into artistic practices can

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<sup>100</sup> ([head.gov.ae/en/Experience-Green-Abu-Dhabi/Places-To-Go/Sheikh-Zayed-Desert-Learning-Centre](http://head.gov.ae/en/Experience-Green-Abu-Dhabi/Places-To-Go/Sheikh-Zayed-Desert-Learning-Centre))

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foster widespread environmental awareness. Public campaigns and hands-on workshops aimed at artists, cultural practitioners, and communities can cultivate eco-conscious mindsets and skills, ensuring that sustainability becomes a shared societal value.

Lastly, advancing technology adoption in cultural institutions opens pathways for sustainable innovation. AI-powered energy management, virtual exhibitions, and digital platforms can reduce the environmental footprint of cultural activities while enhancing accessibility and engagement.

## Challenges

Despite these opportunities, significant challenges persist. While cultural institutions like the *Louvre Abu Dhabi* and the *Saadiyat Cultural District* project also in Abu Dhabi, play a key role in positioning the UAE as a global cultural destination, they have also faced environmental criticism, particularly concerning their impact on fragile ecosystems and resource consumption. The large-scale development of these projects has raised concerns about coastal ecosystem disruption, including damage to marine biodiversity and mangrove habitats due to land reclamation

and construction activities. Additionally, the tourism-driven expansion of these sites significantly increases energy and water consumption, particularly in a desert climate where cooling and desalination place additional strain on natural resources. Critics argue that while institutions like the *Louvre Abu Dhabi* incorporate energy-efficient designs, the broader challenge lies in ensuring that cultural tourism growth does not contribute to unsustainable urbanization, rising carbon footprints, and ecological degradation. Striking a balance between cultural promotion and environmental responsibility remains a key challenge for the UAE's long-term sustainability goals.

A major constraint is the *absence of a unified framework* for coordinating and mapping cultural sustainability initiatives. The fragmented nature of efforts across institutions and emirates hampers efficiency and limits opportunities for collaboration. Developing a centralized registry or platform to track stakeholders and projects would address this gap.

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of sustainability efforts remains underdeveloped. Currently, many initiatives

lack clear benchmarks or consistent reporting mechanisms, making it difficult to assess progress or identify areas for improvement. While projects often incorporate sustainability elements, their actual environmental, social, or economic benefits are rarely quantified. A comprehensive assessment model would provide valuable insights and drive continuous improvement in cultural sustainability practices.

Coordination among stakeholders is another significant challenge. Although partnerships exist, they often lack depth and consistency. Strengthening interdisciplinary collaborations between cultural institutions, environmental organizations, and private enterprises is essential to unlock synergies and scale up successful initiatives.

The reliance on imported materials and technologies poses additional hurdles. While modern solutions are often effective, they can overshadow locally viable and environmentally friendly alternatives. Encouraging the use of local and regional materials and traditional methods can help reduce environmental impact while fostering cultural identity.

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Lastly, public and institutional awareness of sustainability in the cultural sector remains uneven. Many cultural practitioners and organizations lack the knowledge or resources to adopt eco-conscious practices fully. Targeted capacity-building programs and widespread advocacy are needed to bridge this gap and empower stakeholders to drive sustainable change.

## 6.CONCLUSION

The cultural sector in the UAE is poised to significantly contribute to the nation's sustainability goals as articulated in the *Net Zero 2050 Strategy*. The focus will be on incorporating renewable energy sources, implementing sustainable practices, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration within the arts and culture domain.<sup>101</sup>

The UAE's commitment to embedding sustainability within its cultural sector marks a transformative step towards integrating heritage, innovation, and climate resilience.

By incorporating environmental consciousness into creative industries, cultural policies, and public engagement, the nation is actively shaping a model where culture serves as a catalyst for sustainable development. However, to fully realize this vision, ongoing efforts must extend beyond policy frameworks to ensure consistent implementation, measurable impact assessment, and deeper cross-sector collaboration. Looking ahead, the UAE has the potential to set global benchmarks for culture-based climate action by pioneering cutting-edge green technologies in artistic and heritage spaces, fostering regional and international partnerships, and positioning culture at the heart of climate discourse. Strengthening educational programs, expanding sustainable cultural infrastructure, and embracing AI-driven solutions for resource optimization can further reinforce the country's leadership in this field.

