



Museums – A Central Role

Sustainable development, defined as meeting present needs without compromising future generations, integrates considerations of people, planet, and prosperity. Climate action must avoid creating new problems or shifting them elsewhere. Agenda 2030, adopted in 2015, serves as a blueprint for sustainable development, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets guiding global efforts. Museums can align with the SDGs to plan climate action that creates social, economic, and environmental benefits (For further resources providing guidance on incorporating the SDGs into museum practices, please see [here](#)).

Museums all over the globe, attracting billions of visitors annually, have an extensive reach and great potential to promote climate action and sustainable development. Despite this potential, climate action remains a small part of museums' overall activities. Most museums have yet to fully integrate sustainable development into their operations, and many remain silent on the issue. Moreover, museums, often housed in old buildings, consume significant energy and may inadvertently support industries detrimental to the environment through their funding and investment choices. In recent years, there has been increasing awareness and action within the museum sector regarding climate change. Museums have participated in conferences and submitted proposals to support international agreements like the Paris Agreement. Some museums are actively reducing their carbon footprint, but more concerted efforts are needed to meet the targets set forth in global agreements. Museums must prioritise sustainability and actively contribute to climate action to ensure a positive future for all.

Managing the Museum's Transition to Greater Sustainability

'A just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy [...] needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty' (ILO, 2016).

The Paris Agreement emphasises the necessity of a fair transition for workers and the creation of quality jobs during climate action implementation. This ensures that climate efforts align with sustainable development principles, aiming to avoid unjust practices such as displacing communities or diverting food for biofuel production, which can exacerbate poverty and inequality.

Opponents of climate action often argue that it jeopardises employment, advocating to continue fossil fuel extraction. However, transitioning to a zero-carbon future is essential for long-term sustainability, requiring fair and inclusive strategies.

Various organisations, including the ILO, IISD, and B Corp, have developed guidelines and resources for a just transition. These frameworks prioritise workers' rights, dialogue with stakeholders, job protection, retraining, and education to facilitate the shift to a green economy.

Museums should integrate just transition principles into their operations and advocate for their inclusion in funding opportunities, skills development programs, and regulatory frameworks. By supporting human rights and sustainable practices across their supply chains, museums can contribute to equitable transitions and mitigate adverse social and environmental impacts.

Additionally, museums can leverage their role in public education and awareness to promote just transition principles. This includes fostering dialogue, providing access to information, and empowering communities to embrace green technologies and practices.

As investors, museums should align their financial activities with climate justice goals, divesting from unsustainable ventures and prioritising investments that support a sustainable future. Moreover, museums can engage with their stakeholders to ensure a strong social mandate for just transition, offering opportunities for consultation and collaboration.

Ultimately, museums have the potential to play a significant role in facilitating the transition to green jobs and sustainable practices, thereby contributing to broader societal efforts toward climate resilience and equity.