



**Imagining and Realising  
Climate Resilient Futures:  
The Power of Arts, Culture  
and Heritage to Accelerate  
Climate Action**

**The Climate Heritage Manifesto for COP27**



Climate change is having a profound impact on people and planet. We are witnessing long-lasting and irreversible effects. Avoiding the worst of these requires limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Yet the world is failing to meet even the Paris Agreement's 2 degrees temperature goal, with current Green House Gas (GHG) concentrations now the highest ever recorded. This impact is already noticeable by all of us.

Today, it is increasingly obvious that the existence of humans on Earth is profoundly at risk from human-caused climate change and the climate inaction that is deepening, year after year, the climate crisis. Scientists have found that 9 of the 15 known Earth tipping elements that regulate the state of the planet have been activated, and there is now scientific support for declaring a state of planetary emergency (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021, 2022).

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called the status quo a “damning indictment of failed climate leadership.” A growing critique of climate planning and policy which attributes this failure, in part, to the scarcity of social imaginaries capable of conceiving plausible low carbon, just, climate resilient futures; a climate policy ecosystem that validates technocratic approaches while marginalizing alternative strategies; and the need to better include diverse voices and perspectives in climate governance. We believe that culture from arts to heritage, with its power to help people imagine and realize low-carbon, just, climate resilient futures is a missing force that can address these shortcomings.

## **Why culture and heritage?**

Culture anchors people to places and to each other. It creates cohesion in unique ways: enabling community-building and collective action, providing shared moments, feelings and commitments, inventing new symbols and new tools. Artists and cultural voices drive public awareness and action. This work is a powerful tool for climate mobilization. Through public accessibility and trust, cultural centres, institutions and organizations like museums, music venues, theatres, monuments, libraries or festivals provide platforms for listening to communities and hubs of multicultural and inter-generational exchange, capacity building, and knowledge-sharing.



Traditional knowledge and heritage buildings and landscapes that pre-date (or works independently of) the fossil fuel era point that point the way to post-carbon living. The cosmologies and values held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities never co-opted by modern take-make-waste approaches offer counterpoints to unsustainable paradigms of “progress.” Artistic, creative, and imaginative tools hold transformative potential by challenging the values that condition life choices, including economic and consumption models and by supporting transformative reinterpretation of today’s carbonscapes and their accompanying mindsets.

Central to this approach is the imperative of addressing both those elements of culture that can help solve the climate crisis and those that have helped cause it. Many traditions, cultural practices, and lifeways – especially in industrialised places – are deeply entangled with fossil fuels and the extractive and colonial systems that attends them. These cultural elements are sometimes referred to as “petrocultures” and the sprawling urban, suburban and peri-urban landscapes they have spawned as “carbonscapes.” The heritage of the Anthropocene. Just as cultural forces help forged this “complicit” heritage, culture-based approaches must now be enlisted to to identify, interpret, and challenge it.

The climate crisis requires a more ambitious integration of values embedded in nature and culture. We need to change the mindsets and the paradigms that separate humans and nature. National policies and programmes need to promote lifestyles in harmony with nature, and this is impossible without the full involvement of all cultural actors. Cultural heritage holds peoples’ stories and the knowledge of local communities (what the Paris Agreement calls ‘endogenous technologies’). The archaeological record illustrates the causes of, and adaptation to, past changes. History has shown man’s capacity to adapt in the past. We are able to win the battle now with rapid and far-reaching social, cultural and economic change. These changes are only possible when society works together, wills it so.

## **Our full mobilisation**

We represent institutions and organizations committed to shifting the obsolete mindsets and paradigms- unlocking the potential of arts, culture, and heritage to fully achieve the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. We recognize this must include transformation within the culture sector too, embracing sustainable practices and stewardship; lifting up the voices of underserved communities and mobilizing solidarity



with frontline communities. We must preserve, record, and make culture and heritage available in inclusive ways, including through traditional and innovative artistic forms as well as new technologies.

The work of cultural actors is still underused, under-developed. We have to be fully mobilized for climate action. We are artists, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, landscape architects, administrators, archivists, crafts persons, conservators, curators, engineers, geographers, historians, librarians, musicians, museologists, writers, performers, urban planners, and site managers, as well as scientists, researchers, teachers, and scholars, and bearers of Indigenous knowledge. Our unique insights stand ready to be applied to climate change or accounted for in climate science or resilience science, although, of course there are many great and pioneering examples; see for example the case-studies of the [UCLG – CHN report](#) “The role of culture in Climate-Resilient Development”, 2021.