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<sup>101</sup> <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/policies/economy/uae-circular-economy-policy>



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# ZIMBABWE

## Thinking Ecology in a time of economic crisis

*Author: Percy Zvomuya*

Photo: Tino Chinvinge – Girl on a scooter

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## BACKGROUND

About a quarter of a century ago, the Colorado-based scientist Edward Ayres wrote of climate collapse in apocalyptic terms that may have sounded wildly exaggerated then but seems measured now given the scale of the crisis. “We are being confronted by something so completely outside our collective experience that we don’t really see it, even when the evidence is overwhelming. For us, that ‘something’ is a blitz of enormous biological and physical alterations in the world that has been sustaining us,”<sup>102</sup> he wrote in 2001. If, at the time, the science was disputed by some naysayers, the evidence of a weary, overexerted planet is now overwhelming.

Much like most of southern Africa, Zimbabwe has increasingly been affected by climate change. The weather patterns are caught up in a kind of dialectic, either drought or floods. The wet summers are, often, dry; in the seasons when the rains do come, it is frequently floods. The mean of yester year – just normal rains – is becoming

infrequent. In this part of the continent, the twin countries of Malawi and Mozambique have been especially affected. In 2023 Cyclone Freddy killed 200 people in Malawi, displaced 20, 000 others, and left a trail of infrastructure destruction in the poorest country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It’s not only these two countries at the forefront of climate catastrophe. In 2019 Cyclone Idai pummeled and submerged parts of Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar. Climate change is clearly not hearsay, but an existential nightmare the region is already experiencing. Against this background, a country with no plans, policies, and contingency measures to mitigate the deleterious impacts of the climate is much like the person Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe dismissed in his 1967 talk: “[the] African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant – like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames.”<sup>103</sup> This policy document explores

the Zimbabwe arts community’s awareness of the impending crisis but before I do that we need to get a sense of Zimbabwe’s cultural landscape, and travel back to the 1950s, when the scene as we know it today first took shape. In comparison to global standards, Zimbabwe’s arts scene is relatively young – scarcely 70 years old. The Rhodes National Gallery (now National Gallery of Zimbabwe), a statutory institution funded by government, was established in the very year when *Feso*, the first novel in Shona – the most spoken language in the country – was published in 1957. One could argue, therefore, that visual culture in Zimbabwe is as old as indigenous language publishing. It must be added, though, that English language books by white Rhodesians had started coming out in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; these were printed abroad and shipped back into the country.

Literature in indigenous languages was mostly published by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau (at independence in 1980 it became the Literature Bureau) and the Roman Catholic church-run imprint, Mambo Press.

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<sup>102</sup> In Zizek, S. *Living in the End Times*. P331.

<sup>103</sup> Achebe, A. “The Duty and Involvement of the African Writer.” [https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-](https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1968-chinua-achebe-duty-and-involvement-african-writer/)

[history/1968-chinua-achebe-duty-and-involvement-african-writer/](https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1968-chinua-achebe-duty-and-involvement-african-writer/) Retrieved on 31 March 2025.

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To build on the upsurge of black voices that rose in the 1970s – most famously Dambudzo Marechera, whose first book *The House of Hunger* won *The Guardian* Fiction Prize – the publishing firm Zimbabwe Publishing House (ZPH) was founded after independence; its first publications were local issues of licensed titles from Heinemann's famous African Writers Series. In the 1980s it flourished, and published local writers before it stopped publishing fiction altogether, only concentrating on textbooks. Weaver Press, the two-person publishing team at the heart of Zimbabwe's most successful publishing entity of the last two decades, shut its doors at the end of 2023. The other active publishing entity in the country is House of Books, which prints government documents, and republishes old titles and the odd new book.

