



Wilton Park



Report

Cultural Heritage Protection, Development and Diplomacy: International Approaches

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In partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport



Executive summary

‘Protecting cultural heritage is a powerful tool for diplomacy and bringing communities together.’

Cultural heritage protection is increasingly being understood by States as playing a critical intersectoral role in supporting development and diplomacy. Historically cultural heritage protection has suffered low prioritisation by governments and policy-makers, who have taken the view that the area is in competition with a range of other economic, social, security and political demands. However, over the past few years evidence has emerged that States’ understanding of the applications and value of cultural heritage protection is undergoing a shift from being conceived of as a matter of purely for cultural policy making, to a more holistic view of the field that acknowledges its role in supporting a range of priority agendas across the development and diplomatic spaces. In order to realise the full potential that cultural heritage protection has to offer in these areas, the global community must work together to integrate cultural heritage protection into development and diplomacy strategies.

With economies and geographies being rapidly reshaped by the Covid-19 crisis, this Wilton Park dialogue was an opportune time to discuss how cultural heritage protection can be leveraged in recovery, response and mitigating wider socio-economic and geo-political impacts. The dialogue brought together 45 participants from 18 countries, fielding representatives from state governments, multilateral organisations, the development profession, academics and humanitarian actors. Discussions focussed on how to take a more joined-up approach to cultural heritage protection globally; routes to attaining high-level buy-in from leaders and decision-makers; the importance of meaningful engagement with local communities; making the case for heritage as a humanitarian issue; knowledge exchange and innovation; the sustainability of funding; and how to address silos, sceptics and systematic barriers to progress.

Conclusions arising from the meeting were focused on a number of key themes:

1. Adopting coordinated cross-sectoral approaches and an agreed common language
2. Encouraging local action but embedding this within the broader global context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation
3. Building stronger cases based on shared good practice, robust indicators and frameworks that can integrate cultural heritage protection across diplomacy, development and humanitarian agendas
4. Developing sustainable long-term approaches and innovative funding models, combined with the enhancement of digital resources
5. While recognising significant challenges when promoting integrated working and interdisciplinary partnership working, the global consensus that is emerging on the importance of cultural heritage protection should be valued and exploited

Main summary report

Introduction

This Wilton Park virtual dialogue sought to support global consensus-building in recognising the intersectoral role that protecting and promoting cultural heritage has to play in supporting development and diplomacy. With economies and geographies being rapidly reshaped by the Covid-19 crisis, this was an opportune time to integrate a better understanding of how culture is fundamental to recovery, response and in mitigating wider socio-economic and geo-political impacts.

This Wilton Park virtual dialogue aimed to:

- Convene and facilitate iterative discussions between international stakeholders from across different sectors and across thematic areas;
- Stimulate new questions, generate creative approaches and identify learning, programming opportunities and new funding models for the future in line with the SDGs and new priorities;
- Generate an evidence base for what works and what doesn't;
- Stimulate discussions on how best to mobilise cultural heritage for development and diplomacy, learning from a cultural relations approach;
- Emphasise the necessity for networks and collaborations between States and across sectors, using this dialogue as a starting point to build fresh co-operation;
- Explore the role of culture and heritage and channels by which state and non-state actors can enhance protection efforts locally, regionally and nationally.

Intended outcomes for this Wilton Park virtual dialogue were to:

- Discuss how the international community can best leverage cultural heritage as a vital, intersectoral tool through which to address key challenges;
- Increase understanding of the importance of cultural heritage protection across a range of thematic and geographical settings, identify successes and challenges in programme and policy delivery;
- Explore ways in which States are funding and developing cultural heritage protection programmes, with open exchange of ideas and identification of mutual areas for cooperation and learning;
- Share lessons learned and identify mutual areas of cooperation with States and multilateral organisations.

In total, 45 participants from 18 countries participated in this event, representing national and international cultural heritage, development and humanitarian organisations and agencies, governments, academics and experts in the field.

“The key issue now is finding new relationships and different ways of working”

Main findings

Cross-sectoral approaches

‘Cultural heritage protection should be a shared responsibility undertaken in the spirit of global collaboration.’

1. There remains within the international cultural heritage protection community a concern that key policy-makers do not recognise the critical role that cultural heritage protection can play in international development, particularly as the field is frequently positioned as a competing demand against the primary need to save lives. This is coupled with often overly ‘romanticised’ ways of discussing cultural heritage that

“Governments are not monoliths; they are made of different departments and different priorities; joining them together takes skill and perseverance”

serves to ignore profound systemic inequalities and promotes a view of cultural heritage protection that obfuscates its critical role in supporting priority development agendas, perpetuating a lack of understanding of the field’s broad applications at a top level.

