

## Museums and cultural sustainability: stakeholders, forces, and cultural policies

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This paper explores the relationship between museums, cultural sustainability, and cultural policies. Specifically, it offers a theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums and a process for designing appropriate cultural policies for museums with cultural sustainability in mind. The case of Cyprus is used to demonstrate how strengths and gaps in cultural sustainability can be identified within a broader museum environment. The study examines the main stakeholders (the state, municipalities/ communities, and individuals), types of museums (archaeological, art, ethnographic, etc.) they establish and the forces influencing their decisions (such as politics, a sense of national identity, cultural tourism, economic revitalization, and personal agendas) in order to map the Cypriot museum environment and identify the emphasis placed on different parameters of cultural sustainability. By identifying cultural sustainability strengths and gaps on a national level, it becomes easier for cultural policy-makers to design appropriate cultural policies for museums.

**Keywords:** museums; cultural sustainability; cultural policy; theoretical model; Cyprus

### Introduction

Museums are considered to be the safeguards of cultural heritage and therefore their role in preserving tangible and intangible aspects of heritage for future generations is not usually contested. According to Davies and Wilkinson (2008, p. 4), ‘museums devote considerable resources to honoring the legacy of collections, information and knowledge contributed by people in the past and passing it on to future generations’. What museums collect, preserve, and exhibit form the tangible links between the past, present, and future, and form the core of cultural sustainability. Furthermore, museums are considered to be objective institutions which reflect the heritage or culture of a place. They are thought to help define the overall cultural identity and tourism product of a destination by providing a sense of a particular time and place (Graburn 1998, Tufts and Milne 1999, Misiura 2006) or a sense of ‘hereness’ (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

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Museums are also part of a cultural system which selectively renders certain aspects of a culture visible while obscuring others. Like any cultural system or economy, different stakeholders operate within various complex power structures. These stakeholders indicate what is deemed important to be preserved for future generations as the material and immaterial proof of a country's heritage. In this way, a sense of heritage is constructed and used in the present to advocate for national, local, and individual identities.

Despite the obvious connections between museums, culture, and sustainability, not much research has examined how museums fit into cultural sustainability, how different stakeholders might contribute to different aspects of cultural sustainability, and what the implications are for cultural policy. In this regard, this paper aims to (1) explore the relationship between cultural sustainability, museums, and cultural policies, (2) offer a theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums and demonstrate a process for designing appropriate cultural policies for museums with cultural sustainability in mind, and (3) demonstrate how strengths and gaps in cultural sustainability can be identified in a case study museum environment.

In order to accomplish these aims, the paper is divided into three main parts. The first part provides an overview of the role of culture in sustainable development with an emphasis on museums and cultural sustainability. This part concludes with the introduction of a proposed theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums that points towards a more efficient planning of cultural policies for museums. The second part deals with the methodology of the study and the main results. Museums in the southern part of Cyprus – a country with unresolved political conflicts which also happens to be a popular tourist destination – serve as a case study. In this part, different stakeholders are revealed to have different priorities and motivations regarding diverse aspects of Cypriot heritage and as a result establish different types of museums. Finally, the third part of the paper uses the proposed theoretical model in combination with the findings of the study in order to identify strengths and gaps in the cultural sustainability of museums established by various stakeholders. It also points towards future directions for cultural policies.

### **Culture in sustainable development**

A generally accepted definition of sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Nevertheless, according to Throsby (1997, p. 8):

At best, the notion of sustainability, wherever it has been applied, has had something to do with the long-term viability of systems, programs and policies; at worst it has been invoked so indiscriminately as to have lost any substantive meaning.

Regardless of how this term is used, the broad definition above emerged from the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 (Brundtland Commission) and thus the emphasis is placed on the relationship between economic and environmental variables. The definition also argues that the economy and the environment should be seen as a unified system with interconnected variables. Later on, the human or social dimension was added to economic and environmental

factors (United Nations 2002). As a result, sustainable development is often considered to have three main established pillars: the economic, environmental, and social pillars. However, recently, there has been an increased awareness of culture's role in sustainable development (see World Commission on Culture and Development 1996, UNESCO 2005, United Cities and Local Government 2009). Even though this role has been recognized, its incorporation into development processes and how it translates into policy are still unclear (Throsby 1995, 2008), especially since the terms 'sustainability' and 'culture' can be very open.

The concept of culture is complex and contested and can be defined in broader or narrower terms (Hawkes 2001). The UNESCO Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity provides a broad definition as it defines culture as a 'set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (UNESCO 2001). Since this paper deals with museums, the definition of culture can be slightly narrowed down to include cultural artifacts, tangible and intangible heritage, and the knowledge and skills of social groups, communities or nations.

A number of official documents and conventions attempt to incorporate culture into sustainable development in a number of ways. The Hangzhou International Congress (2013) outlines three such theoretical attempts: (1) *Fundamental*. Culture is considered a cross-cutting issue for all developmental initiatives along with human rights, equality, and sustainability, (2) *Transversal*. Culture is incorporated within the goals of the three pillars of sustainable development along with peace and reconciliation, and (3) *Self-standing pillar of sustainable development*. Culture is thought of as a fourth pillar of sustainability among the ecological, social, and economic pillars. All of these conceptions of culture within sustainable development argue for a more serious consideration of culture in strategic planning.

In this paper, we adopt the position that culture is an independent fourth pillar of sustainable development for three main reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, it allows cultural industries, producers, and policy-makers to advocate for including culture in all public actions. Governments have largely ignored culture in their evaluation of the past and their plans for the future (Hawkes 2001). Considering culture as a fourth pillar would introduce a cultural perspective to public policies and guarantee 'that any sustainable development process has a soul' (United Cities and Local Governments 2009, p. 6). According to Hawkes (2001, p. vii), 'cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability' and therefore there is no reason why it should not stand alone among the other three pillars of sustainable development. Second, it allows for a clearer conceptualization of the interconnections between culture and the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development. Finally, it makes the relationship among culture, sustainability, and policy more straightforward.

