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1. Sustainable development and the related themes of the Faro Framework Convention

Robert Pickard

An introduction to sustainable development

At the heart of the concept of "sustainable development" is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. A widely used definition of sustainable development was drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

It is recognised that there are four basic aims for sustainable development:

1. Social cohesion and inclusion

Regeneration, rehabilitation and use of the heritage can create socially inclusive communities by, for example, enhancing the social fabric of communities considered, providing access to the heritage itself and creating attractive places to live and work.

2. Protection and enhancement of the environment

The condition of our surroundings has a direct impact on the quality of life and the conservation and enhancement of the quality and character of the natural and built environment should bring social and economic benefit for local communities.

3. Prudent use of resources

The prudent use of resources means ensuring that such resources are used wisely. For example, many historic buildings can be recycled through rehabilitation for a beneficial social and economic use, safeguarding them for existing and future communities in both rural and urban areas.

4. Sustainable economic growth and provision of employment

Opportunities for future investment and development can be sensitive to the cultural environment as well as delivering economic objectives and employment opportunities. Moreover, the heritage can be used as a factor in establishing the appeal of a region to attract sustainable tourism and new enterprise and employment.

The Faro Convention

Recognition for the role of the heritage in society and its potential for assisting sustainable development can be seen through the Council of Europe Framework Convention on

the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, 2005: CETS No. 199). While not directly expressing the term "sustainable development", it embodies the key aims from above through a number of its articles:

Article 7 on "Cultural heritage and dialogue" considers the debate concerning the valorisation of the cultural heritage including the respect for the diversity of interpretations and values it holds for different communities of people.

Article 8 on "Environment, heritage and quality of life" looks at the role of the cultural heritage in the environment as a resource for territorial cohesion and inclusion and for improving the quality of life. It considers the need to promote integrated approaches to balance economic, social and cultural development and planning, using cultural heritage impact assessments and adopting mitigation strategies where necessary. It also looks at fostering a shared responsibility towards places in which people live and maintaining the sense of place/identity to ensure community development is sustainable and socially cohesive.

Article 9 refers to the "Sustainable use of the heritage", and in particular, the need to maintain the links between knowledge and traditional skills and the use of traditional materials to sustain the cultural heritage and sustain employment in this sphere, respecting the integrity and values of the cultural heritage when decisions about change are made, and the need to promote principles of sustainable management and encouraging maintenance.

Article 10 refers to the question of "Economic activity" and refers to the importance of raising awareness of the cultural heritage of a region/place on the part of all actors to understand the economic potential of the heritage, including assessment of the condition of the cultural heritage and its potential for beneficial and economic use/reuse. Making full use of the cultural heritage is an essential factor in establishing the appeal of a region/place (for inhabitants as a place to live and the capacity to attract sustainable tourism and new enterprise). Securing new investment and business and commercial development in the heritage resource (including through the rehabilitation of buildings) will be important. Also account must be taken of the specific character and interests of the cultural heritage (i.e. without jeopardising the character or interests it holds) when devising economic, rehabilitation or regeneration policies.

Article 11 refers to the "Organisation of public responsibilities for cultural heritage". In this respect integration between different levels of public authorities and different policy sectors are important as well as the creation of partnerships between public, private and voluntary/non-governmental sectors in management and financial strategies for the cultural heritage (public authorities should not have to assume all cultural heritage responsibilities but will have an important role in leading partnership initiatives).

Article 12 refers to "Access to the cultural heritage and democratic participation". Part of the process of seeking sustainable ways of managing the heritage is by ensuring there is public involvement, including by voluntary groups, in the process of cultural heritage

evaluation and decision making concerning the use of the cultural heritage. Efforts are also needed to ensure that certain groups (the young, socially and economic disadvantaged people) are involved and gain access to the process. Access to "opportunity" should also result from the enhancement of the heritage (especially in terms of employment opportunity or housing). Moreover, promoting a sense of place and identity can be a means to help build stronger and sustainable communities.

Summary

Enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage can contribute to the implementation of sustainable development projects. Moreover, the heritage is a strategic asset of society in environmental terms, for social cohesion and for economic benefit. It is therefore important to develop sustainable ways of managing the heritage through projects and programmes and to develop indicators in order to monitor progress in attaining sustainable goals.

European
Heritage

Sustainable development strategies in Europe



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