2. It is a significant failure at present that the role of cultural heritage protection as a lever across identified areas including sustainability, climate change, disaster response, development, human rights, diversity and security is not more widely recognised by policy-makers. In the development space, cultural heritage protection is rarely considered as a component of humanitarian aid response and is only peripherally considered in broader development and peace-building efforts by those operating outside of the cultural heritage protection field.
3. Securing buy-in from key policy-makers necessitates coordinated cross-sectoral working to promote and advocate for the role of cultural heritage protection as a lever across multiple sectors and agendas. At present, cross-sectoral work is hampered by cultural heritage protection actors operating in silos, with a lack of shared terminology, metrics and objectives across sectors. The lack of a ‘common language’ in the cultural heritage protection space has resulted in workstreams being duplicated and missed opportunities to partner on complementary initiatives.
4. Overcoming the challenges to cross-sectoral working will require a move from considering cultural heritage protection as solely a sector to also being a vector that works across a range of policy areas in the development and diplomatic spaces. Organisations and actors with vested interests in the cultural heritage protection field must embrace an ‘ecosystem model’, which necessitates the mapping and building of cross-sector networks to identify where gaps in provision lie and what resourcing/knowledge parties are able to bring to the cultural heritage protection agenda. Where possible, cultivating cultural heritage ‘champions’ from a range of sectors should be pursued as a means of promoting the cross-sector applications of cultural heritage protection.

“To build communities and foster tolerance we must connect our pasts, presents and futures”

Global thinking, local action

‘The protection of people and the protection of their heritage are intertwined and indivisible.’

“Cultural heritage protection should be part of a renewed commitment to multi-lateral action”

5. The need for cross-sector, multilateral working must be squared with the importance of local action in the cultural heritage protection field. Local communities ought to be at the centre of any scoping, designing and implementing of cultural heritage protection programming. However, global consensus-building is also necessary to drive the cultural heritage protection agenda forwards, requiring the balancing of a global mindset with community-based action from those operating within the field.
6. The cultural heritage protection community is broadly in agreement that cultural heritage protection initiatives should originate in the communities that they aim to deliver to, maintaining a people-centric approach to cultural heritage protection programming. Where possible, projects should be led by or developed in partnership with the local community, and make use of local talent, knowledge, technologies and materials in their design and delivery. Projects should also invest in the training, skills development and sharing of knowledge with local participants, building capacity in the local community.
7. Local action does however need to be situated within the broader global context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between States, as the cultural heritage protection agenda requires a collaborative and strategic global mindset. Combining resources and sharing learning between States is agreed to be necessary for the

delivery of effective targeted cultural heritage protection programming. To these ends, it is important to manage the domination of western countries and the global north in the development space. Cultural heritage protection actors should embrace a multi-perspective approach that accounts for the needs of the local community within the global context.

“We need a new unified framework to inform international action”

Building strong cases

‘We need a new framework to inform international action on cultural heritage protection.’

8. The integration of cultural heritage protection into development and diplomacy agendas has been forestalled by a lack of shared indicators across sectors. Without shared indicators and frameworks, actors are unable to recognise areas of mutual interest, effectively synchronise their efforts and share resources across sectors, which has prevented cross-sectoral cultural heritage protection partnerships from proceeding. In turn, this has created difficulties in securing top-level political buy-in, as actors are unable to evidence the cross-sectoral applications and impacts of cultural heritage protection.
9. Successfully integrating cultural heritage protection into the diplomacy and development spaces requires cross-sectoral cooperation on building strong cases for the value and potential uses of cultural heritage protection activities. Actors should work together to agree on a ‘common language’ of shared indicators, and to prioritise and embed the collection and analysis of metrics, data and stories as part of their cultural heritage protection programming. This will aid in the creation of a robust evidence base that has read across multiple sectors.
10. Sharing good practice from across different sectors and learning from international experience are key to building strong cases for cultural heritage protection. In sharing good practice, actors from different sectors can identify gaps in their provision or areas of mutual interest, strengthening their own practises and opening new avenues for cross-sectoral collaboration. Drawing from international experience in the cultural heritage protection field can similarly allow for the identification of novel approaches or techniques that can be replicated in different settings, in addition to aiding in the development of a global strategic mindset around cultural heritage protection.

“We must be patient; it takes time to develop robust evidence”

“Cultural heritage is not just a sector, but a vector of sustainable development”

Sustainable approaches

‘Philanthropy alone can’t do it; governments need to pay attention to funding cultural heritage if we want to have cultural heritage in the future.’

