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## RECONNECTING CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLISM VOL.10, N.1, 2023

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International Partner



**RECONNECTING CULTURE, HERITAGE,  
AND ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLISM**

**Vol. 1**





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# WALKING ON THE PATH TOWARDS 'RECONNECTING CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLISM'

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## ABSTRACT

This essay presents a review and appraisal of emerging literature that reflects upon some of the issues about culture and cultural heritage (culture heritage links and reciprocity), culture as the vital force (role and perspectives of UNESCO), RWYC - moving on the path of culture and sustainability (role of culture as the fourth pillar and covering set, and vision of deeply-rooted education), RWYC and message of environmental education (conscience and consciousness toward understanding and awakening), and culture and architectural symbolism (the variety, distinction, and spatiality of architectural representation), and culture, cosmos, and cultivating future (through the recent works of Schafer and Legrand that generated a contemporary debate in making the future). We propose for an integral balance between a cultural evolution of a spiritual nature, and science-informed approach of understanding and action; what once physicist Fritjof Capra (1983, p. 306) proclaims, paraphrasing Chinese saying: "Mystics understand the roots of *Tao* but not its branches; scientists understand its branches but not its roots. Science does not need mysticism, and mysticism does not need science; but men and women need both." In the last two sections appraisal of all the papers of the *EdA* (vol. 10, nos. 1-2, 2023) is presented.

**Keywords:** Culture, heritage, RWYC, environmental education, sustainability, architectural symbolism, Asian scenario.

## CULTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Culture, from the Latin *colere*, meaning to cultivate, and from its past participle *cultus*, indicates that set of knowledge that each person has acquired in the course of their life through study, experiences, and activities, all reworked by each person to convert the notions from simple erudition to fundamental elements for the moral, spiritual, cultural personality of the individual who relates to making the world sustainable and harmonious.

In every era and every nation, even if in different ways, the theme of culture has assumed a fundamental role in the development of humankind and the formation of communities. Culture has been characterized as a "place of shared identities" where everyone can identify and recognize themselves and thus enhance their shared heritage. A rich and varied cultural heritage that affects the whole of humanity takes on a deeply-rooted educational dimension and promotes a dense network of reciprocated relationships and exchanges among different identities.

The cultural dimension has always made it possible to create processes of knowledge and dialogue, also taking on an important "diplomatic" dimension, hence "cultural diplomacy" (Lee and Niglio 2019, and Niglio and Lee 2021). This cultural approach has allowed the development of individual territories but, at the same time, has also faced the progressive loss of cultural roots and, therefore, of the knowledge and traditions that have intervened in the course of history. Today this theme of "diplomacy" finds interesting feedback also concerning cosmic space as there is a "scientific diplomacy" and, therefore, a "diplomacy for science" that unites scientists and institutions from many countries around the world in search of space exploration, as also demonstrated by an exciting project promoted at the beginning of 2021 by the Embassy of Italy in France.

'Cultural diplomacy' guides us in knowing each other; the concept of culture opens the doors to a renewed perspective connected to the meaning of cultural heritage. For example, in Italian *patrimonio culturale* derives from the Latin *patrimonium*, pater-tris, meaning father, and therefore constitutes that set of "living" values that belong,

by inheritance, to a community. All this generates attention in favour of human heritage, i.e., the recognition of human diversity and its value analyzed both in terms of personal characteristics such as age, specific skills, and talents, gender, cultural level, etc., and examined through other components, in particular the environmental, social, economic and therefore cultural ones (Niglio 2016).

A heritage, the human one, on which science today questions itself in depth under the culture of digitization. Thus, cultural heritage becomes an integral part of spaces in which communities live and share their lives in all manifestations. Moreover, this space expresses the community's interest in organizing itself according to valid rules for good and constructive coexistence. Still, at the same time, this space is also governed by emotional aspects and, therefore, personal experiences that enrich the value of this space with meanings, albeit intangible.

Sustainability (from the Latin: *sustinere*, to support) represents an unlimited and indefinite place that takes on a physical connotation through material elements that describe and circumscribe it. This materiality represents the narrative nucleus that the community recognizes for the sustainability of the site by attributing specific "personalities" to it. In a space imbued with material and immaterial elements, natural and cultural references define the landscape of men and therefore describe his specific sustainability in dialogue with the local culture.

History teaches us that, in its evolution, humanity has intended to integrate itself within limited places and in which it has found refuge, a resolution to its problems, and the most elementary needs: let's think about the theme of safety, living and work, in a world where man is no longer with others but is often "against his own fellow man" in the unbridled race to pursue goals that have nothing to do with the development of humanity and, therefore, the progress of the cultural heritage.

In 1972, alongside the Convention for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage, UNESCO published a critical report entitled "Learning to be", and it is no coincidence that the two documents were published in the same month of November (Faure 1972, p. 6). While the first document advances in defining the concept of heritage and its universal value, the report on education, on the other hand, clearly manifests the interest in approaching the heritage of each community as an important opportunity to know the personal realities and thus favour progress and dialogue between cultures. They have guided training courses to discover and enhance the signs left by history and are part of that vital legacy with which every generation must deal. Therefore, only by pursuing a comprehensive life-long education can one imagine shaping a complete man whose needs are increasing thanks to the stimuli he receives in dealing with other cultures. The document also emphasizes the role of relationships, of knowledge, and of learning to be in the world in a space that is, therefore, complex, which, although limited to its terrestrial and aerial practicability, allows each individual to be himself with others.

Although the idea of culture has always accompanied the discourse of development and education within very diversified contexts (including sustainability), only in recent decades has educational research emerged that has gone beyond the limits imposed above all by social conventions and the development of technologies and digitization has undoubtedly contributed to fostering the breaking of these limits. However, we are not speaking here only of cultural boundaries but, above all, space-time limits.

The commitment of all now must be aimed at operating and working to deepen and strengthen the cultural value of the heritage of the cosmos and, therefore, to bring deeply-rooted educational processes closer to the knowledge and development of the universal system as an integral part of our cultural heritage, and with which we will be more and more involved and invited to confront ourselves also for the safeguarding of life on earth. All this enters fully into the humanistic processes that will increasingly intervene in our daily life and with which we must deal wisely to build a better life in the present and future (Niglio 2021a; also, Niglio 2022b).