Soini and Birkeland (*in press*) investigated the scientific discourse of the term 'cultural sustainability' by analyzing scientific publications that mention the term. They found that cultural sustainability is a transdisciplinary, evolving term and can be organized around seven storylines: heritage, cultural vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural civilization. According to the authors, while most of these storylines are interlinked with economic, social, and environmental sustainability, the storylines of heritage and cultural vitality can

be seen as comprising the fourth (cultural) pillar of sustainable development. These two storylines, which place an emphasis on promoting and preserving cultural capital for future generations, are essential to museums. Museums collect, preserve, and present tangible and intangible heritage as well as pass on knowledge and skills to future generations. Therefore, they can be seen as essential instruments of cultural sustainability.

Even though the term 'cultural sustainability' is still an evolving one, it needs to be more clearly framed in order to be better understood and further examined. For the purposes of this paper, *cultural sustainability* is considered to be the fourth pillar of sustainable development and can be defined as the consideration, preservation, and presentation of tangible and intangible heritage, artistic production, as well as the knowledge and skills of various social groups, communities, and nations. Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind that: (1) culture functions in a wider social, economic, and ecological environment; (2) culture is time- and place-specific; and (3) certain individuals and groups have the tools and power to promote their cultural artifacts and values more forcefully than others. Indeed, culture is a dynamic concept whose meaning varies depending on diverse geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts as well as interpreted in different ways by different groups of people. This becomes even more obvious when, in the second part of this paper, we examine what different stakeholders consider as culture worth preserving and what forces influence their decisions. The better cultural policy-makers understand these contexts and forces, the more comfortable and capable they can be to design and communicate effective cultural policies.

### **Proposed theoretical model: museums, cultural sustainability, and policies**

While there are recently a number of articles and conventions dealing with culture and sustainable development, there is not much literature dealing specifically with museums and cultural sustainability, apart from perhaps some recommendations or best practices for museums mainly generated from museum associations, organizations or scholars interested in 'greening' initiatives (e.g. Graham-Taylor 2003, Davies and Wilkinson 2008, Madan 2011, Canadian Museums Association n.d., Lord n.d.). These recommendations emphasize the relationship of museums with primarily environmental and secondarily economic and social sustainability. The documents highlight the ways museums can contribute to sustainable development through education on sustainability (Barrett and Sutter 2006), energy efficient policies (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2003, Ascione *et al.* 2009, Madan 2011), proper collection management (Merriman 2008), and relationships with local communities (West and Lumley 1988, Pearce 2002).

However, the role of culture in sustainable development and how it differs from social, economic, and environmental sustainability is unclear. Furthermore, the recommendations mentioned in the museum literature are intended to inform individual museums instead of cultural policy. In contrast, this paper is mostly concerned with how cultural policy-makers can create broader (external) cultural policies for museums with cultural sustainability in mind. Having said that, museum professionals can also use the proposed model for internal evaluation and planning.

In order to visualize the role of culture in sustainable development when it comes to museums we are occupied here with a theoretical exercise that is outlined in Figure 1. Figure 1 was constructed on the basis of the broad discussions of

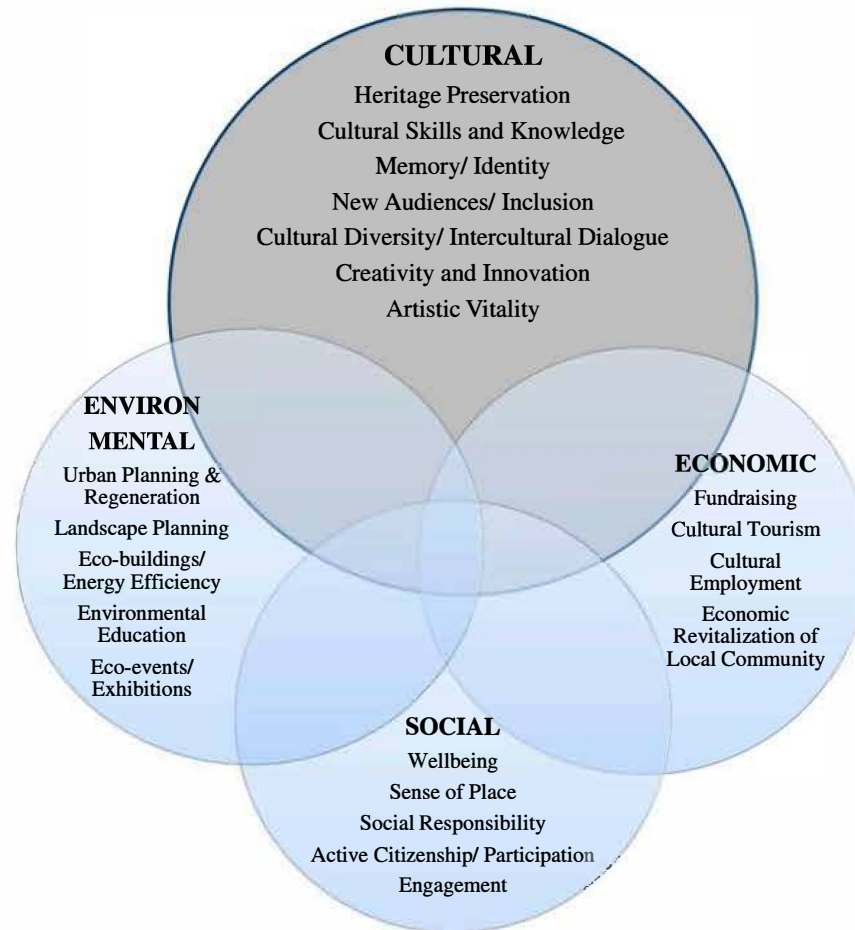


Figure 1. Theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums.

culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development (i.e. Hawkes 2001, Cubeles and Baró 2006, Viel 2009), the recommendations of museum associations and the most recent debates about multiculturalism, inclusion and community participation. Four intersecting circles, one for each of the pillars of sustainable development, contain parameters that ideally should be considered when drafting cultural policies for the sustainable development of museums. The circles intersect because certain parameters can be common to more than one pillar. For example, the parameters of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue placed within the circles of cultural sustainability are closely related to active citizenship and participation, which is placed within the circle of social sustainability.

