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# *Climate, social and economic sustainability: How do modern and contemporary art museums are responding to the Sustainable Development Goals?*

Thanks to the collaboration of the 88 professionals from all continents who took part in the survey launched in 2022, CIMAM has updated its Toolkit on Sustainable Museum Practices.

This comprehensive resource covers since May 2023 the social and economic aspects of sustainability, combining advice and real-world experience from museums around the world. It is a practical international resource based on the principles of human rights: equity, inclusion, diversity, justice, environmental respect, and sustainable economic growth. Modern and contemporary art museums can draw inspiration from this valuable resource.

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The CiMAM Sustainability and Ecology in Museum Practice working group conducted a survey in 2022, aiming to understand how modern and contemporary art museums achieve their sustainable goals without compromising their values. The study also sought to incorporate social and economic aspects into the Environmental Sustainability Toolkit for Museum Practice.



This survey project was originated by the CiMAM Sustainability and Ecology in Museum Practice working group 2020–22 led by CiMAM Board members: Frances Morris (Chair), Suhanya Raffel, Suzanne Cotter, Mami Kataoka, Malgorzata Ludwisiak, Ann-Sofi Noring, Victoria Noorthoorn, and Rhana Devenport.

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## AIMS OF THE STUDY

In January 2022, CiMAM launched the research project *Climate, Social and Economic Sustainability: How do modern and contemporary art museums are responding to the Sustainable Development Goals?* to assess the commitment of modern and contemporary art museums to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The study took as reference the conclusions of the COP26 meeting held in Glasgow in 2021 that the fight against climate change must also encompass the fight against social and economic inequalities, at all levels, from the individual, through the community, to the national and international. At COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in 2022, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres spoke of justice, and specifically climate justice as a new point of reference.

The study aimed to gain a view of how modern and contemporary art museums and cultural institutions were achieving these goals and their relationship to institutional values and to expand the CiMAM Toolkit for Museums on Sustainability as part of a larger concept that encompasses climatic change and social and economic inequality. as recognized at the COP26 summit and

Professionals from the modern and contemporary art museum sector from 38 different countries around the world participated in the survey. The respondents range from

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Museum Directors, Independent Curators, Curators and Heads of Exhibitions, Chairs of Boards of Trustees, Founders, Executive and Managerial Staff, Communication and Marketing, External Consultants, Sustainability Officers, Researchers, Art Educators, and Teachers.

Their contributions show the diversity of socio-political contexts in which Museums are operating and how these contexts influence the ability of museums to develop sustainability plans in line with the ambitions of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Museums play a vital role in building a sustainable future for all.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was unanimously adopted by member states, provides a shared plan for peace, prosperity, and well-being for the planet. The core of the agenda comprises the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a powerful call to action for all countries, regardless of their level of development.

The SDGs highlight the interrelatedness of eradicating poverty, enhancing health and education, reducing inequalities, and promoting economic growth. They also stress the immediate need to tackle climate change. Museums have a unique opportunity to contribute to achieving the SDGs by advocating for sustainability, raising awareness, and fostering meaningful conversations. By doing so, museums can inspire positive change within their communities and beyond.

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## METHODOLOGY

Of the 17 SDGs, 9 were selected for their relevance to museum practices in addressing inclusion, education, equality, diversity, environment, green economy, and dignity at work, among others.

SDG 4: Quality education.

SDG 5: Gender equality.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth.

SDG 10: Reducing inequalities.

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities.

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production.

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SDG 13: Climate action.

SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions.

SDG 17: Partnership for the achievement of the Goals.

The survey included open and closed questions covering the three prisms of sustainability in considering museum practices: economic, social, and environmental. Participants gave their opinions in closed yes/no or multiple-choice questions and share examples of their approaches in open-ended questions.

The results have been categorized into two sections:

The barriers to achieving sustainable transformation and

The list of actions that museums can undertake as opportunities to adopt more sustainable practices.