11. Securing the successful integration of cultural heritage protection into diplomacy and development spaces requires long-term, sustainable approaches that are equipped to weather unforeseen crises, an uncertain funding landscape and fluctuating political leadership. Though 2020 proved a uniquely challenging year in the shadow of Coronavirus and the ongoing climate crisis, it has been noted across multiple sectors that crises can galvanise innovation and lead to improvements within the cultural heritage protection field.
12. The Coronavirus pandemic alongside humanitarian crises such as the August 2020 explosion in Beirut have highlighted the value of cross-sectoral crisis preparedness exercises for actors in the cultural heritage protection field. Such exercises can act as a valuable opportunity to bring together actors from different sectors, acting as both a catalyst to build relationships and an aid in mapping cross-sectoral cultural heritage protection interests, as well as an opportunity to gain insight into unique sectoral

“Covid’19 has made things more complex, challenging and difficult; yet crisis is an opportunity to innovate and change”

challenges by running through scenarios.

13. Digital innovation has also been identified as a key component in improving the long-term resilience and sustainability of the cultural heritage protection field. Coronavirus in particular has necessitated many cultural heritage protection actors to pivot from their previous patterns of working to investing more in their digital resourcing, developing databases, platforms and online learning and engagement offers. Digital represents high value for low cost in addressing barriers to engaging with cultural heritage protection; however, to achieve impacts actors must work to ensure their efforts are joined-up and that they are not duplicating efforts, owing to the sheer volume of content available online.
14. A shared concern across actors with cultural heritage protection interests is the influence of individuals over the prioritisation of the cultural heritage protection agenda. It is considered that cultural heritage protection is not adequately embedded either as a discrete policy area or a cross-cutting lever within the majority of governments' strategies. As a result, the cultural heritage protection agenda is chiefly driven by individuals with a personal interest in the area, which exposes it to risk when there is frequent rotation of personnel within the system. This 'individual churn' presents a number of issues, including precluding the establishment of bilateral and multilateral partnerships owing to internal movement preventing relationships from being established.
15. The scarcity of long-term state funding has necessitated a need to explore innovative funding models to achieve sustainability for the cultural heritage protection field. The individual churn noted above can make cultural heritage protection programming vulnerable to budget changes at a state level; this in turn generates competition between actors in securing funding from private sources, which can prove a barrier to partnership working. The same issues recur across sectors, chiefly that it is easier to secure funding for one-off cultural heritage protection projects than it is to fund overheads or long-term programme costs from both state and philanthropic sources.
16. Cross-sectoral partnerships are crucial to unlocking new funding sources and evidencing to governments the value of investing in long-term, sustainable cultural heritage protection programming. Approaches to partnership working need to seek to transcend systematic barriers and be mutually advantageous and complementary, making the most of cross-sectoral expertise and pooled resources.

Conclusions

'The violation of cultural rights is an attack on our past, present and future and we now need to capitalise on the emerging global consensus on the importance of cultural heritage protection'.

A key theme to emerge from discussions was the need for cross-sectoral collaboration on cultural heritage protection, requiring the mapping and building of networks, development of shared indicators, dissemination of knowledge and sharing of best practices, while ensuring that local communities remain at the heart of programming. Without increased evidence for the value and application of cultural heritage protection across multiple agendas, it will be a significant struggle to embed cultural heritage protection policy in institutional structures, as well as in the next stages of furthering the sustainable development agenda. By working to develop a common language across sectors, cultural heritage protection actors will be in a stronger position to advocate for the integration of cultural heritage protection into development and diplomatic spaces.

However, expectations must be managed around what can realistically be achieved. There are significant challenges to achieving this integration, including barriers around interdisciplinary partnership working (lack of shared language, lack of familiarity with

other sectors, competition for funds), changing political priorities, the influence of individuals and the timescale that making meaningful progress might take. Nevertheless, there is an emerging global consensus on the importance of cultural heritage protection that actors can capitalise on through collaborative action. Across sectors there is hope that awareness of the cultural heritage protection agenda will continue to grow, and a shared commitment from this dialogue to continue these conversations and advocate for the value of cultural heritage protection within the global agenda.

There was a commitment amongst participants to continue these conversations, enhance connections, and advocate for the value of cultural heritage protection within the global agenda. Collaboration will be the key to shared success, although many obstacles remain to achieve genuine and constructive relationships across a range of varied political and organisational priorities and approaches at local, regional, national and international levels.

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