

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture, the global monoculture, or a homogenization of cultures, akin to cultural decay. The phrase cultural diversity can also refer to having different cultures respect each other's differences. The phrase "cultural diversity" is also sometimes used to mean the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. Globalization is often said to have a negative effect on the world's cultural diversity.



Harmony Day is dedicated to celebrating Australia's cultural diversity

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Overview

There are many separate societies that emerged around the globe differed markedly from each other, and many of these differences persist to this day. As well as the more obvious cultural differences that exist between people, such as language, dress and traditions, there are also significant variations in the way societies organize themselves, in their shared conception of morality, and in the ways they interact with their environment. Cultural diversity can be seen as analogous biodiversity.^[1]

Opposition and support

By analogy with biodiversity, which is thought to be essential to the long-term survival of life on earth, it can be argued that cultural diversity may be vital for the long-term survival of humanity; and that the conservation of indigenous cultures may be as important to humankind as the conservation of species and ecosystems is to life in general. The General Conference of UNESCO took this position in 2001, asserting in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that "*...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature*"^[2]



People of various cultural background in a park in London

This position is rejected by some people, on several grounds. Firstly, like most evolutionary accounts of human nature, the importance of cultural diversity for survival may be an un-testable hypothesis which can neither be proved nor disproved. Secondly, it can be argued that it is unethical deliberately to conserve "less developed" societies, because this will deny people within those societies the benefits of technological and medical advances enjoyed by those in the "developed" world.

In the same manner that the promotion of poverty in underdeveloped nations as "cultural diversity" is unethical. It is unethical to promote all religious practices simply because they are seen to contribute to cultural diversity. Particular religious practices are recognized by the WHO and UN as unethical, including female genital mutilation, polygamy, child brides, and human sacrifice.^[3]

With the onset of globalization, traditional nation-states have been placed under enormous pressures. Today, with the development of technology, information and capital are transcending geographical boundaries and reshaping the relationships between the marketplace, states and citizens. In particular, the growth of the mass media industry has largely impacted on individuals and societies across the globe. Although beneficial in some ways, this increased accessibility has the capacity to negatively affect a society's individuality. With information being so easily distributed throughout the world, cultural meanings, values and tastes run the risk of becoming homogenized. As a result, the strength of identity of individuals and societies may begin to weaken.^{[4][5]}

Some individuals, particularly those with strong religious beliefs, maintain that it is in the best interests of individuals and of humanity as a whole that all people adhere to a specific model for society or specific aspects of such a model.

Nowadays, communication between different countries becomes more and more frequent. And more and more students choose to study overseas for experiencing culture diversity. Their goal is to broaden their horizons and develop themselves from learning overseas. For example, according to Fengling, Chen, Du Yanjun, and Yu Ma's paper "Academic Freedom in the People's Republic of China and the United States Of America.", they pointed out that Chinese education more focus on "traditionally, teaching has consisted of spoon feeding, and learning has been largely by rote. China's traditional system of education has sought to make students accept fixed and ossified content." And "In the classroom, Chinese professors are the laws and authorities; Students in China show great respect to their teachers in general." On another hand, in United States of America education "American students treat college professors as equals." Also "American students' are encouraged to debate topics. The free open discussion on various topics is due to the academic freedom which most American colleges and universities enjoy." Discussion above gives us an overall idea about the differences between China and the United States on education. But we cannot simply judge which one is better, because each culture has its own advantages and features. Thanks to those difference forms the culture diversity and those make our world more colorful. For students who go abroad for education, if they can combine positive culture elements from two different cultures to their self-development, it would be a competitive advantage in their whole career. Especially, with current process of global economics, people who owned different perspectives on cultures stand at a more competitive position in current world.^[6]

Quantification

Cultural diversity is difficult to quantify, but a good indication is thought to be a count of the number of languages spoken in a region or in the world as a whole. By this measure we may be going through a period of precipitous decline in the world's cultural diversity. Research carried out in the 1990s by David Crystal (Honorary Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wales, Bangor) suggested that at that time, on average, one language was falling into disuse every two weeks. He calculated that if that rate of the language death were to continue, then by the year 2100 more than 90% of the languages currently spoken in the world will have gone extinct.^[7]

Overpopulation, immigration and imperialism (of both the militaristic and cultural kind) are reasons that have been suggested to explain any such decline. However, it could also be argued that with the advent of globalism, a decline in cultural diversity is inevitable because information sharing often promotes homogeneity

Cultural heritage

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by UNESCO in 2001 is a legal instrument that recognizes cultural diversity as "common heritage of humanity" and considers its safeguarding to be a concrete and ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity

Beyond the Declaration of Principles adopted in 2003 at the Geneva Phase of the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS), the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in October 2005, is a legally binding instrument to all States Parties to the Convention that recognizes



Sydney's Chinatown

- The distinctive nature of cultural goods, services and activities as vehicles of identity values and meaning;
- That while cultural goods, services and activities have important economic value, they are not mere commodities or consumer goods that can only be regarded as objects of trade.^[8]

It was adopted in response to "growing pressure exerted on countries to waive their right to enforce cultural policies and to put all aspects of the cultural sector on the table when negotiating international trade agreements".^[9] To date, 116 member states as well as the European Union have ratified the Convention, except the US, Australia and Israel.^[10] States Parties recognize the specificity of cultural goods and services, as well as state sovereignty and public services in this area. Thought for world trade, this soft law instrument (strength in not binding) clearly became a crucial reference to the definition of the European policy choice. In 2009, the European Court of Justice favoured a broad view of culture—beyond cultural values through the protection of film or the objective of promoting linguistic diversity yet previously recognized. On top of it, under this Convention, the EU and China have committed to fostering more balanced cultural exchanges, strengthening international cooperation and solidarity with business and trade opportunities in cultural and creative industries. The most motivating factor behind Beijing's willingness to work in partnership at business level might certainly be the access to creative talents and skills from foreign markets.