Three sustainability experts were invited to evaluate the results:

- **Caitlin Southwick**, Director and founder of Ki Culture, provided insight and conclusion in analyzing the social aspects of the survey.
- **Henry McGhie**, Director and founder of Curating Tomorrow, helped assess progress toward environmental goals.
- **Martin Müller**, Professor at the Department of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Lausanne, gave his critical opinion on the evolution towards greener economies of the museums surveyed.

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## ASSESSMENT FROM THREE EXPERTS

Caitlin Southwick

Director and Founder of Ki Culture, Secretary of ICOM Sustainability Group, and CEO and Founder of Sustainability in Conservation, London, UK.

### *Museums are changing*

Social value, impact, and service are at the heart of museum activities and missions. However, action and impact are not yet where people think they should be – yet.

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The main challenges seem to be related to cultural barriers and financial constraints. For museums to achieve social sustainability, it will be necessary to shift not only practices but also systems and perspectives. This will require more collaboration and support across borders — for museums to share replicable best practices and for more advocacy on international and policy levels. Museums need a seat at the table to implement fundamental human rights for our practice and society as a whole. As trusted institutions, these should be conversations we are ready to have and positions we are prepared to take, even in countries where politics don't align with the values and mission of the museums. This is where international support is imperative.

Many issues related to equality faced by cultural institutions are not unique to the cultural sector, including gender equality and climate justice, which are more political/cultural issues depending on the country. But budget restraints are a common thread globally in the cultural sector. It is interesting to note that museums are seen as string drivers of a sustainable economy but clearly lack economic sustainability themselves and adequate support from public bodies. Sustainable tourism is a huge topic, particularly for economic development. Respondents feel museums play a clear role in sustainable tourism in their communities, although they are not yet particularly active.

The economic strain of the cultural sector is reflected in opportunities for output but also affects the input into museums

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and programming. There is an overwhelming agreement that inequalities exist globally amongst museums and that there is negligible or no movement to address and reduce these gaps. It is impossible to expect more diversity in the field when fair and livable wages are not standard. Where the money comes from can determine what a museum can do. Most respondents felt that museum sponsors should align and reflect the museum's values. However, it was cited as unrealistic in some situations. One vital issue that was pointed out was the transparency of these sponsor relationships. The long-term solution, however, means getting creative with our economic models and establishing sustainable business models and financial independence.

Respondents demonstrated both practices and using museums as mediums for communication and education. The most important element to achieve sustainability? Education. Both in formal and informal learning environments. Of course, as many museums are publicly funded institutions, government support is crucial to the success of museums as driving forces for ESD and sustainable development as a whole, as are partnerships, cross-sectoral collaboration, and cooperation with educational institutions.

The community resoundingly agrees that museums have the capacity building and awareness-raising capacities to support the implementation of green policies and the responses often connected climate to social sustainability, particularly in relation to Indigenous relations. It is evident that the three elements of

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sustainability – social, environmental, and economic – are heavily intertwined, and this is reflected in the opportunities and obstacles of the museum world. However, many respondents used the word "sustainability" interchangeably with the climate crisis and "green." The distinction needs to be clarified.

Museums being safe spaces, centers of dialogue, and servants of their local communities was overwhelmingly important to respondents, as was providing safe, accountable, and inclusive spaces for all. Museums are understood to exist for the public good and all members of the community. It was heartwarming to see the reactions to museums as centers for refugees, with respondents not only largely supporting multiple roles for museums to engage with refugees but also showing active programs that museums are already undertaking, using art to connect people and bridge gaps between cultures.

Art, culture, and global storytelling promote inclusive and safe communities. All but one respondent felt that museums are responsible for "generating debates that make visible groups at risk of exclusion or representation". This commitment and enthusiasm should be seen across all aspects of sustainability. However, in supporting SDG 11, respondents were largely neutral about how museums perform. It was agreed that building and supporting safe, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive communities should be at the heart of museum activities. When it comes to sustainability, we aren't there yet – but we are on the same page regarding where we want to go.