#### **CULTURE AS THE VITAL FORCE: ROLE AND PERSPECTIVES OF UNESCO**

Culture both enables and drives development, and it must be acknowledged and practiced as the force in the post-2015 development agenda. Culture enables development as a cross-cutting element that should be mainstreamed in any nation's development programme. Indeed, to be most successful, development approaches should be adapted to local contexts and rely on cultural resources while respecting cultural rights in their regional context. It is emphasised that communities and individuals must be able to create and practice their own culture and enjoy that of others free from fear. This process will require, among other things, respect for cultural institutions and attributes. Culture also drives development within several cultural sectors, including the creative industries, cultural tourism, awakened education, and tangible and intangible heritage (Bandarin 2013: 3).

Foremost among the key developments in the past that have a fundamental bearing on the present and the future are: the *Charter of the United Nations* created in 1945 to promote international peace and security, create friendly relations between nations, respect equal rights and self-determination of people, promote international cooperation in economic, social and cultural matters, and confirm people's human rights and fundamental freedoms; as well as the *International Declaration on Cultural Policies* in Mexico City in 1982 that was designed to capitalize on the results of several major conferences and events convened by UNESCO before 1982, as well as to set the stage for many developments after 1982. This historic Conference in 1982 was designed to summarise and capitalize on earlier UNESCO initiatives, including the Monaco Round Table in 1967. This was followed up by the first Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative, and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies in Venice in 1970; and the Regional Conferences on Cultural Policies for Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America

convened in Helsinki in 1972, Yogyakarta in 1973, Accra in 1975, and Bogota in 1978. It also helped set the stage for the creation of the UN World Decade for Cultural Development from 1988 to 1997 and World Commission on Culture and Development from 1993 to 1995, the World Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm in 1998, and celebrating the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015) [see, Chalkey, Haigh, & Higgitt 2014], and other such major accomplishments.

The referred lines of initiatives have served as a historical frame and paved the way for the member states of UNESCO to endorse a substantially broader perception of culture. Here it is formally defined as, "Culture ought to be considered today the whole collection of distinctive traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterize a society or social group. It comprises, besides arts and letters, modes of life, human rights, values systems, traditions, and beliefs" (Olimpia, Schafer, & Singh 2022). Recognizing the value of the inherited heritage and collective participation in making them continue and be part of life establishes a close link between society and cultural heritage, therefore with the memory and identity of the place that makes various niches of cultural landscapes. In Mondiacult (Mexico City, 28-30 September 2022), a voice has been raised to share the need to understand and practice our culture's local values without forgetting that the first heritage we must safeguard is our life (Niglio 2022c: p. 6).

In 1982 the Declaration on Cultural Policies in Mexico City declared that "culture" allows man to reflect upon himself. Culture makes us, specifically humans, rational beings endowed with critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. Through culture, we discern values and make choices (UNESCO 1982). It is through the culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings, and creates works through which he transcends his limitations. Without culture, we cannot build the future of the countries and a better world because without culture, and we cannot foster "ecological citizenship" (Kangas, Duxbury, De Beukelaer, 2017). After forty years of the Declaration on Cultural Policies, the recently held, 'MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration' (28-30 September 2022, Mexico City) under the aegis of UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, the final Declaration mentions:

"We, the Ministers of Culture of the Member States of UNESCO, met at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022 in Mexico City, from 28 to 30 September 2022, 40 years after the historic 1982 MONDIACULT Conference and 24 years after the 1998 Stockholm Conference - both convened by UNESCO - to share our vision of the future of cultural policies and to reaffirm the commitment of the international community in the face of the urgent and complex contemporary challenges in our multicultural societies, and to this end, we adopt the present Declaration, which integrates our common priorities and outlines a forward-looking agenda that fully harnesses the transformative impact of culture for the sustainable development. We commit to a reinforced multilateralism that recognises culture as a global public good with an intrinsic value to enable and drive sustainable development, and we take the full measure of our responsibility by requesting that UNESCO work towards the joint implementation of the following strategic directions, building on its global and specialized mandate on culture, and its normative instruments and programmes, especially fostering" (UNESCO 2022):

- (i) to firmly anchor culture as a global public good and to integrate it as a specific goal in its own right in the development agenda beyond 2030;
- (ii) to underline the need to coordinate, strengthen and develop instruments and mechanisms for the integrated analysis, monitoring, and measurement of culture and its impact on sustainable development;
- (iii) to call on UNESCO to consider convening, from 2025 onwards, a World Forum on Cultural Policies every four years, within the appropriate existing procedures and mechanisms, to address priority areas for cultural policy in a constructive and inclusive dialogue and regularly releasing the Global Report on Cultural Policies;
- (iv) to develop a plan with concrete actions and timeframe to accelerate the implementation of the provisions of the present Declaration in the framework of the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organization and its Programme and Budget, and related aspects.

#### **RWYC, MOVING ON THE PATH OF CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

In 1982 the Declaration on Cultural Policies in Mexico City declared that "culture" allows man to reflect upon himself. Culture makes us, specifically humans, rational beings endowed with critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. Through culture, we discern values and make choices (UNESCO 1982). It is through the culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings, and creates works through which he transcends his limitations. Without culture, we cannot build the future of the countries and a better world because we cannot foster "ecological citizenship." On 25 September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations that became operative on 1st January 2016. Following the earlier

framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a normative and technical framework for interactive government action toward global development, the SDGs as a viable strategy. The replacement from 'development' to 'sustainable development' is significant as it communicates both a shift in objectives (towards sustainability) and a shift in scope (from 'developing' countries to all countries). This act has put sustainability at the centre of global political debate, policy, and programmes for years to come (Duxbury, Kangas, & De Beukelaer 2017, p. 217). The notions and structures that have evolved to establish a culture in sustainability conditions have "demonstrated multidisciplinary, substantial flexibility, and a widening plurality of approaches over time. Cultural sustainability tends to be defined in two ways. On the one hand, it refers to the sustainability of cultural and artistic practices and patterns, including, for example, identity formation and expression, cultural heritage conservation, and a sense of cultural continuity. On the other hand, cultural sustainability also refers to the role of cultural traits and actions to inform and compose part of the pathways toward more sustainable societies. Culture lies at the core of practices and beliefs that can support or inspire the necessary societal transition to more sustainable living" (Kangas, Duxbury, & De Beukelaer 2017, p. 129).