When it comes to the *cultural dimension* of sustainable museums, policy-makers have to consider what is worth preserving as well as how to pass on cultural skills and knowledge to future generations. These decisions will influence the way present and future generations remember the past and form national and local identities. To be able to preserve and comprehend the past in an inclusive manner, museums should consider ways to include new audiences (Misiura 2006) as well as promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (Bennett 2005) within their exhibitions. These issues also touch upon the social dimension of

sustainability. Furthermore, museums have a crucial role to play in encouraging creativity and innovation (Rentschler 2001) as well as artistic vitality.

The *social dimension* includes an emphasis on the overall well-being of local communities and the creation of a sense of place. As Misiura (2006) argues, museums are civic and community spaces and the emphasis on open, clear, and accessible approaches for both local communities and foreign visitors are essential. As such, museums should be socially responsible institutions that encourage active citizenship, participation, and engagement. The *environmental dimension* can include the role museums play in urban planning and regeneration as well as landscape planning. It can also include museums' efforts to preserve the environment with eco-buildings and energy efficient practices (Tétreault 2011). Finally, museums play a crucial role (especially natural history and science museums) in environmental education (Henriksen and Jorde 2001) by incorporating, for example, eco-events and exhibitions into their programs. The *economic dimension* includes fund-raising issues, the development and promotion of cultural tourism, job creation in the creative industries as well as the economic revitalization of the local community (Smith 2003, Misiura 2006).

This purely theoretical model might be challenging to implement as a whole in practice (and might not be necessary), but it can serve as a guideline for cultural policy-makers and museum professionals. Often, finding a balance between these various elements is difficult, especially since parameters can conflict with each other. For example, some scholars and museum professionals believe that an emphasis on cultural tourism and tourism-oriented experiences might limit the social, local role of museums (Swarbrooke 2000, Davies and Wilkinson 2008) or compromise the ideal standards of preservation of a site by turning towards more commercialized and leisure-oriented aspects of heritage management (Evans 1995, Foley and McPherson 2000).

Museum professionals make choices regarding their museum's everyday practices as well as long-term plans that emphasize certain aspects of this model and connect in different ways with the other three pillars. These choices depend on various factors, such as a museum's mission, its collections, philosophy, staff perceptions, and funding. To justify their existence as public cultural institutions (and often their public funding), museums need to consider all cultural sustainability parameters even if in practice they place their emphasis on some of them more than others. On the other hand, cultural policy-makers need to understand and exploit equally all the elements that guarantee and reinforce cultural sustainability in a specific museum environment. For example, national cultural policies would ideally adopt a holistic approach and consider all the cultural sustainability parameters when drafting cultural policies that influence museums.

So, how can cultural policy-makers design cultural policies relating to museums while having cultural sustainability in mind? Table 1 outlines a suggested five-step process. The first step is to comprehend what cultural sustainability is and its specific parameters as outlined in Figure 1. The second step involves the in-depth examination of the local or national museum environment under investigation as well as the cultural policies influencing museums. In order to design cultural policies for museums, one must gain a deep understanding of the complex museum environment under investigation. This involves investigating the different stakeholders, types of museums and forces that influence both the establishment and management of museums. In this way, it becomes easier to identify which

Table 1. Designing appropriate cultural policies for museums with cultural sustainability in mind.

Steps	Description	Parameters for consideration
1.	Consider cultural sustainability parameters (from Figure 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Heritage preservation</li> <li>● Cultural skills and knowledge</li> <li>● Memory/identity</li> <li>● New audiences/inclusion</li> <li>● Cultural diversity/intercultural dialogue</li> <li>● Creativity and innovation</li> <li>● Artistic vitality</li> </ul>
2.	In depth examination of local or national museum environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current cultural policies</li> <li>● Stakeholders</li> <li>● Types of museums</li> <li>● Forces of creation</li> </ul>
3.	Identify strengths and gaps in cultural sustainability	
4.	Design policies for museums which reinforce strengths and encourage filling in the gaps	
5.	Evaluate effectiveness of new cultural policies and, if necessary, redesign	

aspects of cultural sustainability are emphasized or ignored by different stakeholders (third step).

Subsequently, one can design appropriate cultural policies with the goal of reinforcing the cultural sustainability parameters that are already emphasized and encouraging the filling of any gaps (fourth step). This can be achieved in two ways. First, cultural policies can ensure that *as a whole* the museum environment creates a system or ecology that contributes to cultural sustainability across its various parameters. Additionally, cultural policies can encourage individual museums to consider all dimensions of cultural sustainability, even if they choose to place their emphasis on certain parameters rather than others. Finally, the fifth step involves the evaluation of the effectiveness of the new cultural policies and any necessary redesigning (see Table 1).

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest cultural policies for a specific museum environment but to show how cultural policy-makers can identify strengths and weaknesses or gaps in the cultural sustainability of a museum environment. For this reason, we focus on the first three steps of the process. Having dealt with the first step on a theoretical level, the methodology of the study that follows explains how step two and three are implemented in the case of Cyprus.

**Methodology**

The four main research questions concerning step two and three are the following:

- (1) What are the current cultural policies influencing museums in Cyprus?
- (2) What are the main stakeholders of the Cypriot museum scene and what types of museums do they tend to establish?
- (3) What are the forces that lead different stakeholders to create different types of museums?
- (4) What parameters of cultural sustainability are emphasized or ignored by different stakeholders?

This study uses the macro-museum environment of Cyprus as a case study in order to answer these questions. To answer the first three research questions, qualitative research was implemented in three phases. The first phase included the compilation of an inclusive catalogue of all museums in southern Cyprus and a categorization according to type, geographic location, and legal status. The second phase included in-depth interviews with museum professionals from 13 museums. Finally, the third phase involved document analysis and three in-depth interviews with state representatives regarding the cultural policy of Cyprus. In order to answer the fourth research question, the findings of the study were compared with the cultural sustainability parameters outlined in Figure 1.

