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A CONTRIBUIÇÃO DA CULTURA NA CRIAÇÃO DE ECONOMIAS INCLUSIVAS E SUSTENTÁVEIS  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE TO THE CREATION OF INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES  
LA CONTRIBUCIÓN DE LA CULTURA A LA CREACIÓN DE ECONOMÍAS INCLUSIVAS Y SOSTENIBLES

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## RESUMO

**Introdução:** O património cultural e natural é um repositório insubstituível de conhecimento e um recurso fundamental para o desenvolvimento sustentável.

**Objetivo:** Examinar se o património cultural e natural do Alto Douro Vinhateiro é capaz de promover a concretização dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) na Agenda 2030, mediante análise da dimensão “Prosperidade e Meios de Subsistência” proposta pela corrente temática Indicadores Cultura | 2030, com particular ênfase no indicador “Governança Cultural”.

**Métodos:** Seguiu uma abordagem metodológica de base qualitativa. Para a recolha de dados primários, recorreu à realização de entrevistas a dirigentes de organismos locais, públicos e privados, com responsabilidades no campo da gestão cultural, posteriormente, analisadas através do software MAXQDA24 Analytics Pro (24.6.0).

**Resultados:** Os resultados obtidos revelaram que existe uma sensibilização por parte dos atores locais na integração da cultura em iniciativas e políticas, capazes de impulsionar a concretização dos ODS e promover a criação de um território culturalmente mais justo e equitativo, alinhado aos princípios de sustentabilidade económica, social e ambiental.

**Conclusão:** O estudo destaca a percepção dos atores locais para a necessidade de implementação de políticas públicas eficazes e iniciativas que promovam a valorização da cultura como um setor estratégico para o crescimento sustentável, a inclusão social e a preservação do património cultural, consolidando a cultura como um elemento essencial para o desenvolvimento holístico do território. Contudo, foram encontradas fragilidades que devem ser minimizadas por meio de políticas estratégicas.

**Palavras-chave:** Alto Douro Vinhateiro; objetivos de desenvolvimento sustentável; governança cultural

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Cultural and natural heritage is an irreplaceable repository of knowledge and a fundamental resource for sustainable development.

**Objective:** To examine whether the cultural and natural heritage of the Alto Douro Wine Region can promote the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda, by analyzing the 'Prosperity and Livelihoods' dimension proposed by the Culture | 2030 Indicators, with particular emphasis on the 'Cultural Governance'.

**Methods:** It followed a qualitative methodological approach. To collect primary data, interviews were conducted with leaders of local public and private organizations with responsibilities in the field of cultural management, which were then analyzed using MAXQDA24 Analytics Pro software (24.6.0).

**Results:** The results show that there is awareness among local actors of the need to integrate culture into initiatives and policies that can drive the realization of the SDGs and promote the creation of a more culturally just and equitable territory, aligned with the principles of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

**Conclusion:** The study highlights local actors' perception of the need to implement effective public policies and initiatives that promote the valorization of culture as a strategic sector for sustainable growth, social inclusion, and the preservation of cultural heritage, consolidating culture as an essential element for the holistic development of the territory. However, weaknesses were found that need to be minimized through strategic policies.

**Keywords:** Alto Douro Wine Region; sustainable development goals; cultural governance

## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** El patrimonio cultural y natural es un depósito insustituible de conocimientos y un recurso fundamental para el desarrollo sostenible.

**Objetivo:** Examinar si el patrimonio cultural y natural de la Región Vitivinícola del Alto Duero puede promover la realización de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) en la Agenda 2030, analizando la dimensión “Prosperidad y medios de vida” propuesta por los Indicadores Cultura | 2030, con especial énfasis en la “Gobernanza cultural”.

**Métodos:** Se siguió un enfoque metodológico cualitativo. Para recopilar datos primarios, se realizaron entrevistas a responsables de organizaciones locales públicas y privadas con responsabilidades en el ámbito de la gestión cultural, que luego se analizaron con el programa MAXQDA24 Analytics Pro (24.6.0).