The music sector is perhaps the most informal of all the arts, yet the most vibrant and self-sustaining. Its foundations go back almost a century. Western instruments, especially the guitar, started making their way into colonial Rhodesia in the 1930s; the scene came into its own only in the 1950s and 1960s, when vocal groups emerged in the main centres of Salisbury (now Harare)

and Bulawayo. Before independence in 1980, the music industry was dominated by the South African behemoth, Gallo Records and Teal (later Gramma). After independence, Gramma, Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC), and Record and Tape Promotions (RTP) were the main publishers of local music.

In 2000, President Robert Mugabe's government decided to seize white-owned commercial farmland. The move had cataclysmic consequences on just about every facet of life in Zimbabwe. Millions of economic migrants (initially it was the middle classes) left for South Africa, Botswana, and further afield. That laid waste to the economy, and the arts were not spared. Publishing, the music industry, theatre, and the visual culture scene virtually collapsed. The space the record companies used to occupy has been taken over by backyard studios. As there is so much piracy, artists' means of livelihood is mainly the live show circuit. The publishing sector has no such fall-back option. The editor at Weaver Press, Irene Staunton, told me that back when she was at the now defunct Baobab Books, if one of their books was on the school curriculum, they could sell as many as

240, 000 copies in just a year as schools had the resources to purchase prescribed texts. As an indicator of how much the publishing sector has regressed, the example of the novel *Tale of Tamari* by Shimmer Chinodya is instructive: it took the publisher Weaver Press four years to sell only 2, 000 copies.

The two disciplines of music and literature have, for the most part, been inward looking, catering for, and kept going by, local audiences. On the other hand, the visual arts have always looked outside, and this is mostly because of the British curator and administrator, Frank McEwen, the founding director of Rhodes National Gallery. McEwen arrived in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, from his old base in Paris, France, to take up the vacant post of director. When he got to colonial Harare, there was not much of a visual culture scene. He was going to build it from the bottom. Among the native Africans there had once been a stone sculpting tradition that had since fallen out of fashion. The whites – most of them of working-class stock – were not that cultured; according to the Nobel-winning writing British-Zimbabwean writer Doris Lessing, in Rhodesia “nothing was ever discussed

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excepting the colour bar, or sport or gossip.”<sup>104</sup>

Given the fact that there were no local consumers of art, it made sense to look outward. McEwen had to find new markets for the country’s artists abroad, especially in the United States of America. When you peruse McEwen’s correspondences, his passion to sell what came to be known as Zimbabwe stone art is palpable. He went abroad, especially to the United States, to introduce stone art to American audiences and collectors. The result was that through his evangelical fervour stone sculpture managed to make its way into prestigious collections in the United States and Europe. When he retired private galleries took over from where he had left off, organising shows and residencies abroad for sculptors. This continued for much of the 1980s, the 1990s and beyond, when the stone sculpture tradition pauperised itself by making cheap airport artifacts by the hundreds.

To sum up the situation of the arts and culture scene, the statutory body National

Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ) document, *National Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy 2020-2030*, is instructive. The creative and cultural industries “in Zimbabwe are fragmented, lack access to public and private funding; suffer limited fit-for purpose infrastructure; have weak access to local and international markets, and are perceived to be a lesser priority in the national development agenda. They also face challenges such as limited skilled and professionally trained people; poorly enforced legal frameworks to support protection of intellectual property rights – copyright laws are not adequately enforced; limited funding and investment; and generally weak governing structures.”<sup>105</sup> This status quo raises the question: how much space is there for sustainability within the arts and culture community in the country?

## OUT IN THE COLD

The present Zimbabwe government, led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, has a policy document called the National Development Strategy 1 (January 2021- December 2025);

its tenth chapter is titled “Image Building, International Engagement, and Re-engagement,” a reference to the fallout that came in the wake of the land seizures: “Zimbabwe’s international goodwill was damaged following the implementation of the Land Reform Programme, and the backlash from the international community was immediate through imposition of illegal sanctions and unfavourable international media coverage.”<sup>106</sup> Zimbabwe had joined the ranks of so-called pariah states such as Iran and North Korea. Following the 2000 and 2002 elections most impartial observers deemed rigged and violent, the country was suspended from the Commonwealth; the country’s leaders and government were sanctioned by the European Union and the United States. (In 2001 the United States Congress passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act, imposing economic sanctions on Zimbabwe.) Mugabe was eventually ousted in a palace coup by Mnangagwa; and it has fallen to his successors to re-engage with the international community.