Initially, an inclusive catalogue of all institutions in the southern, Greek-Cypriot part of the island that have exhibitions open to the public and/ or incorporate the word 'museum' in their name was compiled. Due to the ongoing political conflict in Cyprus, the researchers did not have access to museums in the northern, Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus. Since in Cyprus there is no policy restriction on the use of the word 'museum' in an institution's name, the catalogue included diverse and dramatically different kinds of museums in terms of focus, size, budget, and number of employees.

Mapping Cypriot museums was an essential and time-consuming process because, despite some attempts, a complete catalogue of Cypriot museums did not exist at the time of this research. All available lists of registered museums from various sources (i.e. the Yellow Pages, the Cyprus Tourism Organization, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Communication and Public Works) were collected and compiled. Furthermore, additional museums mentioned in the media but not mentioned in these lists were added. The final list included 108 museums.<sup>1</sup> Then, in order to verify the information provided from these different sources, a researcher attempted to communicate by phone with all the museums. Out of the 108 museums, 18 museums could not to be reached after three telephone attempts. In the communication with the remaining 90 museums, a researcher explained the purpose of the research and asked for information related to the type, geographical location, and legal status of the museum.

The second phase included in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews with museum employees from 13 selected municipal/ community and private museums (Interviewees 1–13).<sup>2</sup> These museums were selected by the researchers to represent different geographic areas, types, and legal statuses. The interview protocol was structured in such a way as to provide information regarding the idiosyncrasy of the museums, the reasons for their establishment, and the problems they face today.



State museums are fully funded by the government and are administered centrally by various ministries. Furthermore, state museums have been investigated in depth in previous studies (Bounia and Stylianou-Lambert 2011, 2012). For these reasons, no interviews were conducted with state museum staff and the emphasis was instead placed on municipal/ community and private museums. All museum interviews were conducted in 2012, were recorded,<sup>3</sup> transcribed, and analyzed by two researchers who extracted a number of emerging themes from the interviews.

Finally, the third phase included document analysis of the available published documents and reports dealing with Cyprus' cultural policy as well as two in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with state officials at the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Interviewees 14<sup>4</sup> and 15<sup>5</sup>)<sup>6</sup> and one e-mail interview (Interviewee 16).<sup>7</sup>

The study includes any institution which houses exhibitions open to the public (excluding commercial galleries/ institutions) or uses the word 'museum' in its name, regardless of its size, quality, functions, or popularity. Therefore, it considers state institutions with large collections and considerable workforces as well as small one-person private museums. A limitation of the study is that each museum is a unique entity and a 'cultural system' by itself. Therefore, the results of this study might not apply to all museums. Yet, in order to understand the overall Cypriot museum environment and make a connection among museums, construction of heritage, cultural sustainability, and policies, some generalizations are necessary.

## Cypriot museums and cultural policy

### *An overview of museums in Cyprus*

At first glance, in Cyprus, a small country with less than a million residents, there is a large number of museums in operation per capita. The first museum in Cyprus, the *Cyprus Museum*, was inaugurated in 1909 during the British rule and is still the largest archaeological museum in Cyprus. During the first half of the twentieth century a number of museums were initiated by the British authorities or by local societies.<sup>8</sup> After Cyprus' independence in 1960, three major groups took over the responsibility for establishing new museums: the Republic of Cyprus, communities, and individuals. The most active decade for the establishment of museums was the 1990s. A study commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture and executed by the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia indicates that almost half of non-state museums in the southern part of Cyprus (33 out of 68) were created between the years 1990–2000 (Loizou-Hadjigavriel and Constandinide 2004).

Museums usually evolve from individual, community, municipal, or state initiatives. In this study, in order to examine the kinds of museums created by various initiatives in Cyprus, museums were categorized into ten types: (1) history, (2) archaeology, (3) art, (4) natural history, (5) Byzantine, (6) ethnographic, (7) technology, (8) theater, (9) environmental, and (10) other museums. Additionally, these museums were further categorized into: (1) state, (2) municipal/ community, and (3) private museums, depending on their legal status and main funding sources. Table 2 outlines the results of this classification.

Classifying museums into types is not always a clear-cut affair. For example, a museum might have a small archaeological collection as well as an ethnographic one, which makes it difficult to classify it as either archaeological or ethnographic. In this study, the classification was based on how the employees of each museum

Table 2. Cypriot museums: types and legal status.

Status Type	State % (N)	Municipal/ Community % (N)	Private % (N)	Total % (N)
History	2 (2)	5 (5)	6 (6)	12 (13)
Archaeology	10 (11)	0 (0)	1 (1)	11 (12)
Art	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (4)	7 (8)
Natural History	0 (0)	4 (4)	2 (2)	6 (6)
Byzantine	0 (0)	4 (4)	9 (10)	13 (14)
Ethnographic	5 (5)	19 (20)	10 (11)	33 (36)
Technology	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Theatre	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Environmental	0 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (4)
Other	3 (3)	2 (2)	7 (8)	12 (13)
Total	21 (23)	36 (39)	43 (46)	100 (108)

classified their own institution.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the classification into private or municipal/ community museum is sometimes elusive. Certain museums are the result of collaborations between private foundations and municipalities and as a result have a dual legal identity. For example, the Leventis Municipal Museum in Nicosia and the Theater Museum in Limassol are legally classified as both private and municipal. For the purpose of this study they were classified as private since they emerged from privately owned collections and are sometimes still supported by private funding sources. Despite these limitations in classification, such an attempt is valuable because it can point out whether or not different stakeholders are active in the establishment of different types of museums. Table 2 highlights some interesting relationships that can be further explored.

Overall, Cyprus has a variety of museums, the majority being ethnographic (33%), Byzantine (13%), historical (12%), and archaeological (11%). Museums are run by private organizations, foundations or individuals (43%), municipalities or rural communities (36%), and the state (21%). The state runs all of the archaeological museums apart from one (11 out of 12) and has also established a small number of ethnographic museums. The Church of Cyprus (legal status: private) is in charge of most Byzantine museums (10 out of 14), while various communities/ municipalities have created an impressive number of ethnographic museums (20 out of 36). Therefore, different stakeholders indeed contribute to the establishment of different kinds of museums.

