



Climate Action Needs Culture

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From birth to death the stories we tell shape the way we see the world. Some are positive some negative some clouded with misinformation. Right now, we're seeing a world that is changing in unprecedented ways.

I grew up in Scotland, but my family comes from Nigeria so cultural heritage means a lot to me. I've also seen first-hand the devastating impact of our changing climate.

When the nations of the world come together in Glasgow what will be the stories we tell of COP26? Reaching Net Zero, and a world adapted to the changed climate, will require massive global transformation. Changes to society and lifestyles that, for many, are hard to imagine. But without culture providing a new positive vision of the future can we actually create it?

The pictures on our screens still reinforce lifestyles which make high-carbon living normal and aspirational. These stories need to change, as the story of slavery has changed. Without new stories we risk repeating the mistakes of the past and are failing to adapt to the future.

Is culture the secret weapon for climate policymakers? A powerful force to shift society's embedded thinking and transform the status quo that's only working for a small minority. Artists, historians, librarians, and curators think differently. They bring different imaginations, skills and experience that can help other professionals think outside the usual boxes. Art and culture is not only a mirror to hold up to society, but, as Bertolt Brecht said, a hammer with which to shape it.

Museums, galleries, libraries, and historic environments. These powerful memory institutions help us understand previous transitions in society. They remind us that things haven't always been the way they are today and have the power to paint a new vision of the future.

People come together in cultural spaces to explore, learn and to think differently to think collectively. Big cultural spaces inspire us to think bigger. And small community spaces provide practical resources and knowledge for local adaptation and resilience. Spaces where people learn new skills and rediscover old ones where they debate new ideas and share traditional wisdom.

Economists, scientists, and politicians can't fix the climate emergency on their own. They can't change the way people think, and that's what's required. Climate change needs culture change and cultural players are waiting to help, armed with powerful skills, resources, and audiences.

So, let's harness their energy and commitment by bringing culture front and centre of climate policy. Let's use our amazing cultural spaces to support a bold and just transition.

Decisions over the next decade will shape the future of humanity. The choice to exclude our cultural resources, or embrace them, could be the most important story of them all.

Our message to the world's climate people and culture people: Climate action needs culture to inspire, to inform, to engage. Let's work together now. Let's change the story.