The field of sustainable development can be conceptually divided into four general dimensions: social, economic, environmental, and institutional. The first three dimensions address fundamental sustainability principles, while the final dimension addresses key institutional policy and capacity issues. Sustainable development is an organizing principle for human life on the finite Earth. The term 'sustainable development' rose to significance after it was used by the Brundtland Commission in its 1987 report *Our Common Future*. In the report, the commission coined the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

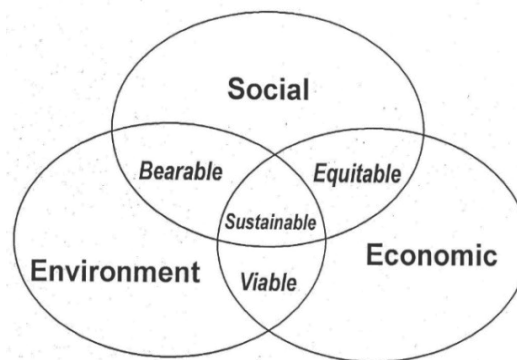


Fig. 1. The basic frame of Sustainability (after Brundtland Report, 1987).

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

### Culture and Sustainable Development: Three Models

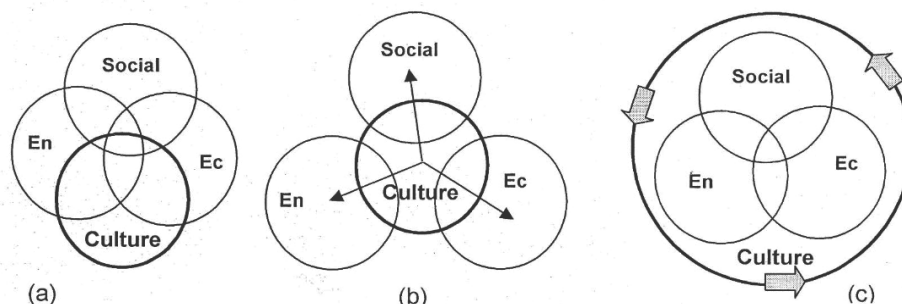


Fig. 2. Culture and Sustainable Development: Three Models - (a) Culture *in* sustainable development, (b) Culture *for* sustainable development, (c) Culture *as* sustainable development (after Dessein et al. 2015, p. 29).



In the current thought process of sustainable research and its implication policy, the use of “culture” is implicitly visible and is of vital importance, where the following three fundamental roles of culture have been discerned (see Fig. 2, Dessein, et al., 2015; see Singh, Niglio, & Rana 2023a):

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

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

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

In late 2020, *Reconnecting With Your Culture* (RWYC) was created in response to needs and requirements like this, especially in terms of providing opportunities for young people and future generations in elementary and secondary schools throughout the world to learn more about culture in general and their diverse cultures and heritages in particular, as well as those of their classmates. The timing of the creation of this rapidly-expanding educational program internationally could not have been better in terms of stimulating opportunities for young people when and where they are needed most, namely at a crucial time in their lives and in their localities and schools working in close cooperation with their teachers, parents, and educational experts.

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

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

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

*This brings us to the most crucial issue of all. Why is cultural and heritage education so essential from now on into the future?*

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

That should also include education in the natural and ‘cultural: tangible, intangible, and transitory heritages’ of the diverse countries in the world and humankind as a whole, studying the valuable role that the UNITED NATIONS and especially UNESCO have played and continue to play in building up and promoting these

historical and contemporary achievements throughout the world and capitalizing on all the available technological devices, digital techniques, and communication channels that are available for these purposes. This will require the implementation of projects aimed at knowing, protecting, and enhancing the cultural diversity of all nations and the sustainability of all countries through innovation, conservation, creativity, imagination, and the development of the cultural value chain proposed by RWYC's international programme: <http://esempidiarchitettura.it/sito/edakids-reconnecting-with-your-culture/>.

To fulfil its mandate and commitment to developing a deep-seated education in culture and heritage and realising a sustainable future, RWYC has complemented its programs and courses in communities and schools with several closely related pedagogical activities. Included here are international seminars and conferences on subjects such as *Culture as an Idea and Reality* in conjunction with ICOMOS (April 18, 2021), *Reconnecting With Your Culture in the World* with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (November 20, 2021), and *Culture: Key to Systemic Change and Sustainable Development* (April 23, 2022); the creation and circulation of exhibitions of young people's drawings in Italy, Japan, India, Mexico, Columbia, Indonesia, Venezuela, Brazil, Morocco, Germany, Canada, USA, and other countries in the world; distribution of periodic newsletters and comprehensive bulletins; creating collaborative arrangements with such organizations as EDA International Research Centre, New European Bauhaus, American University of Europe, and others, and promoting such relevant and recent publications written by prominent RWYC associates, like dealing with regenerating cultural religious heritage (Niglio 2022a), emerging cultural geographies (Singh, Ravi, et al. 2022), Placemaking and cultural landscapes (Singh, Niglio, & Rana 2023a), Culture and cultivation in understanding the cosmic whole (Shafer 2022), and Sacrality and pilgrimage places (Singh & Niglio 2023b). In a similar vein, using the platform of a bi-annual *International Journal of Architecture and Engineering: EdA Esempi di Architettura*, the two volumes (Vol. 9, 2022; and Vol. 10, 2023) have, respectively, covered the themes of 'Historic cities and cultural-religious heritage: preservation & regeneration' (Singh & Niglio 2022), and 'Reconnecting culture, heritage, and architectural symbolism' (Singh & Niglio 2023a, the present volume); both the volumes are represented with contributions from different parts of the earth.

#### RWYC AND MESSAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In late 2020, *Reconnecting With Your Culture* (RWYC) was created in response to needs and requirements like this, especially in terms of providing opportunities for young people and future generations in elementary and secondary schools throughout the world to learn more about culture in general and their diverse cultures and heritages in particular, as well as those of their classmates. The timing of the creation of this rapidly-expanding educational program internationally could not have been better in terms of stimulating opportunities for young people when and where they are needed most, namely at a crucial time in their lives and in their localities and schools working in close cooperation with their teachers, parents, and educational experts.