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Henry McGhie

Director and Founder of Curating Tomorrow, BSc, MA, FRSA. Consultant specialising in museums, sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals, climate education, and action, ecology and nature conservation, leadership and strategy. Churchill Fellow, Museum partnerships for the SDGs and Paris Agreement, Liverpool, UK

***Understanding the environmental dimension of sustainable development***

As in any discussion on sustainable development, it is important not to think in 'silos', to ensure that action for one aspect is not simply creating problems in another area.

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In the context of Agenda 2030, the environmental aspect of sustainable development is more or less written into several of the '5 Ps' of Agenda 2030 and sustainable development. That is to say, the environment is fundamentally connected to social and economic considerations, and they should be considered together wherever possible.

In Agenda 2030 states (Preamble):

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in more considerable freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet.

Within the 5 Ps:

### **People**

We are determined to end poverty and hunger in all their forms and dimensions and ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity, equality, and a healthy environment.

### **Planet**

We are determined to protect the planet from degradation through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources, and taking urgent action on

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climate change so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.

### **Prosperity**

We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social, and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

Within the description of Our World Today:

“Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiraling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism, and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. Natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity, and loss of biodiversity, add to and exacerbate the list of challenges that humanity faces. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. Increases in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and other climate change impacts seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, including many least-developed countries and small island developing States. As a result, the survival of many societies, and the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk.”

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### **Environmental threats**

Nature is widely recognized as facing a triple climate change crisis, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The three are connected and underpinned by an unsustainable approach to and use of nature. Biodiversity, in turn, is recognized as facing five main threats: habitat conversion and loss, climate change, over-exploitation, pollution, and invasive species.

### **Museums and environmental action**

The core international agreements to address these challenges are the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement for climate change and the Convention on Biological Diversity for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of nature. These two agreements are, shockingly, thirty years old this year. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, which are its main program, were adopted in 2015 to achieve these and many other agreements more effectively and to involve more of society and all sectors to attain them.

The museum sector has been slow to embed environmental considerations into its practices and policies. In its older sense, the industry often considers sustainability as a brake on 'development' (so-called) rather than embracing sustainable development and identifying the challenges worth working on and strategies to address them.

The sector also often considers sustainability in an older sense, as about wise/careful/efficient use of resources; sustainable development is different, as it is about empowering, enhancing,

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and unlocking the potential for a future where people, nature, and the economy flourish and develop together. That is to say, sustainable development is more than simply taking your existing practices and making them 'more sustainable', as you are either sustainable or you are not. Sustainable development is not just about stopping things from getting worse but helping them improve.

That means working with sustainable development is not about 'business as usual', but recognizing the importance of really addressing the challenges and using goal-based approaches to move towards ambitious, different future states rather than inching forwards from existing positions to be somehow 'more sustainable' (=less unsustainable).

The sector also often 'offsets' the environmental damage it does by emphasizing the social good it creates. However, when we work with sustainable development, we recognize that we have to strengthen the positive benefits and reduce the negative impacts.

In assessing environmental sustainability actions, we can ask: is there a vision? Is there a goal? Is it the right goal? Is there enough progress toward that goal? Finally, are our goals backed up by concrete monitoring and open sharing of progress, covering successes and challenges?

[\[1\] Making Peace With Nature | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

[\[2\] Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services | IPBES secretariat](#)

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**Martin Müller**

Professor in the Department of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. He currently leads the research project 'Culture for the Planet', which is developing a framework for sustainability for cultural institutions and is seeking to capture the state-of-the-art of sustainability practices around the world.

***Museums in a green economy***

The economy is a thorny subject for sustainability. Strictly speaking, the economy is not more than a means to an end in the sustainability transition. It is there to allocate scarce resources – food, housing, education, and so on – in the most

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equitable, efficient way toward the critical goals for the sustainability transition. Most scientific sustainability models do not incorporate the economy, much less economic growth. Instead, see sustainability as the need to meet specific social thresholds while not overshooting the ecological boundaries of our shared planet (e.g. O'Neill 2018).