### *Cypriot museums and cultural policy*

Unfortunately, the recent museum boom did not bring along a boom in museum professionalism. Many non-state museums, especially in rural areas, exhibit permanent, unchanging collections, employ no specialized personnel, have limited opening hours and visitor facilities, and function under inappropriate conservation conditions (Loizou-Hadjigavriel and Constandinide 2004). This trend continues today. Indicative is the fact that according to the interviews, only a small number of museum employees had any previous expertise/ knowledge regarding their museum's collections before their arrival at the museum and even fewer had ever taken a course in museum studies or other related fields. For example, Interviewee 7, the only employee of a small natural history museum in Larnaca, mentions:

Regarding knowledge, specialization, no, I don't have any relationship with the subject matter [of the museum]. However, as soon as I arrived I said to myself that I have to look into it. I took some classes, followed some seminars. I read and study.

Furthermore, a large number of museums are small-sized museums with limited human and financial resources to allow for in-depth study of their collections, or for changing exhibitions, proper planning or programming. An urgent need for professional development for museum employees and the hiring of specialized personnel is evident.

The cultural policy in Cyprus aims at protecting and promoting the cultural heritage of the island and supporting the local arts mainly through direct funding. According to the findings, cultural policies are often the result of gradually responding to the needs of cultural producers without the guidance of a general strategic plan (Interviewee 14). At the same time, European guidelines and conventions influence to an extent the government's cultural policy (Interviewees 14 and 15). However, in the last few years, the need for long-term strategic planning in the form of a comprehensive cultural policy became apparent. Apart from one or two internal documents that circulated within the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture before 2000 and the brief descriptions which come as part of the Ministry's annual reports, only a single strategic plan for a cultural policy was drafted (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008, Interviewees 14 and 15).

According to Interviewee 15, 'This 2008 document is a crucial one because it is the first document which was drafted as the result of the initiative of a politician'. Indeed, the document was drafted after extensive consultation with various interested parties following the directions of the then-minister of Education and Culture and it included a radical restructuring of cultural structures. While some aspects of this strategic plan were partially implemented, its most crucial element, which involved structural changes, never was. As stated by the Head of Cultural Services (Interviewee 14), the document 'passed from the council of ministers, it was approved but then abandoned. Parts of it have, of course, been implemented [...] However, the policy itself has not been implemented.' There seem to be two main reasons the 2008 strategic plan was put aside: first, the change in government and, therefore, the change of the minister responsible for the strategic plan, and second, the economic crisis which hit Cyprus as early as 2011 (Interviewees 14 and 15).

Two other key documents that deal with cultural policy resulted from Cyprus' participation in the National Cultural Policy review program of the Council of Europe. The two reports that were produced, one by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2004) and one by a group of experts lead by Gordon (2004) provide an overview of the cultural policy of Cyprus as well as identify problems and opportunities. When it comes to museums, the key problems identified are the difficulty most museums face to secure funds and thus protect their economic viability, the unclear ownership status of their collections, the absence of clear policy objectives, the lack of sound administration and management, and the sometimes unscientific organization of their collections (Ministry of Education and Culture 2004). Furthermore, the fragmented location of state cultural responsibilities does not help the effort of working on a long-term strategic plan (Gordon 2004). For example, the Ministry of Communication and Public Works is responsible for archaeological and ethnographic museums, while the Ministry of Education and Culture is

responsible for the rest of the museums (mainly art and history museums). According to the Head of Cultural Services (Interviewee 14):

Culture suffers today because of fragmentation and because we, a department of contemporary culture, are stranded in structures and forms of the previous 30 years with limited capabilities that are lost in the size of the ministry we are part of [...] The administration of culture must change urgently.

The respondent sees a unified authority for culture as the only solution for communication problems between the various ministries responsible for different types of museums. As a result, restructuring the administration and management of culture, articulating and delivering a coherent and effective cultural policy that is integrated with other public policies, and finally implementing that policy in an efficient and transparent manner seems of be the future direction of cultural policy in Cyprus.

Realizing that a new policy for museums was necessary, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared and saw passed through the House of Representatives a law for the recognition of both private museums and museums established and operated by local authorities<sup>10</sup> (Ministry of Education and Culture 2009). The law, which became effective in 2009, aims primarily at setting professional standards for museums as well as broadening and advancing the services offered to their visitors.<sup>11</sup> The law establishes the minimum requirements for an institution to be granted the status of a 'recognised museum' and thus become eligible for state funding. State funding for museums aims at serving their further development by covering only developmental expenses and not financing any operational needs<sup>12</sup> (Interviewee 16, Nicolaou 2013).

### **Cultural actors, stakeholders, and priorities**

The following paragraphs explore the main forces that influence different stakeholders in the establishment of different types of museums and their effect on cultural sustainability.

#### ***State museums: memory, identity, and politics***

Cultural heritage is closely related to community and national identities and therefore issues of representation and power become prominent. Countries and nations, in one way or another, select certain aspects of their cultures to value, preserve and promote among themselves and others. Cyprus is home to two main communities: Greek (mainly Christian) and Turkish (mainly Muslim) Cypriots. Culture is so entangled with politics and perceptions of national identity that it is very difficult to separate it from Cyprus' current political problems. Indeed, what is considered to be 'heritage' by the state, and therefore worth preserving and promoting, often depends on political decisions. As a result, what constitutes heritage is not an objective fact but a time- and place-related social and cultural construct (Rizzo and Throsby 2006).

Due to their perceived objectivity, museums play a role in 'certifying' certain cultural aspects of a place (while silencing others). The Republic of Cyprus has traditionally placed its emphasis on archaeology. Archaeology was and is employed to construct, reinforce and project specific national narratives, which are mainly connected to the ancient Greek past of the island. Currently, the Republic of

Cyprus runs eleven archaeological, five ethnographic, two historical, two art, and three 'other' museums. On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot community places more emphasis on the historical aspect of the island, and especially on aspects of its Ottoman past (Bounia and Stylianou-Lambert 2011).