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<sup>104</sup> Lessing, D. *Putting the Questions Differently*, p98.

<sup>105</sup> National Arts Council of Zimbabwe policy document, <https://nacz.co.zw/wp->

[content/uploads/2024/07/NATIONAL-CULTURAL-AND-CREATIVE-INDUSTRIES-STRATEGY-1.pdf](https://nacz.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NATIONAL-CULTURAL-AND-CREATIVE-INDUSTRIES-STRATEGY-1.pdf), p4-5.

<sup>106</sup> National Development Strategy 1. p175.

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Among strategies adopted to reverse negative perceptions of the country, the document recommends “sprucing up and adornment of public buildings and spaces in Zimbabwe and Missions abroad with Zimbabwean art, culture and heritage products”<sup>107</sup> and developing and deploying “a robust cultural diplomacy policy.”<sup>108</sup> Clearly the arts and culture are seen as some of the tools to use in helping the country be re-admitted into the family of nations. This utilitarian approach to the arts and culture is not just contained in lofty policy papers; there are concrete steps on the ground to bring this into effect. Towards this end, in October 2024 Kembo Mohadi, Zimbabwe’s vice president, whose brief is supervision of the Ministry of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, visited the Venice Biennale, where Zimbabwe has had a national pavilion since 2011. He was accompanied by a delegation from the ministry and the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. Far from it being just a cursory visit, according to a source who was in the delegation, he was genuinely engaged and asked pertinent questions. While touring the Ethiopian pavilion, he urged his compatriots

to go and establish galleries back in Zimbabwe, where not only local and regional artists were showcased, but also those from beyond. “Once we have done so, then we will become the gurus in the arts sector in Africa, SADC and also back home.”<sup>109</sup>

Zimbabwean bureaucrats and politicians realise that during its days out in the cold the country missed out on the neoliberal largesse of stratospheric prices at assorted art marketplaces and the attendant bolstering of national gravitas. From this visit, we can deduce that among the country’s political elites, there is angst: how does a country that has been stranded for long on the periphery get a pass to the centre of the global art marketplace? In 2009 the scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote that “it seems true that the crisis of climate change has been necessitated by the high-energy consuming model of society that capitalist industrialization has created and promoted, but the current crisis has brought into view certain other conditions for the existence of life in the human form that have no intrinsic connection to the logics of capitalist,

nationalist, or socialist identities. They are connected rather to the history of life on this planet, the way different life-forms connect to one another, and the way the mass extinction of one species could spell danger for another... In other words, whatever our socio-economic and technological choices, whatever the rights we wish to celebrate as our freedom, we cannot afford to destabilize conditions that work like boundary parameters of human existence.”<sup>110</sup> Is the angst one observes among Zimbabwean political elites compatible with current ideological debates around ecology and sustainability, and the awareness that the climate change crisis has come about because of unfettered capitalist extractivist practices?

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<sup>107</sup> National Development Strategy 1. p171

<sup>108</sup> National Development Strategy 1. p175.

<sup>109</sup> The Herald, 31 October 2024. Accessed on 4 February 2025.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid



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## SUSTAINABLE ARTS

If there is little awareness among the ruling elites of the impending apocalypse, you cannot say the same about the Zimbabwean arts community. There seems to be a recognition that action is needed to mitigate the effects of climate collapse. Some artists, in the materiality they choose in their practice and where they site their studio places, are partly addressing the theme. For years the Zimbabwean artist Moffat Takadiwa, now affectionately known as the “spiritual garbage man”, has built a practice around found objects and other detritus of capitalist consumer culture – computer keyboards, bottle tops, toothbrushes; using these objects, he builds sculptures and installations in which he makes commentary on consumerism, inequality, and the environment.