This paradigm and mindset shift also require the cultural dimensions of climate action be prioritised in science, policy, planning and fiscal frameworks for climate mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and in planning for losses and damages. The mainstreaming of cultural considerations must be done at all scales (local regional, national and international) and across all sectors from energy to buildings, from mobility to agriculture.

We recognise the profound connection between cultural rights, cultural survival, climate justice and climate action. We also consider this Manifesto to be a contribution to human-centred, rights-based approaches that places culture as an explicit and operational dimension of development and provides cultural actors (civil society and governments) a seat at the table required to make it happen.

Resilience science outlines characteristics of resilient systems, including capacities to transform, persist, and adapt. The Race to Resilience Culture campaign, launched by the Climate Heritage Network, summarises key ways that culture-based strategies support climate action:

- Culture and heritage support a multiplicity of social network, helping construct the identities of people and communities in ways that can strengthen social fabric and place attachment and reduce precarity.
- Resilient systems are characterised by diversity, which includes diversity of knowledge systems and technologies (e.g., local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge); livelihoods; languages; and worldviews, spiritualities, and values.



- Culture provides the capacity for inter-cultural exchange, which fosters interconnectedness, but also embodies endogenous capacities that promote local self-sufficiency, such as use of local materials and know-how (i.e., “modularity”).
- Equity and justice intersect with resilience, including how widely capabilities are distributed within a society. Drawing on a cultural rights approach to development, culture can address the social dimensions of marginalisation and exclusion, including climate governance.
- Adaptive learning and the ability to navigate diversity, are nurtured by creativity and inspiration in adaptation and innovation.

## **Time to act**

It is time to act. We must close both the emissions and ambition gaps. To achieve a 1.5°Celsius world, more attention must be paid to the cultural dimensions of lifestyles and livelihoods, to the public understanding of climate impacts, the social acceptance of systems changes, to gender-responsive and diverse approaches, and to the wellsprings of climate ambition. In short, we must transcend the divides between culture and science, people and policy, memory and evolving practice.

We require that nations and cities place culture at the centre of climate action. We provide the spaces and the events where this societal crisis can be aired, discussed, and acted upon. We are uniquely qualified to do so because of the singular combination of historical consciousness, sense of place, long-term stewardship, knowledge base, public accessibility, and unprecedented public trust. No other institutions are better placed than cultural to exercise larger views of time and to spark new commitments.

Concretely, we must accelerate rights-based, place-based, demand-side, and people-centred climate action. We must safeguard and champion those elements of art, culture and heritage that point the way to circular, regenerative ways of living not dependent on exploiting people and nature, and we must challenge and interpret those other elements that have helped cause the climate emergency. Led by cultural actors and operators, we must strengthen the frameworks by which we all can act as accomplices with Indigenous Peoples and local communities and build common cause with intersectional interests such as racial and gender equality, linking culture to climate justice in ways that bolster climate action and climate responsive sustainable development.



COP27 must be a turning point for multi-level action to realise the potential of culture to effectively combat the climate crisis. It is our shared responsibility to secure the cultural inheritance and cultural rights of current and future generations; to safeguard a healthy, prosperous, and resilient planet; and to deliver the emissions reductions upon which these outcomes hinge. To bolster a system of climate planning struggling to keep 1.5 alive and deliver transformative adaptation, we must urgently unlock the power of culture from arts to heritage to help people imagine and realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures. In all this work, count us in! Count culture in!

### **Who We Are?**

This document has been prepared by the [Climate Heritage Network](#), the world's leading alliance of arts, culture and heritage organizations for climate action, uniting a global coalition of over 200 international, national and subnational networks, governments and cultural organizations.

This Manifesto provides key messages on culture and climate change aimed at the 2022 United Nations Climate Conference (COP27) and beyond. It seeks to activate those involved in arts, culture, and heritage to take climate action through communication and engagement, inspiring and assisting their constituents, members and audiences to increase ambition; to change their own behaviours; and to engage with climate change policy development at local and national government and intergovernmental level. Simultaneously, in order to meet the urgency of the climate emergency, it strives to inspire and encourage greater synergistic collaboration on climate action with other sectors and partners that have not traditionally engaged with cultural actors.

We invite civil society, government at all levels, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, cultural organizations and institutions, businesses, universities and research organisations and other stakeholders to join us in signing on to this Manifesto, signalling our shared ambition to create just, thriving, and resilient communities today and into the future.



## **CHN Manifesto COP 27 - Drafting Group (in A0):**

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