RWYC is a visionary mission of awakening youth and preparing them for Global Understanding and Environmental Conscience, human service, and preserving our cultural heritage in the cosmic frame of Culture-Nature interfaces through the quality and deeply-rooted Education and dialogues: a march re-appraising interconnectedness between Locality and Universality – Holiness (*humanity*) to Wholeness (*sublimity*). RWYC attempts to awaken and envision—Education *for* life, Education *through* life, and Education *throughout* life. It further strengthens the scope and practice of deep ecology, Gaia, and ecospirituality (see Singh 1995). The spiritual understanding is linked to 'Gaia' (Mother Earth); thus, Gaian is "a person who believes that Earth (Gaia) is a living being and the root of our being, and of which we are a part. Gaia has an inherent right to life above all else, and Gaians have to restore and protect Gaia from harm." This is also a working platform under RWYC (see Singh & Niglio 2023c).

Less than two years after the beginning of the international program "Reconnecting With Your Culture" (July 2020), the pandemic events of 2020 have unsettled humankind. Still, they have allowed us to reflect on the importance of the "sustainability" of our planet and the "universe" system to which we belong. In the course of its work, RWYC also created the *Tokyo Charter* (August 2021) to assist with developments in this area by conveying its mission, goals, and objectives in several languages and intended to focus on the meaning that culture assumes to build a better world on the planet and beyond (Shafer and Niglio 2021, also Niglio 2022c: pp. 5-6). Human research has always gone beyond terrestrial limits. Certainly, astronomy is one of the most ancient sciences in human history since the origin of the cosmos, and its nature has always been questioned. This charter consists of a general preamble at the beginning, and nine specific articles that emphasize local examples of cultures and heritages, respect for the diversity of cultural and heritage expressions in communities, institute commitments to citizenship and sustainability, address matters dealing with cultural knowledge, consciousness, and respect, develop inclusive and holistic capabilities and competencies, promote local cultural practices and policies, and several others. But questioning these issues means analyzing a vast, unexplored cultural heritage from which to draw valuable answers to understand the Earth's very existence.

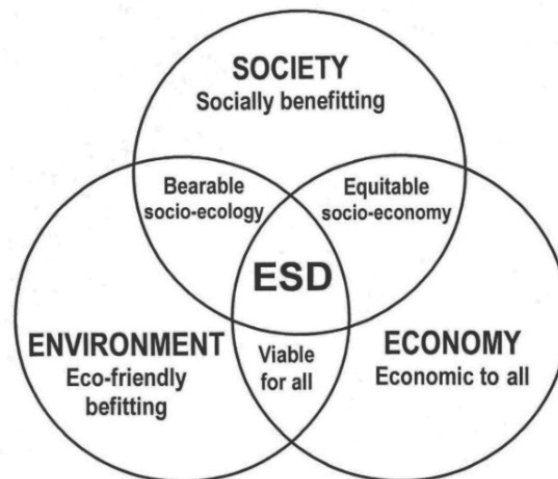


Fig. 3. Education for Sustainable Development

Education is considered one of the most vital strategies for maintenance and continuity of the process of achieving and maintaining sustainability, which Gandhi has already provoked in the early 20th century; he said, 'there's enough in the world to meet the needs of everyone, but there's not enough to meet the greed of everyone' (CWMG, vol. 38, p. 197). By education, Gandhi means "an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit that makes the world harmonious, happier and peaceful" (CWMG, vol. 25, p. 390). Gandhi was the real provocateur of education on sustainable development; his thoughts can be better fitted into the three sets of three attributes of sustainability, viz. Society (S), Environment (E), and Economy (C), which by the interaction of their essence converges into three sub-sets, i.e., Bearable socio-ecology ( $E \cap S$ ), Equitable socio-economy ( $S \cap C$ ), and Viability for all ( $E \cap C$ ), which at the next level of cross-interaction result into ESD, Education for Sustainable Development (see Fig. 3), in terms of set representation as  $ESD = S \cap E \cap C$  (cf. Singh 2021, pp. 21-22).

We have lived a long time between borders, and in the context of the dialogue between the East and the West and characterized by academic diplomacy – a reflection on the reasons behind divisions and boundaries, from the intimate planes of behaviour and home to that of the borders between economies and states is recently explained (Olimpia 2022b). Moreover, aided by the concept of "limit", she reviews some of the scales of human territoriality that operate within the context of the culture to visualize future opportunities in less rigid areas of contact where dialogue has taken place historically. The idea of reconciliation between the East and the West was one of the prime messages portrayed by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) that he projected in his critique of nationalism and his advancement of internationalism. In his work '*Sikshar Milan*' Tagore appreciates the west has successfully overcome human needs like hunger, disease, and death. At the same time, the East tried to concentrate on attaining spiritual bliss and salvation (Singh 2009a, p. 227). Obviously, "since the roots of (ecological) trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether that or not. We must re-think and re-feel our nature and destiny" (White 1967, p. 1207). Ethical values are the moral force in the sustainable existence, progress, maintenance, and continuance of human beings.

#### CULTURE AND ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLISM

Like the inheritance of the past through the continuity in the present, architectural mythology refers to the symbolism of existing real-world architecture, as well as architecture described in the past in mythological and metaphysical stories. In addition to language, a myth could be represented by a painting, poetry, a sculpture, a building, a design, a landscape, or any such representation, etc. It is about the overall story of architectural wholeness, often revealed through art. Myth preserves the meaning and metaphor imposed upon history and is represented in varying forms of architecture. It is rightly remarked that "The value of a built environment, therefore, is a conglomerate of its actual physical existence and the historical memories and myths people attach to it, bring to it, and project on it" (Graber 1993, p. 19). Architectural works, in their representative form of the built structure, are often perceived and expressed as cultural symbols, heritage icons, and works of art or craftsmanship. Civilizational history is also traced through the evolution of architecture and associated symbols representing the glory and deeper understanding of the interfaces of Culture-Nature niches, superimposition of meanings, metaphors used, and the milieu taken and defined. It is observed that "Through its aesthetic dimension, architecture goes beyond the functional aspects that it has in common with other human sciences and becomes truly autonomous. [The] form is at once the limit and liberation of architecture. Through the form, architecture can rise above the immediate conditions that produce it and express values, which survive for the

future” (Rondanini 1981, p. 4). These architectural structures are as meaningful as in the past, conceived and popularized by the people through various functions and rituals manifested therein.