Our current reality is quite different, of course. Most money is allocated not where it makes the greatest contribution to sustainability but where it makes the highest financial profit. Therefore, it is encouraging to see that around 90% of the museums in the survey think they can change that situation. Raising awareness and making a difference in the push towards a greener and more equitable economy clearly stands out as a top priority of museums. This result points towards an important change in museums' self-understanding, as many did not typically consider themselves economic actors in the past.

Three major potential levers for museums to become responsible economic actors in the sustainability transition emerge from the survey.

- 1) The first lever is to inspire people that another economy is possible. Many museums in the survey have already collaborated with artists and hosted exhibitions that pinpoint a certain aspect of sustainability, be it climate change, waste, inclusion, or others. The survey shows comparatively little reservation against a committed stance, with only very few responses cautioning against losing out sight of the

original mission of one's institution. The important point here is that we appear to be transitioning from awareness-raising to inspiring hope in people and showing them pathways to militating for a more equitable economic system and becoming responsible consumers.

- 2) The second lever is walking the talk. If museums preach systemic change, they need to lead it. Otherwise, they risk being accused of greenwashing. Museums can and want to do that, as the responses to the survey show, but they are not there yet. As one respondent puts it: 'I personally feel like a lot [of museums] only show examples of sustainability or exhibitions of examples, [but do] not [put it] in practice.' Yes, museums have started to think about waste, reducing their carbon footprint, and the power they have in their supply chain. But most efforts are piecemeal and widespread. To serve as an example of a green economy, museums need to embed sustainability at the core of their strategy and become systematic about the actions they implement and the goals they want to achieve.
- 3) The third and last lever is sponsorship. A vast majority of institutions in the survey recognize the need to have sponsorship policies in line with sustainability objectives: 'We seek to engage with partners and sponsors whose values, policies and practices recognize their role as social change agents,' writes one respondent, 'and align with our commitment to sustainably advance social justice and equity.' Many insist on vetting sponsors so that they comply

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with sustainability standards, perhaps even requiring external certification before entering into sponsorship agreements. But sponsorship is a two-way relationship. Companies, too, are becoming more selective in their sponsoring. This means that walking the sustainability talk, as mentioned before, is becoming more critical for museums as they seek sponsorship opportunities. It also implies that museum leadership can create new sponsorship income by launching sustainability initiatives such as installing solar panels or reducing energy consumption. This turns sustainability from an expense item into a revenue generator – and contributes to allocating some of those scarce resources mentioned above to the right use.

O'Neill, D. W., Fanning, A. L., Lamb, W. F., & Steinberger, J. K. (2018). A good life for all within planetary boundaries. [Nature Sustainability](#), 1(2), 88–95.



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## FINDINGS

The responses to the survey highlight the need for an international reference that encourages the exchange of inspiring good practices. This will enable museums around the world to reorient or embark on a path towards more sustainable practices in the environmental, social and economic dimensions.

The voices of the participants make it clear that museums must lead by example, respecting society, the environment, and their educational role within communities. Assuming this responsibility is the main catalyst for cultural institutions to drive positive change.

Although modern and contemporary art museums are in the early stages of sustainable development, they have a unique opportunity to become beacons of best practice, bringing their perspectives to global debates on human rights, social justice, and climate issues. Sustainability is rooted in universal respect for life and human rights. It is imperative that museums, to the best of their ability, adopt this ethos as their *modus operandi*.

# BRAKES, PATHS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

## to develop sustainable practices in museums

### 1. THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF SUSTAINABILITY: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) AND EDUCATION.

In terms of achieving the SDGs linked to the social prism of sustainability and raised in this survey (SDG 4: Quality and education, SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10: Reducing inequalities), only 28% of museums think that their outreach and education programs affect sustainability.

According to expert **Caitlin Southwick**, founder and executive director of **Ki Culture**, this is problematic because it shows that not all museums prioritize these goals in their activities.