Overall, various historical, administrative and political factors helped archaeology museums emerge as the state's preferred vehicle for promoting the cultural heritage of the island with a more recent interest in ethnographic, historical, and art museums (Bounia and Stylianou-Lambert 2011, 2012). This emphasis on archaeology has had a direct effect on the island's sense of memory and national identity, two important parameters of cultural sustainability. Huyssen (2003, p. 11) claims that one of the most recent phenomena has been:

the emergence of memory as a key cultural and political concern in the Western societies, a turning towards the past that stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity.

The author calls this turning to the past 'present pasts' since the, usually (re)constructed, past influences how people see themselves in the present. A characteristic example of 'present pasts' is the emphasis on archaeology and Cyprus' connection with its ancient Greek past as well as ethnography over other periods of the island's history or present. This selective memory and its 'musealization' has a clear political site. Huyssen (2003, p. 17) wonders: is it the fear of forgetting that triggers the desire to remember, or is it perhaps the other way around?'. In the case of Cyprus, one could hypothesize whether it is the fear of remembering specific aspects of the island's history that triggers the desire to forget by selectively highlighting specific aspects of the cultural heritage of the island.

In general, by focusing on heritage preservation and constructing a sense of national memory and identity, state museums raise valid questions regarding whose culture they are preserving and exhibiting, for whom, and how these practices influence national, local, and personal identities. As a result, other issues central to cultural sustainability such as inclusion, cultural diversity, and intercultural dialogue deserve more consideration.

### ***Municipal/ community museums: preservation and cultural tourism***

Municipal and community museums seem to focus on ethnographic museums (20 out of 36) mainly for two reasons. First, the diminishing number of inhabitants, especially young people, in rural villages, and as a result, the slowly disappearing of traditional know-how, increases the urgency of preservation of local customs and traditions. Interviewee 13, who works for a small ethnographic museum in the village of Avgorou, says, 'I believe that our museum aims at preserving cultural heritage and educating the young so they can see how their forefathers lived.' Many communities in rural villages feel the need to preserve their history and traditions by using ethnographic material collected from locals and housed in traditional houses. The availability of funding for restoring traditional buildings from the government of Cyprus and the European Union contributes to and reinforces this trend. Secondly, museums are seen by these communities as a way to attract tourists to the mainly quiet but picturesque villages and therefore have a positive effect on local economic development.

Whether or not these two goals are achieved is debatable since the initial funding boost usually results in restored spaces which function as museums but with little or no subsequent financial support to continue and expand their operations. Furthermore, without the help of specialized personnel to renew and keep the museum alive, these spaces often resemble storage rooms which, apart from the occasional school group, are most of the time devoid of visitors. Undeniably, the most common complaint of the interviewees is the lack of funding, which leaves museums unable to hire specialized personnel, engage in programming or even maintain the museum's basic operational costs (Interviewees 5, 6, 10–12). Moreover, some museum personnel pointed out the lack of any targeted promotion that could potentially raise awareness among locals and tourists (Interviewee 13). In this respect, it is not surprising that 7 out of the 18 museums that the researchers were not able to reach are small rural ethnographic museums that have inconsistent opening hours or that open for visitation only after a formal request.

What is interesting in the case of these small ethnographic museums is the relationship between economic, social, and cultural sustainability. To start with, an uncontrolled boom of economically unsustainable museums that depend solely on central state funding can be dangerous for cultural sustainability. Gordon (2004, p. 43) warned Cyprus against an:

unplanned museums pollution, which cannot be in the interests of any of the reputable professional operators. There is perhaps a risk that if too many 'unplanned' museums, which are not distinctive enough in their own right to hold their own in the increasingly volatile tourism market, could end up competing with themselves unsuccessfully and effecting the take up the government would expect to see in new high quality national institutions.

It seems that this is the case with many small-sized museums in rural areas in Cyprus. If a museum is financially weak it is vulnerable to decline and even foreclosure. Without substantial differentiation from other similar museums, efficient economic planning, experienced personnel, and entrepreneurial approaches, these museums can be unsustainable not only economically but also socially and culturally. Socially because they will not be able to offer anything back to the community and culturally because they might not manage to properly preserve objects, traditions, and knowledge for future generations. As a result, economic sustainability is often a prerequisite for social and cultural sustainability.

An example of a museum with questionable management, in terms of economic sustainability, is the *Museum of Elementary Education Vasas*, which opened its doors to the public in 2010 in the village of Vasa. The establishment of the museum was funded by the Pancyprian Greek Teachers Organization and the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the community of Vasa. The museum received very positive reviews regarding the way it unfolds the history of education in Cyprus as well as the use of innovative technologies. According to Interviewee 8, a volunteer educator, after its creation, the museum was 'abandoned to the hands of the community' which is currently unable to cover even the basic operational costs of the museum, such as the salary of a guard, electricity, and heating. As a result, the museum opens only for specific hours during the week, mostly for student visits, and has no regular opening hours. Interviewee 8 argues:

The future of the museum is unclear. That is, if there is no further funding from the Pancyprrian Greek Teachers Association and the Ministry of Education and Culture or other funding bodies, unfortunately the museum will close. It's an unbearable economic weight on the community [...] we have created a masterpiece that is unique in Cyprus and it's a pity to let it be destroyed.

In contrast to the numerous ethnographic museums, this museum focuses on a unique subject matter and therefore does not compete with other similar museums. Nevertheless, its narrow focus and its dependence on limited state and community funding leaves it unable to substantially contribute to the local community.

