

Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals: Successful Practices and Lessons Learnt from the Uk's Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Research Portfolios

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Abstract : Heritage and culture, in general, plays a central role in addressing the complexity and broad variety of global development challenges, ranging from environmental degradation and refugee and humanitarian crisis to extreme poverty, food insecurity, persisting inequalities, and unsustainable urbanisation, just to mention some examples. Nevertheless, the potential of harnessing heritage to address global challenges has remained largely under-represented and underestimated in the most recent international development agenda adopted by the United Nations in 2015 (2030 Agenda). Among the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets established, only target 11.4 explicitly mentions heritage, stating that efforts should be strengthened "to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage in order to make our cities safe, resilient, and sustainable". However, this global target continues to reflect a rather limited approach to heritage for development. This paper will provide a critical reflection on the contribution that using (tangible and intangible) heritage in international research can make to tackling global challenges and supporting the achievement of all the SDGs. It will present key findings and insights from the heritage strand of PRAXIS, a research project from the University of Leeds, which focuses on Arts and Humanities research across 300+ projects funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund. In particular, this paper will shed light on successful practices and lessons learned from 87 research projects funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund portfolios in 49 countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) between 2014 and 2021. Research data were collected through a desk assessment of project data available on UKRI Gateway to Research, online surveys, and qualitative interviews with research principal investigators and partners. The findings of this research provide evidence of how heritage and heritage research can foster innovative, interdisciplinary, inclusive, and transformative sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs in ODA countries and beyond. This paper also highlights current challenges and research gaps that still need to be overcome to rethink current approaches and transform our development models to be more integrated, human-centred, and sustainable.

Keywords : global challenges, heritage, international research, sustainable development

Conference Title : ICHSD 2022 : International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development

Conference Location : Bangkok, Thailand

Conference Dates : August 16-17, 2022