**Resultados:** Los resultados muestran que los actores locales son conscientes de la necesidad de integrar la cultura en iniciativas y políticas que puedan impulsar la consecución de los ODS y promover la creación de un territorio culturalmente más justo y equitativo, alineado con los principios de sostenibilidad económica, social y medioambiental.

**Conclusión:** El estudio destaca la percepción de los actores locales sobre la necesidad de implementar políticas públicas e iniciativas eficaces que promuevan la valorización de la cultura como sector estratégico para el crecimiento sostenible, la inclusión social y la preservación del patrimonio cultural, consolidando la cultura como elemento esencial para el desarrollo holístico del territorio. Sin embargo, se encontraron debilidades que deben ser minimizadas a través de políticas estratégicas.

**Palabras Clave:** Región Vinícola del Alto Duero; objetivos de desarrollo sostenible; gobernanza cultural

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development (SD) emerged from the recognition of the environmental and social risks associated with rapid economic growth (Vecco & Srakar, 2018, p. 2). The most widely recognised definition was presented in the Brundtland Report, which describes SD as a process that meets current needs without compromising future generations (WCED, 1987, cited by Nurse, 2006, p. 34). This concept articulates the relationship between economic growth and environmental preservation, reinforcing the interdependence between natural resources, the economy, and society (Nocca, 2017, p. 2). Recognition of the three pillars of the SD - environmental, economic, and social - was consolidated at the Rio Conference in 1992 (Oliveira, 2024, p. 11), and was subsequently reaffirmed at United Nations (UN) conferences that established practical measures for its implementation (Nocca, 2017, p. 2). Culture, considered a common good and a strategic resource for SD, has been increasingly valued by the international community (UNESCO, 2019). However, attention to the tangible and intangible elements of culture has only intensified in recent decades (Vecco M., 2010, p. 323). The UN and UNESCO have played a key role in integrating culture into SD, an aspect reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 11 and Target 4 (Vecco & Srakar, 2018, p. 2). However, some authors argue that the presence of culture in the 2030 Agenda is still insufficient (Nocca, 2017, p. 3). The Alto Douro Vinhateiro (ADV) can benefit from the valorization of its natural and cultural resources, although it faces economic, social, and environmental challenges (Capoano & Noversa, 2021, p. 143). The degradation of these assets can jeopardise the region's cultural identity, requiring effective preservation strategies (Vecco & Srakar, 2018, p. 1). This article seeks to demonstrate the importance of culture in strengthening inclusive and sustainable economies by analysing cultural indicators from UNESCO (2019). The research seeks to provide a theoretical basis for adopting cultural strategies that contribute to the sustainability and progress of ADWR by linking culture and sustainable development (Hirvi-Ijäs, et al., 2020, p. 10).

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. The role of culture in the development process

The concept of development arose from the need for economic reconstruction, influencing the community's well-being and quality of life (Maggiore & Vellecco, 2012; Feil & Schreiber, 2017, P. 669). Over time, it has come to adopt a holistic approach, integrating environmental, economic and social dimensions (Delicado, Domingos, & Sousa, 2018, P. 28). Culture has been considered the fourth pillar of sustainability, as it molds human relationships with the environment (Sabatini, 2019, P. 32). Francisco & Morigi (2023, p. 9) emphasize the need to consider that sustainability is a cultural issue. Culture can be seen as community identity or creative activity (OEI & CEPAL, 2021, p. 10). The National Institute of Statistics (INE) (2016, cited by Capoano & Noversa, 2021, P. 140) defines it as a set of human activities related to the creation and dissemination of symbolic content. It represents a common good and has been widely studied in social sciences (Silva, 2022, PP. 4-5). Cultural heritage, in turn, reflects community and social heritage (Pinto, 2023, p. 14). Culture promotes human development, social cohesion, and freedom of expression (Interreg Europe, 2020, p. 10). However, it is not always valued in sustainability policies (Oliveira, Baracho, & Cantoni, 2024, p. 5). It should therefore be recognized as its own domain in public policy (Dessein et al., 2015, p. 30).