Among all the architectural motives and representations, the object of sacrality and religious art has been ordinary since its beginning. Sacral architecture (sacred or religious architecture) is a religious practice concerned with designing and constructing places of worship or sacred or intentional spaces, such as churches, mosques, stupas, synagogues, and temples. Many cultures devoted considerable resources and skills to their sacred architecture and places of worship. That’s how religious and sacred spaces are considered the most impressive and permanent monolithic buildings created by humanity. Conversely, sacred architecture as a locale for meta-intimacy may also be non-monolithic, ephemeral, intensely private, personal, and non-public. Kieckhefer (2004) suggests that sacred space can be analysed by three factors affecting the spiritual process: (i) *spatial dynamics*: longitudinal space emphasizing the procession and return of sacramental acts, (ii) *responsive and interactive focus*: auditorium space suggesting proclamation and response, and (iii) *the aesthetics impact*: new forms of communal space designed for gathering and returning depend to a great degree on the minimized scale to enhance intimacy and participation in worship encouraged through metaphysical meanings imposed, and the mythologies created. At a different level, it is affirmed that “the sacred space is the place where the transcendent becomes immanent, and where the devotee can access God” (Călian 2021, p. 139).

All the cultural realms and areas interlinked to their national territories possess distinct architecture and landscape; especially in the oriental world where cultural continuity has resulted from the ancient past, they converse into a distinct situation. Some illustrations are cited here as examples.

The architecture of Indonesia reflects the diversity of locational (islands), cultural, historical, and geographic influences that have shaped it as a whole. Invaders, colonizers, missionaries, merchants, and traders brought cultural changes that profoundly affected building styles and techniques. In the Java Island of Indonesia, “Nature brings life into Man-made structures. Spiritual buildings actively respond to Nature and its surroundings. It is not cut off from the natural world and signifies the passing of time. Light is a part of Nature and is an essential part of it. It reveals form and is what makes things visible. Light casts a shadow when it hits a mass. It marks the beginning of the material. Therefore, light is essential in materializing abstraction” (Trisno, Claudia, & Lianto 2020: p. 42). Moreover, “in the context of Jakarta, where traditional Javanese spiritual architecture has been ‘reasonably’ lost in the pursuit of modernism, a return to the roots of Javanese Architecture could pave the way to derive authenticity and identity as well as spirituality and cultural affinity which it is currently lacking and appears to continue to erode” (*ibid.*, p. 47).

Balinese architecture is developed from Balinese ways of life, their spatial organization, their communal-based social relationships, as well as philosophy and spirituality, which influenced its design that represents the metaphysical exposition of interrelatedness between culture and nature that developed from Hindu influences through ancient Javanese intermediary, as well as pre-Hindu elements of native Balinese architecture (Davidson 2014). These, having absolved many traditions and taboos, converged into a composite landscape of mosaicism (see Fig. 4). The common theme often in Balinese design is the tripartite divisions. Balinese temples or *pura* (Sanskrit word for ‘walled city’) are designed as open-air places of worship within enclosed walls, connected with a series of intricately decorated gates between its compounds. These walled compounds contain several shrines, *meru* (towers), and *bale* (pavilions). The design, plan, and layout of the *pura* follow the Tri Mandala concept of Balinese space allocation. The three mandala zones are Nista Mandala (*jaba pisan*): the outer zone, Madya Mandala (*jaba tengah*): the middle zone; and Utama Mandala (*jero*): the holiest and the most sacred zone. The traditional Balinese house is the product of a blend of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs fused with Austronesian animism, resulting in a house that is ‘in harmony’ with the law of the cosmos practised in Balinese Hinduism.



Fig. 4. Balinese symbol of mosaicism of culture and traditions.



Chinese architecture is characterized by bilateral symmetry, enclosed open spaces, Feng shui (e.g., directional hierarchies), horizontal emphasis, and allusion to various cosmological, mythological, or general symbolic elements—all having hierophantic expression. The most popular culturally represented symbol of Chinese philosophy and metaphysics used in understanding multiple facets of landscapes and human interconnectedness is *Yin Yang* symbol (Fig. 5), which characterised balance and harmony as a fundamental concept applied to both nature and human affairs in the frame of cosmic order (Zhang 2019, pp. 1-2). It is said the symbol was revised by Daoist sage Chen Tuan (872-989 CE), based on the Taiji image in the Book of Changes (*Yi Jing*), *Yin Yang* (阴阳) literally means “shade and light” with the word *Yin* derived from the word for “moon” (月), and *Yang* for “sun” (日), *The Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing* or *Zhou Yi*), originated in the Western Zhou period (1000-750 BCE), suggests that complementary opposites created Heaven and Earth, *Yin* and *Yang*. When Heaven and Earth intersect, and *Yin* and *Yang* unite, it gives life to all things (*ibid.*). When *Yin* and *Yang* separate, all things perish. When *Yin* and *Yang* are in disorder, all things change. When *Yin* and *Yang* are in balance, all things are constant. The mutual interdependence of *Yin Yang* is called “和合” (*hehe*).

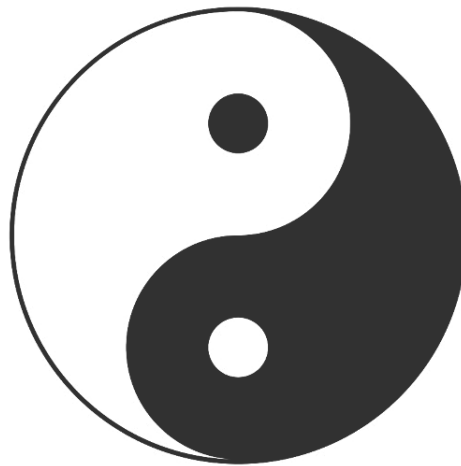


Fig. 5. Architectural symbol of *Yin Yang*, China.

Over time in the ancient past, the Chinese civilisation flourished across the mainland, and its influences spread—superimposing and intermingling with the existing indigenous system of architectural construct and symbolism that has retained its principal characteristics from pre-historic times to the present day, maintaining an intimate relationship with nature. Over the vast area from Chinese Turkistan to Japan, from Manchuria to the northern half of French Indochina, the same construction system is prevalent; this was the area of Chinese cultural influence that started around five thousand years ago.

The universal principle that permeates all things, maybe the realm of physical nature, or the sphere of human life, has been expressed in the *Yin* and the *Yang* or the negative and the positive forces. The Five Elements (air, water, fire, earth, and metal/or sky/space) account for the organic continuity; however, they are neither directly tested nor disproved. Pung-su (Korea) brings the metaphysics of *Yin* and *Yang* and the Five Elements to common use. Pung-su symbols formulate an essential unity between the experience of life and a metaphysical understanding, sustaining each with the borrowed authority of the other. Of course, the basic frame of Pung-su in Korea came from ancient China; however, Koreans have developed their system befitting their environment and landscapes. Therefore, it is important to understand early Chinese philosophy related to the theory of Pung-su, which emphasizes that all things and events of the world are products of the two elements, Eum (*Yin*) and Yang (cf. Kim and Singh 2023).