### ***Private museums: diverse interests and agendas***

Private museums can be museums owned by individuals (e.g. Cyprus Wine Museum), foundations (e.g. Pierides Museum), organizations (e.g. Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage, Bank of Cyprus), and/ or religious institutions (e.g. the Church of Cyprus). Private museums seem to focus on three types of museums: ethnographic museums (11 out of 36), Byzantine museums (10 out of 14) and other museums (8 out of 13). The high percentage of 'other' museums – that is, museums that do not fall under any of the other nine categories – indicates the diverse interests of their creators. Private museums comprise the most diverse category of museums in Cyprus because of the many stakeholders involved in their establishment. Some private museums are large institutions with strong partnerships, while others are small, one-person affairs.

An example of a small private museum is the *Paphos Ethnographic Museum*. The museum is currently owned and run by an energetic 79-year-old woman who gives tours and tries to 'preach the history of Paphos' to mainly international visitors (Interviewee 10). The museum is housed in her family home and was founded by her now-deceased husband, an archaeologist and avid collector of folk art. According to Interviewee 10, her love for the collection, her husband and the history of Paphos keeps her going. The dedication and personal contribution of the individuals involved in small private museums can be remarkable and can function as a positive element. However, a drawback can be that some owners invest so much personal time and effort in their museums that they find it extremely difficult to entrust their collections' management and museum's general administration to other people. Interviewee 10 mentions that even if she could afford to have an employee at the museum, other than her daughter, who occasionally helps her out, she would not want to because she does not believe that anyone else could love the museum as much as she does. As she claims, 'At least as long as I live, I wouldn't want the museum to leave my hands. The museum is the work we created with my husband; it's our spiritual child' (Interviewee 10). This attitude generates questions regarding the cultural sustainability of small private museums in cases where their initiators are not able to care for them any longer. As we have seen, an aspect of cultural sustainability is the ability to convey to future generations' cultural skills and knowledge.

Some private individuals and foundations maintain fruitful collaborations with municipalities while partially maintaining their private legal status. Two appropriate examples are the *Leventis Municipal Museum* in Nicosia and the *Pierides Museum* in Larnaca. Both museums were initiated by the Leventis and the Pierides family,

respectively, and primarily house their private collections. Partnerships with municipalities and other organizations secure the economic sustainability of museums and benefit from both the strong vision of their initiators and the involvement of the local community (Interviewee 6).

Two other key private stakeholders which play an important part in the preservation and promotion of Cypriot heritage and contemporary arts are financial institutions (such as banks) and the Church of Cyprus. Several banks through their cultural centers (i.e. *Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation; Hellenic Bank Cultural Centre; Marfin Laiki Bank Cultural Centre*<sup>13</sup>) have established museums and non-profit exhibition spaces. Their contribution is based on the 'principle of corporate social responsibility and the concept that a financial institution should also aspire to enhance the community that supports it' (Bank of Cyprus, n.d.) and thus are conscious of the close connection between social and cultural sustainability. Additionally, the Church of Cyprus has always played an important role in the sociocultural and political environment of Cyprus. Ten out of 14 Byzantine museums that currently operate in southern Cyprus were established and run by the Church of Cyprus with an aim to preserve and promote the Byzantine and post-Byzantine heritage of Cyprus.

The Church of Cyprus emphasizes not only heritage preservation but also issues of memory and identity. For example, the mission statement of the main Byzantine museum in Nicosia, the *Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation*, emphasizes its role in observing and publicizing plundering in the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus, arguing for the return of stolen items and raising awareness around issues of conflict and cultural destruction.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Byzantine museums in Cyprus complement archaeological museums in the sense that they reinforce a (Greek) Orthodox Christian national identity in opposition to a (Turkish) Muslim one.

Finally, some institutions, such as the *Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre* or the *Evagoras and Kathleen Lanitis Foundation* house only temporary exhibitions and thus encourage repeat visits. These institutions focus on creativity and artistic vitality and are quite popular with the local population. As Frey (2003) argues, private decisions might support a broader range of artistic activities that might be more experimental and controversial than public ones since public decision-makers tend to focus on specific aspects of 'established' culture and avoid scandalizing public opinion. This is true in the case of Cyprus, since the most innovative art institutions are not state-run but private.

## Discussion and conclusions

Every country's museum scene is composed of a complex system of stakeholders and forces which determine what becomes visible as the cultural heritage of a place. Different forces and priorities, such as politics, the urgency for a sense of national identity, cultural tourism, the need for local economic revitalization, micro-interests, and personal agendas, urge different stakeholders to establish different types of museums.

This final section of the paper connects the findings of the study with the proposed theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums (see Figure 1). The parameters of cultural sustainability included in Figure 1 and the findings of this study help us identify strengths and gaps in the cultural sustainability of the



Cypriot museum environment which can be valuable to policy-makers when drafting cultural policies related to museums. Table 3 provides an overview of what aspects of cultural sustainability state, municipal/ community and private museums contribute to while identifying gaps in cultural sustainability for each of these categories.

When it comes to state museums, a conservative, top-down approach is followed while stress is placed on the construction, preservation, and promotion of Cyprus' national identity and sense of memory. Archaeology dominates state museums with an apparent emphasis on ancient Greek civilization. State museums are mainly 'object-oriented' rather than 'people-oriented', since they pay attention mostly to preservation and education rather than to the visitors' connections with the collections and their pertinent shaped experiences. Considering the parameters of cultural sustainability illustrated in Figure 1, state museums place their emphasis on heritage preservation, the passing on of specialized cultural skills and knowledge, as well as the construction of a public memory and a sense of national identity (see Table 3). As such, policy-makers should encourage the development of new audiences, the representation of cultural diversity, as well as creativity, innovation, and artistic vitality.

On the municipality/ community level, it appears that there is an increased interest in ethnography and folk art (20 out of 36 museums). The twin forces of preservation and tourism influence this decision. However, without the appropriate incentives and expertise, the majority of small rural museums tend to be doomed to conventional, undistinguished, and thus unsustainable futures. Unfortunately, the prospect of these small museums is unsure. Future cultural policies should encourage the unification of the efforts of various communities, since the 'cultural product' they offer is often undistinguishable and thus not strong enough to stimulate cultural tourism or to be competitive. Indeed, economic sustainability, and thus cultural sustainability, can sometimes be achieved by working in close partnership with similar museums (Davies and Wilkinson 2008). Issues of what needs to be preserved and why, and the interconnection between economic and cultural sustainability, become prominent in this case. In terms of cultural sustainability, most rural community museums (the majority of museums in this category) should be encouraged to develop new audiences, invest in the management of their collections and in the handing down of cultural skills and knowledge (see Table 3).