It's not only Takadiwa. At the beginning of April 2025 the independent curator Laura Ganda put together a show at the National Gallery of Bulawayo titled “Art and Ecology Laboratory of Ideas”, sponsored by the Swiss

embassy, and featuring the artists Victor Nyakauru, Clive Mukucha, Shalom Kufakwatenzi, and Tinotenda Chivhinge. According to the curator, her show was an instance of a “contemporary approach to exhibition-making through the lens of rethinking materiality” as a means of engaging “with issues of sustainability and cultural resilience.” The exhibition, said the curator, “incorporated found objects, discarded materials, and practices of recycling, reuse, and upcycling to produce artworks that respond and reflect this global issue through form and narrative”. At the opening, Stéphane Rey, the Swiss ambassador, a notable patron of the arts in Zimbabwe said, “We are committed to championing art and sustainability through creative, collaborative initiatives. Art drives social change, civic engagement and environmental awareness, especially through projects like this, which merge artistic expression and ecological consciousness.”<sup>111</sup>

In Murehwa, 100 km north of Harare, the country's most acclaimed living visual artist, the sculptor and mixed media practitioner

Tapfuma Gutsa, is rethinking the received wisdoms about the city. While tens of thousands stream from up country into the cities and the shanty towns that have grown around it, and those in the city – as the Martinican novelist Patrick Chamoiseau writes in his classic novel *Texaco* – keep “up the fight to be part of City”<sup>112</sup>, Gutsa has made the reverse journey; he has relocated to Murehwa, 100 km north of Harare, part of a counter-cultural trend among Zimbabwean artists to secure working spaces away from the anxious bustle of cities. In the colonial days, the rural area was a site of deprivation and displacement; by levying punitive taxes, African men were forced to the cities by the white settler administration to become part of the cash economy. When visiting Gutsa's ancestral home in Murehwa, one visits an art practice in which he is questioning the received wisdom of city-centric artistic practices. Instead of his raw material, black granite, being transported more than 148 km from Mutoko into Harare, his old haunt, it only has to travel a little over 40 km to Murehwa. How much difference this makes is debatable when tens of thousands of

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<sup>111</sup> <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/new-swiss-embassy-champions-artistic-excellence-in-zimbabwe> Retrieved on 14 April 2025.

<sup>112</sup> Chamoiseau, P. *Texaco*. P24.

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kilogrammes of the stone are sold every month to adorn home and buildings in Europe, the U.S., and China. Gutsa's plot abounds with indigenous vegetation, a citrus orchard, his own studio, and a communal working space where he teaches his neighbours to sculpt stone. He is involved in an experiment in how to establish a sustainable artist residency at whose centre are old farming practices, animal husbandry, and horticulture. He isn't looking abroad for foreign patronage but is keen on the middle classes in Harare and elsewhere in the country visiting the chalets he is constructing or sponsoring the visits of young artists.

In an interview I conducted with the deputy director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Fadzai Muchemwa, she said that there are already residency programmes in Africa in which the residents don't have to physically leave their studios. It is an approach adopted by the Uganda-based Njabala Foundation, whose mantra is "creating a safe space for female artists to blossom."<sup>113</sup> In an interview Muchemwa said, "it is possible to have a residency, say you

have won this fellowship, and have a mentor, and have people engage with you remotely while you are in your studio in your home country." While she was generally laudatory of concepts and practices such as reducing ecological footprint and sustainability, she also observed, "I think it's unfair for the North to talk about us reducing our footprint because they have finished with the travel. How many of us travel to Europe? They come here more often than we go over there."

Muchemwa also pointed out on the hypocrisy of some governments in the North: "These problems we are experiencing now were created by the industrial revolution; they are the ones who set the world on fire and now they want to be the watchman." She also noted how, when Russian aggression against Ukraine started, Germany put coal-powered stations back online that had been mothballed. She added, "sustainability conversations just show the privilege of the people speaking. When it comes to matters of the stomach, that conversation might not be appropriate: you can't tell someone about

taking care of the future when they need to eat tonight."

Misgivings aside, sustainability is already at the core of the practices of some artists and craftspeople in Zimbabwe, Muchemwa noted. For instance, she said people who make cloths from the bark of baobab harvest their material in sustainable ways. They don't repeatedly harvest one tree, instead wait for the trees to heal before returning to collect the raw material. The same can't be said about chrome miners, for instance, who stick to the plunder and extractivist template established by capitalism: they carve up a mountain, break down stone, retrieve the precious mineral, before moving on to the next patch of land, leaving in their wake scarred and polluted landscapes.