Of course, essentially, over time, Korean geomancy derived from Chinese geomancy; however, in the process of adaptation and transformation, the Korean system has developed its distinctive form, which is unique in the Korean landscape and serves as the most fundamental metaphysical frame for placemaking and placeness (see Yoon 2017, p. 110), as illustrated in Hahoe village (Kim and Singh 2023, p. 55).

Historically Southeast Asia was considered “Greater India” from as early as the 5th century BCE due to its strong Hindu-Buddhist cultural influences lasting until the rise of Islamic influences in the 12th century. Despite the strong influence of Indian culture on the Southeast Asian kingdoms, the vast territory still hosts thousands of tribal communities living their indigenous lifestyles. They get their knowledge and architectural traditions merged into the superimposed culture. Of course, the roots of the ancient past are still preserved and part of the taboo, traditions, rituals, etc. Southeast Asian waters witnessed political and cultural dynamics through maritime trading activities throughout two millennia.

Similarly, land-based agrarian societies developed advanced hydrological engineering to utilize the wetlands for rice growing. Channels, moats, and man-made lakes, along with vast rice fields, elaborate temples, and

ancient settlements, are evident in the ancient remains of Angkor, Singhasari, Majapahit, Pagan, and Ayudhya. For temples and other political-religious edifices, masonry – stones and bricks – was commonly reserved for temples. For many Southeast Asian countries, due to their nationalistic and patriotic symbolic values, many old architectural monuments are protected and highly regarded as one of the countries' cultural treasures and symbols of cultural mosaicism.

Southeast Asia and Oceania possess a long tradition of abundance and diverse vernacular architectural heritage and symbolism. They are rich in regional distinctiveness and reflected in social and cultural structures. However, recent studies refer to fundamental questions about the validity of their representations, present context, and relevance for sustainable development, including the issues of vernacularity (Vellinga 2020).

#### CULTURE, COSMOS, AND CULTIVATING FUTURE: THROUGH SCHAFER AND LEGRAND

Economics and its associated materialistic principles prevailed in the world scene during the last two and a half centuries. Commonly we accept economics as the most significant achievement, but over time it is realised that economics and its related modes of thought and development strategies are incapable of creating peace and harmonious life. Schafer (1998) has already alarmed that there can be little doubt that developments on the economic and technological fronts destabilise and disorient people everywhere in the world. This manifests itself in many "counter-cultural movements" aimed at increasing people's sense of empowerment and control over the decision-making processes affecting their lives. Schafer (2015) has strongly opined that despite all its benefits, the current "economic age" must soon give way to a new "age of culture" that places the highest priority on people and the natural environment rather than materialism and the marketplace. He continued his argument that 'culture as a concept, as well as individual cultures, must now become the centrepiece of human development if the substantial gains of the current economic age are not to be lost in the environmental and civilizational collapse'. His campaign to establish a culture in all its manifestations as the key to a 'more equitable, sustainable, and harmonious world' has made his voice one of the most recognizable in the growing international chorus demanding enlightened social change. Inspired by his voice and mission, the RWYC (Reconnecting With Your Culture) has taken a further step on this path (see Singh and Niglio 2023c).

Following the path of re-awakening and thought process to move from an economic to a cultural age, through a renaissance rather than anarchic rebellion and collapse during the last four decades, Schafer (2022) argued that humanity must move toward 'the world as culture', a world in which cultural modes of knowing and doing play a central role. He considers the various manifestations of culture that have evolved over the centuries, painting a fascinating panorama unique to his recent book. Those manifestations include culture as cultivation of the soul, which originated with Roman statesman and scholar Marcus Cicero; culture as the arts, the humanities, and the heritage of history; culture in the context of personality development; the anthropological and sociological manifestations of culture; and, most recently, ecological, biological, and cosmological conceptions of culture. Culture's embrace of holism, attention to the total pattern of human life, and incorporation of artistic and humanistic modes of thought make it the ideal organizing principle for a brighter and more sustainable future. Schafer concludes by considering how the world as a culture might be brought into existence in the years ahead. He strongly demanded shifts in public policy and very rationally opined that cultural selection, more than natural selection, will determine the future of Earth's biosystems and the fate of humankind. He concluded:

"From the earliest manifestation of culture as "cultivation of the soul" in Roman times to the most recent all-encompassing manifestation of culture as "the cosmic whole" in line with contemporary cosmology, there is no doubt that culture is the key to a better world when everything is considered in totality. Culture makes it possible to move in breadth and depth across virtually all domains, disciplines, and activities, from the human to the nonhuman, the simple to the profound, the individual to the collective, the local to the global, the artistic to the scientific and technological, and the mundane to the magnificent" (Schafer 2022, p. 270).

It is within the rapidly-evolving global situation that culture is emerging as an influential world force. This is apparent in several developments, such as the declaration by the United Nations of a World Decade for Cultural Development from 1988-1997, as well as the recent announcement by UNESCO and the United Nations of a World Commission on Culture similar to the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development (1987). Moreover, these developments occur when many countries worldwide are involved in measures to strengthen their cultural identity, practices, programs, policies, and possibilities.

The most recent addition to the above list is UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – Mondiacult (28-30 September 2022, Mexico City). The Mondiacult Declaration mentions that "from 2025 onwards, every four years, within the appropriate existing procedures and mechanisms, to address priority areas for cultural policy in a constructive and inclusive dialogue of all actors concerned, to strengthen multilateral action, collaboration and solidarity between countries and to contribute to the strategic lines of work for UNESCO within the framework of its Governing Bodies and building on the findings of the Global Report on Cultural Policies" (UNESCO 2022, p. 6).