### 1.2. Cultural indicators as a method of assessing and monitoring culture

Indicators are essential tools for evaluating and communicating results in public policies and are widely used to monitor progress towards Sustainable Development (SD) (Dessein et al., 2015, p. 50). Their use is recommended by governments and institutions to inform decisions and establish a common language (Pires et al., 2017; Guzmán, Roders, & Colenbrander, 2017, pp. 193-194). However, the presentation of indicators capable of evaluating the cultural dimension of sustainability is a difficult and complex task (Francisco & Morigi, 2023). Culture has gained relevance in the development debate with the 2030 Agenda, being recognized as a driver of sustainability (Ordonez-Ponce, 2022). UNESCO emphasizes the importance of evaluation processes and reliable indicators to measure the impact of culture on SD (Nocca, 2017, pp 5-6). To this end, the Culture 2030 Indicators were created, a set of 22 indicators spread across four dimensions, enabling the cultural contribution to the 2030 Agenda Goals to be understood (UNESCO, 2019; Valiati & Moller, 2016, p. 26). Despite progress, the integration of culture and heritage with the SDGs is still limited (El Faouri & Sibley, 2024, p. 4). The Portugal 2030 Strategy recognizes culture as essential for innovation, social cohesion, and tourism, providing for investments in digitization, decentralization, and internationalization of the sector. In the regional context, the Douro 2030 plan considers culture to be a central axis for identity, tourism, education, social inclusion, and sustainable development (CIM Douro, 2023). As such, culture is not just an element of identity, but a strategic factor for economic and social progress.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Sample

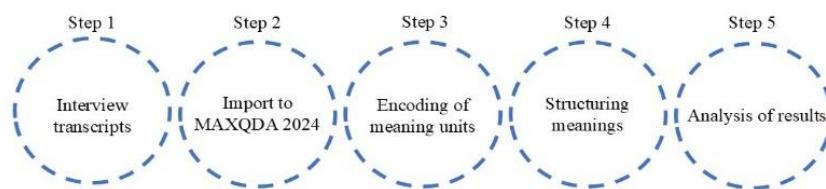
This study analyses the Alto Douro Wine Region, which was classified as a World Heritage Site in 2001. Its cultural and natural heritage of universal value has made an important contribution to increasing tourist demand, economic progress, and the general well-being of the community. Between 2013 and 2023, the territory experienced substantial growth, both in the number of overnight stays, around 200%, and in revenue from tourist accommodation, with a significant increase of over 600% (PORDATA, 2025). Culture played a key role in this dynamic.

### 2.2 Data collection instruments

To obtain qualitative data, a semi-structured questionnaire was conducted between February and March, adjusted from literature references to suit the context under investigation. Before it was applied, a pre-test was carried out with three participants to check the clarity and relevance of the questions in the interview script. The study involved 9 DMOs from the tourism sector in the ADWR. They were selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, via email invitations. The inclusion criteria stipulated that the participants had management positions in companies responsible for boosting tourism and that they agreed to take part in the study on a voluntary basis. There was also no incentive to take part, and all the participants agreed to share the content of the interviews for academic purposes. In this study, thematic saturation was reached after 9 interviews, considering that additional questionnaires would not add more information to the content already collected (Fuchs et al., 2024). The interviews followed a narrative and exploratory format, with structured questions to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and perceptions. Each interview lasted an average of 45 minutes and took place in person or online, depending on the availability of each participant. The interviews were conducted individually, recorded on audio for later transcription, and analyzed using MAXQDA24 Analytics Pro software (24.6.0).