Southwick gives us some clues about the **brakes that can cause this low percentage of involvement:**

- Political, economic, or language barriers
- Disconnection with the world of children
- Weak infrastructures, low budget, and poor planning to address sustainability.

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- Freelancers not directly involved in the museum activity activities
- Dangers of art laundering.

Southwick also perceives a need for a holistic approach in all the museum activities: *"It's not just about communicating but about providing fair wages, safe working conditions, and ensuring that board members are aligned with the organization's values."*

## SDG 4: Quality Education

*The most crucial element in achieving sustainability is education.*

### Barriers

- Few educational programs exist with no clear objectives addressing specific environmental sustainability challenges.
- Vague awareness of the globality of the term "sustainability," which is used interchangeably as "climate crisis" and "green."
- Museums prioritize community educational needs in terms of learning style and skills rather than content and subject matter.
- Weak infrastructures, low budget, and poor planning to address sustainability.

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## Opportunities

- Increase staffing with a diversity of origins, encourage learning skills for specific roles (e.g., curators learning pedagogy), and work collaborating across all departments: curatorial + research and education.
- Focus more on the adoption of Education for Sustainable Development approaches.
- Increase funding for educational programming and make it permanent.
- Encourage the development of critical thinking skills and connect curriculum and current social conversations with the collections and exhibitions in a new and inspiring way.
- Create learning teams to participate actively with diverse and under-represented communities in the museum's local area and beyond.
- Shed light on pressing issues through creative and engaging ways by working with artists and educators to integrate these stories into museum programs.
- Plan museum educational programs and outreach experiences in collaboration with the local community.
- Collaborate with local partners - schools, NGOs, authorities, and universities to ensure a quality, inclusive, and sustainable educational program.



## SDG 5: Gender Equality

*Achieve gender equality by also addressing racial and class inequalities.*

### Barriers

- In some museums where most of their employees are women, the institutions remain highly committed to the patriarchal agendas of the authorities.
- The precarious salaries of all museum staff keep women's income level close to poverty.
- Inequality lies in how women's opinions are valued rather than their mere inclusion.

### Opportunities

- Evaluate gender equality by also addressing racial and class inequalities in all programming and every individual project in the early stage.
- Achieve racial and gender equity in the workplace and the museum collections and exhibitions that reflect the society the museum finds itself in.
- Create a work environment that embraces all genders and identities.
- Educate about gender equality and inclusion in the museum programs.

## SDG 10: Reducing inequalities

*Museums as centers for dialogue, servants of their local communities, accountable and inclusive for all.*

### Barriers

- Major challenges to achieving sustainability are related to cultural barriers and financial constraints.
- Museum's entrance fees are out of reach for the working class, and exclusive for tourists and local elites.
- Creating gender and inclusion policies only for a political agenda that must meet gender quotas but does not engage with structural violence.
- There are global inequities among museums worldwide, and little or no movement to address and reduce these gaps.

### Opportunities

- Go beyond the museum walls and be an active part of the community.
- Use exhibitions to create opportunities to invite communities into the conversation.
- Establish a Community Curatorial Advisory Group to engage culturally and linguistically diverse voices and

perspectives in planning for commissions, acquisitions, and exhibitions.

- Encourage a new generation of philanthropists and leaders to support the transformation of 21st-century art galleries and museums with values of sustainability and environmental stewardship, inclusion, diversity, experimentation, and innovation.
- Create a Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion, demonstrating the museum's commitment to ensuring equal access to all community sectors.
- Include people from diverse and minority backgrounds and young people on the boards of institutions to allow them to interact with the museum over the long term and influence what it does.
- Continually review the hospitality offered by the institution and development of a manual for inclusive language.
- Museums are referents for defending fundamental human rights in the museum practice and in society as a whole.
- Museums are responsible for generating discussions that make visible groups at risk of exclusion or representation.

## 2. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT OF SUSTAINABILITY: CLIMATE JUSTICE AND AWARENESS, EMISSIONS AND WASTE REDUCTION, AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION.