In his latest exposition, Schafer (1 Dec. 2022) said, "I believe that one of the biggest mistakes that have been made in the world over the last century and a half is *ignoring the fundamental importance of the holistic definition of culture as "a complex whole" and "total way of life"* as articulated and advocated by Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) in the latter part of the nineteenth century through his *magnum opus, Primitive Culture* (1871), and defined:

"Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Taylor 1871, vol. 1, p. 21). His proposition was confirmed by countless anthropologists, sociologists, cultural historians, and others working in the cultural field since that time (see Ratnapalan 2008). ..... I remember that the UNESCO Conference on Cultural Policy in Mexico City in 1982 initially endorsed the aforementioned holistic and anthropological definition of culture. (Correct me if I am wrong, but I have the impression that UNESCO and other international institutions seem to be moving away from this definition and preferring a much more restricted one). If this impression is correct, it is even more important than ever for us to stick to this all-encompassing understanding and definition of culture in our work, as set out so effectively in [this] article and explained so well in terms of its use concerning key developments in the cultural field at present and from now on into the future".

In 1967 Lynn White proposed a thesis that to confront the expanding environmental crises, humans must begin to analyze and alter their treatment and attitudes towards nature. He narrates that the slow destruction of the environment derives from the Western scientific and technological advancements made since the Medieval period. He concludes, "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves concerning things around them" (White 1967, p. 1205). Humanity's path of destruction will continue without a fundamental change in worldview. Our ecologic crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture. The issue is whether a democratized world can survive its implications. Presumably, we cannot unless we rethink our axioms (cf. *ibid.*, p. 1206). He, empathetically, concluded: "Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and re-feel our nature and destiny. The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction" (White 1967, p. 1207). After passing over five decades, a sympathetic and straightforward preposition is submitted by Legrand. He provokes, "there is a very simple truth—so simple that we may have collectively forgotten it along the way—that our technological progress and ethical crises have made even more relevant nowadays: all the problems we face come from our minds and hearts. There also lie the solutions. As our problems grow more complex and develop unpredictably, we more than ever need to return to this simple truth" (Legrand 2021, p. 4).

In a ground-breaking work, Legrand (2021) proposes to fundamentally reframe our model of development from its current emphasis on "having" to one focused on "being": "We need to move from having to being, which many believe means interbeing" (*ibid.*, p.55). Mobilizing a wealth of scientific research from many different fields, the core teachings of wisdom traditions, and his personal experience, he articulates how politics can support human flourishing and the collective shift of consciousness that our current challenges demand. Finally, following the path of eternal awakening through spiritual conscience, he charts the way for human development in the 21st century, one to reconcile our minds, hearts, and the whole Earth community.

Following the spiritual insights, Legrand (2021) critically appraised various facets of development as envisioned and practised by UN agencies, private sector companies and non-governmental organisations, including the most commonly debated UN SDGs. He unfolds seven "Spiritual Values as the Foundation of the Politics of Being" (*ibid.*, pp. 73-181): Understanding, Life, Happiness, Love, Peace, Mindfulness and Light. The book's second half then focuses on implementing these values in an "Agenda for Action" by nine sectors: Family, Education, Work, Health, Food/Agriculture, Nature, Justice, Economy and Governance. Legrand perceives and projects spirituality as an 'essence of humankind' and its close association with the 'meaning and purpose of life' feature as the most prominent themes in defining spirituality as life-force (*prāṇa*) in the whole of the lifeworld. Culture and the cosmos are interconnected in creating conscience from civilisational continuity in reviving the path we should reconcile our minds and hearts through spiritual awakening (cf. Legrand 2021). The cosmic frame of ETHICS helps to balance values and virtues! E-T-H-I-C-S stands for "Empowerment, Transformation, Holistic Approach, Integrity, Competence, Sustainability" - Globethics.net ... Should we frame it as Cosmological Spirituality? (Stückelberger 2020).

Traditionally, it is believed that the cosmic energy or spirit unites all that is, as part of a cosmic order, named, for example, *Tao* in China, *Maat* in Egypt, *Rita* or *Dharma* in India, and *Logos* in Greece. We can contemplate this divine order, its beauty, harmony, and wisdom in the course, ways, and laws of nature, the original and permanent source of revelation (*ibid.*, p. 95). Says Jarow (1986: p. 2), "the Indian word *dharma*, like the Chinese *Tao*, is essentially untranslatable. It has been spoken of as "religion", "sacred duty", "virtue", "cosmic order (*rita*)" and so on. Etymologically, it comes from the Sanskrit verbal root - *dhri*, which means "to hold", giving the sense of that which holds everything together ... . The *dharma* of water is wetness; the *dharma* of wind is breathe; the *dharma* of honey is sweetness; the *dharma* of flower is fragrance; the *dharma* of fire is heat ... . The *dharma* of place is to sustain the sacred power manifested therein. The *dharma* of our culture is to save our Mother Nature 'Gaia' — promoting deeper moral values — the gateways of knowing the cosmic identity of human beings—the essence of spiritual understanding.

During the contemporary crisis, a new paradigm of being is emerging—filling up those who align their lives to it with the vitality, happiness, and grace that open its pathway and attract others. Legrand is confident that its "emergence is facing strong resistance, but its advent is inexorable. It will necessarily come together with a politics of being, whose basic elements—a simple definition and conceptual framework, a method, and a policy agenda, which includes ten core messages" (Legrand 2021, p. 374): a cultural evolution of a spiritual nature,

science-informed approach, cultivating our fundamental “interbeing”, increasingly honour the highest human values, integrating all relevant claims and initiatives, cultivate human virtues, actionable policy recommendations, spiritual teaching and implement a politics of being, regional level reconnecting its own soul and wisdom as a way harmonious coexistence, and healing trauma for being and living togetherness” (*ibid.* 2021, p. 375-376).

The 9th Global Forum of the UN Alliance Of Civilization held in Fez, Kingdom of Morocco: 22-23 November 2022, provoked “In this time of upheaval, sorrow and distress, religious leaders and faith-based organizations play a unique role in bringing people together around the common values of our shared humanity – solidarity and compassion. Solidarity and compassion should be promoted both within and between communities of faith” (see <https://www.unaoc.org/2022/11/remarks-opening-ceremony-9th-unaoc> ). It is realised that the Alliance of Civilizations can serve as a platform to facilitate understanding, comprehension and respect for each of our cultures and civilizations, which in any case need each other to survive in the future. Addressing this forum, Legrand (2022), further exclaiming from his book, *Politics of Being*, proclaimed, “To build a global, peaceful and sustainable civilization, which honours cultural diversity, we need to invest in building positive cultures. .. Science can tell us, not only how to build cultures of peace, but also regenerative cultures organized around the principles and laws of life, cultures of love, empathy, and compassion, cultures of well-being, mindful, responsible cultures, which cultivates our awareness of our deep interconnectedness. .. Cultural development is the basis of authentic, lasting human development. ... Peace is above all, a way of being; it starts inside of each of us, in the way we think – in a non-dualistic manner acknowledging that everything is interrelated – in the way we speak and listen to one another, in our decisions as responsible consumers. My teacher, zen master Thich Nhat Hanh would say that peace is in every step, in the way our feet kiss our mother earth with great respect and love” (Legrand 2022).