### 2.3 Statistical analysis

This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, using Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) to explore the perceptions of DMO managers in the tourism sector. The analysis was carried out using MaxQDA24 software, recognized for its efficiency in qualitative studies of the individual perceptions of participants in the context of tourism (Sousa et al., 2024; Vieira et al., 2024). The data used in this study were analyzed systematically, with the units of meaning identified and coded using the software. This process ensured that no relevant information was excluded, ensuring a comprehensive and representative analysis of the participants' responses, guaranteeing the validity of the analysis. Figure 2 illustrates the methodological flow followed, highlighting the stages of identifying, coding, and synthesizing the units of meaning. These stages included transcribing the interviews, reviewing and organizing the data, coding and categorizing the relevant information, as well as identifying emerging patterns and trends. This approach made it possible to capture the breadth and depth of the participants' responses, guaranteeing the integrity of the data and reinforcing the credibility of the results presented.



**Figure 1** - Description of the data analysis process

Source: adapted from MAXQDA24

## 3. RESULTS

The information collected was carefully analyzed, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions, opinions, and experiences. Based on this process of interpreting and analyzing the content of the interviews, six themes of analysis were considered and validated, namely: Heritage and Sustainability; Education and Inclusion; Financing and Partnerships; Social Impact; Legislation and Policies; Cultural Governance, which made it possible to explain the participants' perception of Sustainable Development (SDGs) (see Figure 2 attached). These themes were adapted from scales validated in the literature (Dessein et. al, 2015; Nocca, 2017; Vecco & Srakar, 2018; Jelinčić, 2021; Ordóñez-Ponce, 2022). Figure 2 shows the dynamics of the variables in

understanding the theme under study. According to the results of this study, the most contributory themes in explaining perceptions of the SDGs are Legislation and Policies (55), Education and Inclusion (46) and Financing and Partnerships (29).

Code System	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	SUM
Heritage and Sustainability	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	21
Education and Inclusion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	46
Financing and Partnerships	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	29
Social Impact	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	12
Legislation and Policies	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	55
Cultural Governance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	23
Sustainable Development (SDGs)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	31
$\Sigma$ SUM	25	33	30	28	21	18	22	19	21	217

**Figure 2 - Analysis of Emerging Themes**

Source: adapted from MAXQDA24

#### 4. DISCUSSION

To further analyze the origin of participants' perceptions of the role of the SDGs in the cultural sector, it is not enough to observe the weight and occurrence of the emerging themes; it is essential to understand how they relate to each other (Gizzi & Rädiker, 2021). Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the themes being analyzed and their relationships. By analyzing the origin of these relationships between the determinants in this study, it is possible to understand how the relationships analyzed above are established and what their meaning is. Based on this approach, it is possible to understand the effect of these determinants, including some relevant indirect relationships that may also be exerting an influence. According to Figure 3, the results confirm that the theme "legislation and policies" is a key theme in explaining the perception of the SDGs, since there is a strong and direct relationship between them. Furthermore, the themes "financing and partnerships" and "education and inclusion" also have a notable positive effect on the perception of the implementation of the SDGs. It is also worth noting that the theme "legislation and policies" has a significant positive effect on the themes "cultural governance" and "funding and partnerships". On the other hand, apparently, despite "cultural governance" having a positive effect on the perception of the application of the SDGs, this effect is not as significant when compared to other predecessor effects, which may perhaps mean that the legislation and policies foreseen for the cultural governance of the territory may be ineffective with regard to compliance with the SDGs, or are simply not as visible in practice for the participants of this study. On the other hand, according to our results, the perception of the SDG has a positive effect on "social impact" and "heritage and sustainability". Although the effect is not very evident, these relationships suggest that for DMO managers, the social impact depends on the actions that are developed and aligned with the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, they also believe that the dynamization of heritage and its sustainable promotion are correlated with the application of these same SDGs. Cultural governance is essential to ensure inclusive, accessible and effective cultural policies, relating to the SDGs in different ways, namely through its contribution to the creation of more transparent and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) or through its capacity to promote cultural diversity and equity, ensuring the representation of all social groups (SDG 10). Well-structured governance can also help create an environment that favors the implementation of effective cultural policies, which are fundamental for defining parameters for the cultural sector's operations, whether in encouraging and protecting cultural and creative diversity (SDG 8) or access to a more complete and diverse education (SDG 4). Funding and partnerships are crucial for the growth of the cultural sector. Investments in culture can be public or private, and partnerships with international organizations or companies can help expand the sector's operations. Adequate financing and strategic partnerships contribute to the sustainable growth of culture and social inclusion (SDG 17) and the creation of innovative and sustainable cultural infrastructures (SDG 9). Education plays a fundamental role in promoting cultural inclusion and creating critical, creative, and conscious citizens. Cultural education not only values diversity but also promotes active citizenship and global solidarity as it enables individuals to understand and value different cultures, promoting a more tolerant and inclusive society (SDG 4) in addition to reducing social and economic inequalities, providing opportunities for marginalized groups (SDG 10). The emerging themes are not only interconnected, but also have reciprocal effects, namely: (i) effective cultural governance can create the necessary environment for the formulation of well-structured cultural policies; (ii) financing and partnerships can ensure the implementation of cultural policies, in addition to strengthening governance; (iii) education and inclusion can be more effective when associated with inclusive cultural policies and partnerships with different social actors, allowing access to culture at different levels; (iv) well-developed governance and legislation can facilitate access to funding and partnerships, which in turn can promote cultural initiatives that are more inclusive, generating greater impact on cultural education. All these themes are fundamental to the success of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. When worked on in an integrated manner, they can generate a virtuous cycle, in which each one contributes to strengthening and expanding the others.