Finally, according to the findings, private museums range from small individual museums that depend too much on their creators to guarantee their sustainability to

Table 3. Cypriot museums and parameters of cultural sustainability.

Status	State	Municipal/ Community	Private
Heritage preservation	x	x	x
Cultural skills and knowledge	x		x
Memory/ identity	x	x	x
New audiences/ inclusion			
Cultural diversity/ intercultural Dialogue			
Creativity and innovation			x
Artistic vitality			x

large innovative financial or religious institutions. Moreover, several private foundations emphasize creativity, innovation, and artistic vitality through temporary exhibitions, something that is absent from state or community museums. Flexible private museums can often result in dynamic institutions that succeed in filling an important gap in the Cypriot museum scene. As a result, cultural policies should encourage the contribution of successful private museums.

Cultural policy-makers can encourage state, municipal/ community, and private museums to consider all parameters of cultural sustainability as suggested above. Additionally, looking at the museum environment as a system or ecology, they can place their emphasis on the cultural sustainability parameters that are absent from the Cypriot museum environment today. It is obvious from Table 3 that most museums in Cyprus, regardless of their legal entity, need to be encouraged through cultural policies to develop new and diverse audiences, represent cultural diversity, and stimulate intercultural dialogue. For example, the research did not identify any museums created in the southern part of Cyprus by ethnic or religious minorities while the representation of these groups in existing museums is minimal or nonexistent.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, state and municipal/ community museums could be more active in encouraging creativity, innovation, and artistic vitality, important concepts from a marketing management perspective (Rentschler 2002) as well as from a quality of life perspective. Community museums, and more particularly small rural museums, need to play a more active role in almost all parameters of cultural sustainability if they want to have a culturally sustainable future.

To conclude, this paper argues that culture should be considered as an equal pillar of sustainable development along with the environment, society, and the economy, and as such, taken into consideration when designing any strategic plans. When it comes to museums, cultural policy-makers ought to look at the 'big picture' of a museum environment and draft policies with cultural sustainability in mind. The main contribution of this paper is that it attempts to create a clear link between museums, cultural sustainability, and cultural policies by offering a theoretical model for the sustainable development of museums and by demonstrating a process of identifying strengths and gaps in cultural sustainability. The case of Cyprus effectively demonstrates how this process can be implemented.

In order to gain further understanding regarding the relationship of museums with cultural sustainability, this model needs to be further tested in future research. For example, further research can use the theoretical model in order to identify gaps in cultural sustainability of a regional or national museum environment, design appropriate cultural policies which aim to fill in these gaps, and test the outcomes of these policies. Further research can also investigate whether or not and to what degree cultural policy-makers incorporate cultural sustainability into their planning processes and how they understand the term 'cultural sustainability'.

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## Notes

1. Since 2012, new museums have opened their doors to the public; hence, the resulting catalogue is not exhaustive.
2. Representatives of the following 13 museums were interviewed. The order of appearance corresponds to the Interviewee number: 1. Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage – Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation; 2. Museum of Kykkos Monastery; 3. Cyprus Museum of Natural History – Photos Photiades Scientific and Cultural Institution; 4. Loukia and Michael Zambela Art Museum; 5. Pedoulas Folklore Museum; 6. Pierides Museum; 7. Larnaca Municipal Museum of Natural History; 8. Museum of Elementary Education Vasas; 9. Cyprus Wine Museum; 10. Cyprus Ethnographic Museum; 11. Museum of Natural History of Pomos; 12. Municipal Museum of Ayia Napa Thalassa; 13. Avgorou Ethnographic Museum.
3. The average recorded time was 17 min.
4. Interviewee 14: Pavlos Paraskevas, Director of Cultural Services, Ministry of Education and Culture.
5. Interviewee 15: Dr. Elena Theodoulou-Charalambous, coordinator of European and International Affairs for Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture.
6. The interviews took place at the respondents' offices in July 2013 and the average recorded time was 35 min for each interview.
7. Nicos Nicolaou, Ministry of Education and Culture. Mr. Nicolaou was in charge of the creation of the museum law in Cyprus and is currently overseeing its implementation.
8. For example, the Cypriot Folk Arts Museum was established in 1937 by the Society of Cypriot Studies.
9. In the case of the 18 museums we were not able to reach, the museum's name and primary collections determined its classification.
10. That is, museums created and run by non-public legal entities such as foundations or non-for-profit companies.
11. By the end of 2013, it is expected that the first museums will complete the process of evaluation that will eventually lead to their recognition (Interviewee 14). Therefore, the law's effect is still to be seen.
12. This limitation reflects the two guiding principles for state funding that are incorporated into the law: first, all state finances allocated for funding recognized museums have to be exclusively targeted towards maximizing the public benefit. Second, all museums have to create their own financial resources necessary to enable them to cover their running costs and safeguard their long-term sustainability (Nicolaou 2013).
13. Since 2013, the *Marfin Laiki Bank Cultural Centre* became a part of the *Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation*. This was the result of the collapse of the Marfin Laiki Bank.
14. The *Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation*, states four main goals on its website (Church of Cyprus n.d.): (1) to conserve and preserve the existing collection, as well as those items that are gradually being repatriated from abroad, (2) to promote the collection, raise awareness, and inform younger generations through educational programs, (3) to project the issue of the plundered treasures to museums abroad through seminars and exhibitions in co-operation with the Department of Antiquities and to provide information to interested parties, and (4) to act as an informal observatory for locating plundered treasures abroad in order to report the issue and raise awareness.
15. A recent exception is the folk museum in occupied Kormakitis which was established by the Maronite community in 2012. Donations came from the UNDP-PFF and the government of the Republic of Cyprus. However, this museum is located in the northern part of Cyprus and therefore outside the scope of this research.

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