In a similar vein of noble thought, the Vedic sage said in the historical past, e.g., *Rig Veda* (10.90) that invoked for human consciousness with conscience and cognizance (see Singh 2009b, p. 52). Over time, elaborated in the *Yajur Veda* (10.17.1), a text of the 15th century BCE, which says:

“I pray for peace to pervade all the worlds;  
I pray for peace in the Sky and on the Earth;  
Peace in the cooling water; peace in healing herbs;  
The plants and forests are peace-giving;  
There be harmony in the celestial objects;  
Also, peace in the perfection of knowledge;  
Peace among everything in the universe;  
Peace pervades everywhere and for everyone.  
May that real peace come to us!  
I pray for that very peace!”

If we want to keep alive, survive and continue the salvific power of places (sacredscapes), we should minimise human greed and awaken ourselves through changes in our lifestyles and a deeper quest of *realisation* that leads to *revelation* (*anubhava se anubhūti kī aur*) which would make a cultural conscience and awakening—a platform that RWYC is paving slowly; let us pray together with great ancient sages:

*Om Sahanaāvavatu | Sahanaubhunaktu | Sahavīryam Karavāvahai | Tejasvināva-dhītamastu Māvidviśāvahai | Om Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ | |*

*Om, May we all be protected | May we all be nourished | May we work together with great energy | May our intellect be sharpened (may our study be effective) | Let there be no Animosity amongst us | Om - Peace (in me), Peace (in nature), Peace (in divine forces) | |.*

*Krishna Yajurveda - Taittiriya Upanishad (2.2.2), a 15th-century BCE text.*

### COVERAGE WITH *EDA*, 10 (2023)

Within the system of complex interconnectedness and interactions among cultures, heritage, and architecture and their resultant attributes, together we seek to search ways, paths, and means that are implied for framing and making a base for the UN Sustainable Development Goals that to be promoted by the 2030 Agenda, together with community development. The trajectory of understanding, awakening, and making awareness is taken here as a force to serve good causes to humankind.

As an important mission of RWYC, Reconnecting With Your Culture, an appeal has been made for papers that may focus on any aspect related to re-appraising interconnectedness between locality and universality – Holiness to Wholeness: Humanism to Spiritualism. Through the call for papers (CFP), it was expected to have representation from different cultures and countries—the vision and such programmes appraising and evaluating while linking the context of heritage and architecture in their regional ensembles. The role of culture is vital to develop future perspectives of developing shared and participatory policies and fostering the sustainable development of humanity.



It is a commonly accepted dictum that cultural heritage and related architectural attributes require special care for understanding and planning—Preservation & Regeneration, and also care for maintaining them as cultural nexus of visioning the future and fulfilling the SDGs as envisioned by the UNO/UNESCO. This special issue of *Esempi di Architettura* [vol. 10 (nos. 1~2. 2023)] attempts to keep pace with these issues.

On the above line of vision and plan, papers were invited by professionals and scholars from various cross- and multi-disciplines to deliberate and explain the role of culture in the evolution, maintenance, and regeneration of architectural symbolism and associated cultural landscapes and human habitat systems—to be illustrated with theoretical debates, case studies, critical appraisal of policies, and planning perspectives, etc. In addition, a theme like sacredscapes imbued with cultural-religious heritage would also be a subject of concern – from existentiality, experientiality to sustainability: Theory vs Practice: Understanding vs Exposition – all aimed at enhancing this trajectory of 'Culture, Heritage, and Architecture', illustrated from different cultures around the world. For this purpose, eight such broad sub-themes were crystalized that may focus directly on the Cultural & Heritage Landscapes, viz.:

- i. *Cultural imprints on the Landscapes of Historic Cities*: Philosophy and Context, Pre-historic paintings and Meanings, Regional comparison, and contrasts; cognitive mapping.
- ii. *Historic Cultural Landscapes*: Origin, Growth, Transformation in space and time; contemporality and prospects; processes of 'Succession-Sustenance-Sustainability'.
- iii. *Cultural Performances and Intangible heritage*: their role in placemaking and architectural symbolism that led to the growth and development of such cities.
- iv. *Interconnectedness among Cultural traits, Spirituality, and architecture*: make distinct images of such centres and their representation in art, aesthetics, and architectural attributes; cultural values & civility.
- v. *Culture and Spiritual in Contemporary architecture*: design, metaphysical meanings, aesthetics, change, and continuity; links among culture, civic formation, and cultural heritages.
- vi. *Religious buildings, their heritage values, and architectural symbolism*: Contrasts and similarities concerning culture, meaning, and myths.
- vii. *Culture, Contestation, Creation, and Prospects*: Cultural connotations vs heritage contestations, resurrections, heritagisations; and
- viii. *Culture as the fourth pillar of Sustainability*: Status of culture, heritage, Heritagization, & Sustainable Planning; dialogue with the UN Sustainable Development Goals to be promoted by the 2030 Agenda, and community development.

At the first instance of screening, 45 abstracts were assessed by May 2022, and 35 were approved, taking into view the thematic focus, coverage, and contents, which were again divided into two issues of the *Esempi di Architettura* [vol. 10, 2023].

Now we wish you a good reading and we hope these topics will be an important occurrence for reflecting to also understand the role of intercultural dialogue and the importance of walking together to build a better future.

These topics are important premises for understanding also our international pedagogical program "RWYC" which will be the main topic of the next call in 2024.

"RWYC - Reconnecting With Your Culture - a visionary mission of awakening the youth to prepare for the global understanding, human services and preserving our cultural heritage in the cosmic frame of Culture-Nature interfaces through the quality and deep-ecology rooted Education and Dialogues: a march re-appraising interconnectedness between locality and universality - Holiness (humanity) to Wholeness (sublimity). The RWYC attempts to awaken and vision – Education for life; Education through life; Education throughout life".

Envisioned, provoked, and designed by: Prof. Dr. Olimpia Niglio  
Structured, framed, and written down by: Prof. Dr. Rana P.B. Singh

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