In an art scene in which government funding is largely absent and the tab is picked up by European cultural institutions, such as Alliance Francaise, Goethe Institut, and Pro-Helvetia and a few embassies of countries of the Global North, travel to residencies is often a source of livelihood. If the artists

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<sup>113</sup> Tagline of Njabala Foundation, sourced from their site, [www.njabala.com](http://www.njabala.com). Retrieved on 14 April 2025.

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reduce their travel, their livelihoods are under threat. The NACZ document the *National Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy*'s 10 main pillars are: cultural markets and business development; intellectual property; funding, financing and investment; education, capacity building and training; cultural infrastructure; cultural statistics and research; media and information and communication technologies; cultural diplomacy and global business; cultural governance; safeguarding cultural heritage. Conspicuous in its absence is the theme of culture and sustainability. Attempts to get a comment on this issue from the NACZ were fruitless.

## CONCLUSION

The NACZ document acknowledges that creative and cultural industries in Zimbabwe exist in an adverse economic environment in which locals have reduced amounts of disposable income and the only way to earn some income is to look outwards, toward what the paper calls “regional and international markets.”<sup>114</sup> When the local cultural sector is barely functioning, and artists live from hand to mouth, it seems an unaffordable luxury to think about ecology and sustainability. However, as shown by the examples set by Takadiwa, Mukucha (his 2025 solo show at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe features found and recycled objects), Muchemwa, Ganda, and others, there is an awareness of the impending climate crisis and the need for the arts to respond. Perhaps they are refusing to be like the absurd man Achebe dismissed who doesn't put out the raging fire consuming his house, instead running after a rodent fleeing the inferno.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Lipika Bansal (INDIA)** an artistic researcher and social designer. Her practise is based on theory, oral traditions, and fieldwork. She investigates art and craft cultures, the heritage of textiles, it's origin, local significance. She uses co-creation and artistic research methodologies, such as (digital) storytelling – and writing with a focus on design for empowerment and change. Lipika's work is cross-disciplinary by nature, involving experts from all disciplines, ranging from artists, designers, craftspeople, makers, heritage professionals, starters, amateurs, biologists, scientists. Their expertise represents a way of looking at the world, which enriches the work, based on local knowledge, local materials and reciprocity.

Lipika is founder of Textiel Factorij, through which she conducts artistic research and develops exhibitions on the heritage of textiles, trade routes and politics between India and the Netherlands. Lipika curates and produces works with commissioned artists and designers and develops. She also organizes artist-in-residence programmes in India where participants learn about each other's histories, cultures, visual languages

and methods. On return she occasionally invites craftspeople from India to conduct masterclasses and workshops for professionals: artists, designers and students, but also for enthusiasts. Next to her practice Lipika teaches at Dutch art academies.

**Jorge Cerveira Pinto (UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)** is an international expert in cultural policy, creative industries, and sustainable development, currently serving as Senior Board Advisor to Dubai Culture and former Culture Planning Director at the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. With over two decades of leadership experience across Europe and the Gulf, Jorge has shaped cultural and tourism strategies in cities including Lisbon, London, Riyadh, Dubai and Abu Dhabi. His work integrates heritage, urban innovation, and climate-conscious planning, aligning culture with national transformation agendas.

Jorge areas of interest include culture impacts, international cooperation, and city development. Jorge also holds postgraduate qualifications in European Heritage Law, Creative Cities Management, and Cultural

Communication. He has advised UNESCO, WIPO, and WTO, and serves on the expert panel for the European Capitals of Culture. Jorge has authored and co-authored numerous studies and policy reports on cultural economics, creative ecosystems, and sustainability and has collaborated with universities and institutions such as NYU Abu Dhabi, the American University of Sharjah, Birmingham City University, and the European Cultural Foundation. He is an active member of several international expert networks and continues to contribute to global knowledge through research, writing, and institutional partnerships.