There is also the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ratified on June 20, 2007 by 78 states which said:

The intangible cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and gives them a sense of identity and continuity thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity

Cultural diversity was also promoted by the Montreal Declaration of 2007, and by the European Union. The idea of a global multicultural heritage covers several ideas, which are not exclusive (see multiculturalism). In addition to language, diversity can also include religious or traditional practice.

On a local scale, Agenda 21 for culture the first document of world scope that establishes the foundations for a commitment by cities and local governments to cultural development, supports local authorities committed to cultural diversity

Defense

The defense of cultural diversity can take several meanings:

- A balance to be achieved: thus, the idea of defense of cultural diversity through the promotion of actions in favor of "cultural minorities" said to be disadvantaged;
- Preservation of "cultural minorities" thought to be endangered;
- In other cases, one speaks of "cultural protection", which refers to the concept of cultural exception. This makes the link between the social vision of culture and the vision inherent in its commercialisation. The cultural exception highlights the specificity of cultural products and services, including special recognition by the European Union in its Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In this context, the objective is to defend against what is seen as a "commodification"—considered harmful to a "disadvantaged" culture—supporting its development through grants, promotion operations, etc., also known as "cultural protectionism".

- This defense may also refer to incorporating "cultural rights" provisions, conducted unsuccessfully in the early 1990s in Europe, into a layer of human rights.

Cultural uniformity

In a specific occasion of social life, or custom, cultural uniformity can be observed and displayed in behaviors of a community^[11]

Cultural diversity is presented as the antithesis of cultural uniformity

Some (including UNESCO) fear this hypothesis of a trend towards cultural uniformity. To support this argument they emphasize different aspects:

- The disappearance of many languages and dialects, regarding for example the languages of France, without legal status or protection (Breton, Corsican, Occitan, Alsatian, Flemish, Poitou, Saintonge, etc.).
- Anxiety of people on the preservation of their traditions as in New Zealand, coastal regions in Australia, North America, Central America;
- Increasing cultural preeminence of the United States through the distribution of its products in film, television, music, clothing and nutritional products promoted in audio-visual media, consumer products virtually standardized on the planet (pizza, restaurants, fast food, etc..).

There are several international organizations that work towards protecting threatened societies and cultures, including [Survival International](#) and [UNESCO](#). The [UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#), adopted by 185 Member States in 2001, represents the first international standard-setting instrument aimed at preserving and promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.^[2] Indeed, the notion of "cultural diversity" has been echoed by more neutral organizations, particularly within the UNESCO. Beyond the Declaration of Principles adopted in 2003 at the Geneva Phase of the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS), the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was adopted on 20 October 2005, but neither ratified by the US, Australia nor by Israel. It is instead a clear recognition of the specificity of cultural goods and services, as well as state sovereignty and public services in this area. Thought for world trade, this soft law instrument (strength in not binding) clearly became a crucial reference to the definition of the European policy choice. In 2009, the [European Court of Justice](#) favoured a broad view of culture—beyond cultural values—through the protection of film or the objective of promoting linguistic diversity yet previously recognized. On top of it, under this Convention, the EU and China have committed to fostering more balanced cultural exchanges, strengthening international cooperation and solidarity with business and trade opportunities in cultural and creative industries.^[12]

The [European Commission](#)-funded *Network of Excellence on "Sustainable Development in a Diverse World"* (known as "SUS.DIV") builds upon the UNESCO Declaration to investigate the relationship between cultural diversity and [sustainable development](#)^[13]

See also

- [Cross-cultural communication](#)
- [Multiculturalism](#)
- [Respect diversity](#)
- [Social cohesion](#)
- [Solidarity](#)
- [Foundation for Endangered Languages](#)
- [Mondialogo](#)
- [Purple economy](#)
- [Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)
- [World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#)
- [Intercultural relations](#)
- [Coolitude](#)
- [Cultural rights](#)
- [Cultural safety](#)
- [Subculture](#)
- [Criticism of multiculturalism](#)

Cultural diversity in Wikimedia Foundation

- [m:Grants:Start/Goals#Support diversity](#)
- [wp:Wikipedia Signpost/2015-12-09/Op-ed#What beliefs are at the core of Wikidata.3F Is it a database like any other.3F](#)

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- Khal Torabully (with Marina Carter), *Coolitude An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*, Anthem Press 2002) ISBN [1-84331-003-1](#)

External links

- [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#)
- [UNESCO Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity](#)
- [Cultural Diversity in WikEd](#)
- [Broadcasting Regulation and Cultural Diversity](#)
- [Across Cultures - films and articles on cultural diversity in Canada at NFB.ca](#)
- [Coalition for Cultural Diversity](#)
- [UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity](#)
- [Video on intercultural dialogue and the use of the ICT for literacy](#)
- [Promoting cultural diversity](#)

[[¹]], [[²]], [[³]], [[⁴]]

1. "[Preparations for the 40th Edmonton Heritage Festival](#)"(<http://www.diverseedmonton.ca/32-column/community/72-preparations-for-the-40th-edmonton-heritage-festival>)

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 3. User, Super. "Home" (<http://www.asiannewsandviews.com/index.php/en/>). *www.asiannewsandviews.com*
 4. <http://bhesa.ca/index.php/13-blog/blog-news-from-bhesa/117-preparations-for-the-40th-edmonton-heritage-festival>
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