The environmental aspect of this survey was analyzed by **Henry McGhie**, founder of **Curating Tomorrow**, a consultancy that helps museums and their partners improve their contributions to creating a sustainable future. McGhie highlights the wide dispersion of responses on this topic, which was addressed through questions related to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 13: Climate Action.

**What path do we need to follow to achieve some of these climate SDGs, according to Henry McGhie?**

- Focus more on the adoption of Education for Sustainable Development approaches and the use of relevant resources, and frame the work more clearly around the relevant targets of the SDGs in particular:
  1. SDG 4.7 (By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and the

- contribution of culture to sustainable development);
2. SDG 12.8 (By 2030, ensure that people everywhere are equipped with information and awareness relevant to sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature); and
  3. SDG 13.3 (Improve education, awareness, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning).
- Using these goals more concretely will enable museums to leverage existing learning resources, develop more meaningful activities, and monitor and communicate their activities more effectively for sectoral reporting and SDG reporting (both formal and informal).

Overall, the SDGs can help enhance all of these recommendations, getting greater attention and certainly working to develop and achieve goal-based action.

## SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

*Museums play a role in sustainable tourism in their communities.*

### Barriers

- Museums play a role in sustainable tourism in their communities, although they have yet to be particularly active.
- The main challenges to achieving sustainability are related to cultural barriers and financial constraints.

### Opportunities

- Raise awareness of the role of tourism in bringing potential benefits to sustainable development and environmental protection and restoration, and recognize that tourism is also a substantial environmental cost of museums that needs to be addressed.
- Schedule traveling exhibitions and educational programs in rural and regional areas, including those of low socioeconomic status.
- Promote international days as a way of working together to help museums connect people to broader initiatives and familiarize them with the “big picture.”

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- Raise awareness of First Nations and their cultural practices, in which care of the countryside is central.
- Recognize that different social groups will be affected differently by environmental challenges and contribute to environmental restoration in various ways to engage more people in meaningful activities to care for and restore the environment.
- Everyday life in museum practice must resonate with the museum's ethical and sustainable values for visitors to perceive their relevance.
- Create a Green Economy Policy plus a Green Tourism Gold Award.

## SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

*Inspiring people that another way of consuming is possible.*

### Barriers

- Museums have started to think about waste, reducing their carbon footprint, and the power they have in their supply chain. But most efforts are piecemeal.

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## Opportunities

- To account for the use of materials, reuse them, and cooperate with other museums in shipment reduction projects.
- Raise awareness of the amount of waste generated by an exhibition, the materials used, and their possible reuse.
- Consider longer-term projects. Reduce excess production and waste through responsible planning over time.
- Training and awareness-raising workshops for museum staff on good practices in consuming and producing materials.
- Set an example of a green economy by integrating sustainability into the core of the museums' strategy and be systematic in the actions and objectives to be achieved.
- Assume practices committed to the green economy in their daily work.
- Create lists of resources and questions to ask when planning projects and programs to ensure sustainability in these events whenever possible.
- Eliminate single-use plastics and minimize food waste.
- Obtain green certificates to guide museums toward ongoing development.
- Move from raising awareness to inspiring hope in people and showing them ways to campaign for a more



equitable economic system and become responsible consumers.

## SDG 13: Climate Action

*Make climate a priority.*

### Barriers

- Low adoption of policies to reduce GHG emissions.
- The wide range of actions to mitigate the effects of museum activity on the environment are low-level or at individual levels rather than coherent objectives or global target directions.
- Museums' commitments to sustainability and the environment could be more specific and oriented to the SDGs specific to this prism.
- Lack of clarity on essential challenges worth working on and "low hanging fruit".

### Opportunities

- Museums can broadly support sustainable development by identifying what heritage to preserve and considering its conservation and development in the face of environmental challenges.