**Luciane Coutinho (BRAZIL)** is the founder of LivMundi, an initiative that empowers young people and women as climate communicators in their communities through various programs. She holds a Master's degree in Communication and Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, where she developed the thesis Unthinkable Utopian Futures through Afrofuturism. She also earned a Master's in Creative Leadership from Steinbeis University with the thesis Brazilian



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Socioenvironmental Movements, Youths and Their Perspectives. Luciane was nominated for the Gender Just Climate Solution award by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and was a speaker at TEDx Countdown.

**Meera Curam (INDIA)** is a distinguished textile artist, designer, researcher, and curator with extensive visual arts and textiles expertise. Her work delves into natural dyeing, cultural patterns, and their historical and ecological significance, blending traditional knowledge with contemporary artistic inquiry. She is pursuing doctoral research at DeMontfort University, Leicester, UK, where she investigates the cultural practice of Rangoli patterns and the lack of acknowledgement of the embodied knowledge in women.

As the Residency Director at Hampi Art Labs, JSW Foundation, Meera fosters interdisciplinary collaborations and supports artists in experimental and research-driven practices. Her work extends beyond academia and curation, engaging with archival research, sustainability, and the revival of endangered craft traditions.

**Christine Danceuse (CANADA)** is Planning and Development Manager for the CALQ's Planning and Programs Directorate. With a master's degree in communication and cultural studies from Université Laval, Christine Dancause has many years of experience in research and cultural settings in Québec. Her career has given her a thorough understanding of the environmental challenges in the cultural sector, in addition to solid expertise in statistical analysis. During her training, she participated in a variety of research groups on media reception practices, museum audiences, cultural policy and multi-party processes in environmental management. With the CALQ for over 15 years, she is currently the Planning and Development Manager, with the primary mandates of strategic planning, program evaluation and sustainable development. Since joining the CALQ in 2008, Christine has contributed to developing and implementing four sustainable development action plans, been a member of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications' interministerial committee on sustainable development and made many presentations about sustainable development to cultural

community representatives. With an interest in issues of environmental responsibility specific to the cultural sector, she helped coordinate the CALQ's efforts and interventions around the deployment of the Creative Green tool in Québec's arts community, as well as implementing the project with the Sustainable Events Council. Christine is the author of several publications about the cultural sector and sustainable development.

**Ludmila Duncan (SINT MAARTEN)** holds an MSc in Development Management from the University of Birmingham. She is a writer, researcher, and founder of Scriptis, a Rotterdam-based consultancy specializing in policy development, grant writing, research, and communication design. A former policy advisor and Member of Parliament in St. Maarten, she championed cultural and environmental education, heritage preservation, and participatory governance. Before relocating to the Netherlands, she co-founded the St. Martin Archives & Heritage Platform, a collective focused on safeguarding and promoting the island's historical legacy.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Ludmila is a recent alumnus of the Pressing Matter Winter School at Wereldmuseum Leiden, where she engaged in critical conversations on museum restitution and decolonial policy.

She is also the founder and editor-in-chief of Originsss, a digital literary magazine that spotlights history, heritage, arts, culture, and identity in the Dutch Caribbean.

**Mahnaz Fancy (UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)** is Principal Researcher for Arts & Heritage the UAE Ministry of Culture and Coordinator for the Group of Friends for Culture based Climate Action at the UNFCCC (GFCBCA). Raised in Karachi, Paris, Abu Dhabi, and New York and building on her doctoral studies in Cultural Studies, she brings a deep understanding of international arts exchange, cultural diplomacy, and arts education. Over the last 25 years, she has launched multiple UAE and US-based cultural initiatives on emerging transnational creative communities from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. In her recent roles, Mahnaz has focused on culture's ability to respond to climate change: as Senior Program Manager

for the first edition of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, *Rights of Future Generations*, she delivered a major public education initiative on the intersection of architecture and climate action across the Global South and she now plays a key role in UAE efforts to drive for international recognition of culture in climate change policy at the UNFCCC.

**Ian Garrett (CANADA)** is a designer, producer, educator, and researcher in the field of sustainability in arts and culture. He is the director of the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts. He is also producer for Toasterlab, a mixed reality performance collective, and Associate Professor of Ecological Design for Performance at York University. He has a performance design practice focused on ecology and accessible technologies .