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- Complete a net-zero emissions plan, participate in carbon sequestration plans, and aim for climate neutrality by 2035.
- Develop clear visions, targets, and metrics on the expected outcomes of museum-related environmental actions to drive ambition and accountability.
- Ensure that environmental actions also deliver social and economic benefits to avoid trade-offs.
- Support artistic and research projects that address environmental issues and harness the potential of museum collections to conduct research that helps to understand, protect and restore nature and to make informed decisions.
- Actively share information on ecological values.
- Install solar energy, wastewater reclamation, and review air conditioning levels to reduce energy consumption.
- Create program adaptations and awareness of gas emissions from transportation, installation, and travel.
- Reduce mobility of team members to the minimum necessary, and avoid flying if possible.

### 3. THE ECONOMIC ASPECT OF SUSTAINABILITY: WORKING CONDITIONS, LOCAL AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY, AND ETHICAL SPONSORSHIPS THAT PURSUE SUSTAINABLE OBJECTIVES.

The economic aspect of this survey has been assessed by **Martin Müller**, professor in the Department of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, who has evaluated the answers obtained about SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production, SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions, SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals.

In a current context where most of the money goes not to where it contributes most to sustainability but to where it makes the most economic profit, Müller expresses that it is encouraging to see that nearly 90% of the museums surveyed think they can change that by raising awareness and making a difference in the drive towards a greener and more equitable economy, as evidenced by the museums' priorities in this survey. This demonstrates a significant shift in the self-understanding of museums, as many did not typically see themselves as economic actors in the past.

## SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

*Make museums responsible economic players in the transition to sustainability.*

### Barriers

- Wage inequality is rooted in the nationality of workers and passport holders.
- The working conditions of guards, visitor service teams, guides, and cleaning teams, crucial to the development of the museum's functions, are always considered at the bottom of the list.

### Opportunities

- Fair salaries for cultural personnel.
- Create more junior positions with the possibility of growth within the institution for people from diverse backgrounds who have yet to have the opportunity to gain sufficient experience to occupy positions of responsibility.
- Contracting systems that can boost local suppliers. Conscious and inclusive management of the institution's supply chain promotes local development and low environmental impact.

- Promote a hybrid work system and optimize working hours, reducing non-essential labor.

## SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

*Make museums responsible economic players in the transition to sustainability.*

### Barriers

Some museums have warned of the danger of losing sight of the institution's original mission by collaborating with artists or hosting exhibitions focused on a particular aspect of sustainability, be it climate change, waste, inclusion, or others.

### Opportunities

- Sponsorships must be dedicated to fostering smart, inclusive growth by creating a self-sustaining and sustainable organization.
- Sponsorships should have external audits that certify the destinations and uses of the money, thus making the good work of the institutions fully visible.
- Encourage sustainable sponsorship in support of a caring society.

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- Find partners that prioritize inclusive and equitable opportunities for all and share social responsibilities with museums.
- Integrate ESG measures as KPIs in sponsorship.
- Establish a Code of Conduct to sign with all stakeholders to follow the museum's ethical and sustainable values.

## SDG 17: Partnership for achieving the Goals

*Partners should conform to the joint efforts to reach the SDGs.*

### Barriers

- One must preach with systemic change and not lead it at the risk of being accused of “greenwashing.”

### Opportunities

- A museum's management can create new revenue through sponsorship by implementing sustainability initiatives.
- A museum board should be made up of activists and artists, not just financial partners.

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- Museums can mediate complex information and ideas through the artist's lens by developing collaborations with artists that address policies and strategies toward a green economy.
- Establish sponsorship policies in line with the sustainability goals of museums, keeping in mind that sponsorship is a two-way relationship and that companies are also increasingly selective in their sponsorship.



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## LIST OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

CIMAM is sincerely grateful to all the professionals who took the time and interest in completing this survey that will help CIMAM in advancing in its mission to provide more useful and relevant tools for modern and contemporary museums and the professionals working in them:

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CIMAM's 2023–25 Sustainability and Ecology in Museum Practice is led by CIMAM Board members: Suzanne Cotter (Chair), Suhanya Raffel, Malgorzata Ludwisiak, Clara M. Kim, Kitty Scott, Leevi Happala, and Joselina Cruz.

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