**Devon Hardy (CANADA)** is an environmental specialist with a background in environmental sciences and water resources management. After working in the environmental field for over 5 years, she decided to pursue a career in the arts and

began working on sustainability initiatives in partnership with different arts organizations across Canada. She managed the adaptation of Julie's Bicycle's Creative Green Tools to the Canadian context, and then became the Associate Director of the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (CSPA).

**Paraic Mc Quaid (IRELAND)** is an artist and lecturer in cultural policy at the Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT). Paraic holds a MFA in Sculpture and MA in Cultural Policy. His research and lecturing span these two disciplines. He is currently programme coordinator for the MBus Cultural Event Management in IADT. He is Irish national expert author for the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends. His research interests include Irish and international cultural policy. Recent papers in 2024 covered topics about Freedom of Artistic Expression, and Basic Income for Artists. Paraic also continues his practice-based research in sculpture and collaborative arts practice. Paraic has worked as expert assessor for the Creative Europe fund from 2013-2015, and as expert for the European Expert Network on Culture

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(EENC). He is external examiner for the MSc in Museum Education in University of Glasgow.

**Hande Paker (TURKEY)** is a political sociologist who works on politics of climate and the environment, civil society, state, cosmopolitan citizenship, and political ecology. Her research has appeared in various edited volumes and international journals such as *Voluntas*, *Environmental Politics*, *Theory and Society*, and *Middle Eastern Studies*. She was previously a senior research fellow at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research at Duisburg-Essen University, Mercator-IPC fellow at Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University and a

visiting scholar at CliSAP, Hamburg University as well as associate professor at Bahcesehir University. Hande Paker holds a PhD from McGill University, Canada. She received her MA from McGill University as well and her BA from Boğaziçi University, Turkey.

**Percy Zvomuya (ZIMBABWE)** is an African writer, critic, editor, and tree planter. His career in arts writing began in South Africa at the Mail & Guardian, a weekly politics and investigative newspaper. His writing has appeared in Artforum, The Guardian and Chimurenga. He is the editor and publisher of the hard-copy literary pan African magazine When Three Sevens Clash.

He is at work on a new issue titled “Pelandaba”, exploring endings. He was the guest editor of an issue of Italian magazine Internazionale, in December 2022, focusing on South African fiction. In 2024 he put together a catalogue, “Our Father’s Inheritance Doesn’t Allow Us to Sleep,” which accompanied Zimbabwean painter Admire Kamudzengerere’s show at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. His nonfiction piece “Chasing Mermaids” has been included in *The Interpreters: South Africa’s New Nonfiction*, published in May 2025. He is editing a new edition of former Zimbabwe’s education minister Fay Chung’s memoir, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*. His biography of Robert Mugabe will be published in 2026 by Jonathan Ball

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# COLOFON

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## Editors

Kimberley Bebendorf, Jelle Burggraaff, Marcel Feil, Imke van Herk, Thomas de Hoog and Jan Jaap Knol

## Cover image

Picture from the exposition *Single Use Plastic* by Johanna Minnaard. The exposition tries to let the viewer think about the way we use plastic, and shows plastic objects that were made for single use only and that are forbidden since July 2021. The exhibition can be rented via <https://www.johannaminnaard.nl/single-use-plastic>.

## ABOUT THE BOEKMANSTICHTING

[www.boekman.nl](http://www.boekman.nl)

The Boekman Foundation is the Dutch Institute for arts, culture and related policy. It collects and disseminates knowledge and information about the arts and culture in both policy and practice. It stimulates research and the development of opinion on the production, distribution and take-up of the arts and on national and international policy on the arts and culture.

## ABOUT DUTCH CULTURE

[www.dutchculture.nl](http://www.dutchculture.nl)

DutchCulture is the network and knowledge organisation for international cultural cooperation. It supports the Dutch cultural and creative sector, public authorities, and diplomatic posts in pursuing their international ambitions. It connects cultural and creative professionals, organisations, public authorities, and networks with each other and with international partners in the field of international cultural cooperation.

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