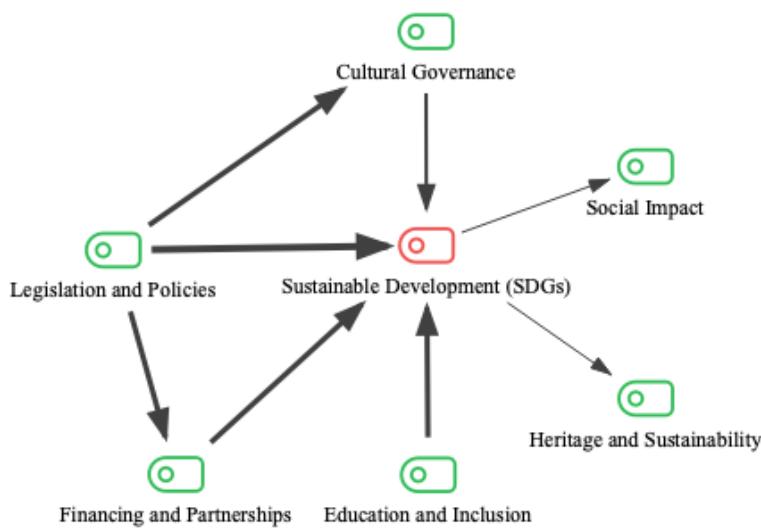


Figure 3 - Correlational effects between emerging themes.

Source: adapted from MAXQDA24

The analysis indicates that the perception of the SDGs in the cultural sector results from a network of determinants, with "legislation and policies" playing a central role by directly influencing the SDGs and indirectly impacting other areas such as "cultural governance" and "funding and partnerships." "Education and inclusion" and "funding" also show a positive effect on the implementation of the SDGs, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach. While some effects are less noticeable, all emerging themes are interrelated and collectively contribute to promoting a more sustainable and inclusive culture aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the perception of tourism sector managers about the influence of culture in achieving the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda, focusing the analysis on cultural governance. The research question addressed was: "How can cultural governance influence the achievement of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda?" The results indicate that there is an interconnection between the emerging themes, which are essential for the sustainable development of culture. Culture plays a leading role in the economy, identity, and social cohesion. The implementation of effective public policies and the appreciation of culture as a strategic sector can encourage sustainable growth, social inclusion, and the preservation of cultural heritage, consolidating culture as an essential element for sustainable development. However, strengthening the sector requires strategic measures so that it positions itself as a tool for progress with direct implications for the economy, society, and the environment. This way, it can contribute to a more inclusive, innovative, and economically dynamic society. A good structuring and integration of these elements makes it possible to create a solid and efficient cultural ecosystem, capable of driving economic growth, social inclusion, and the appreciation of cultural diversity. Cultural governance establishes the institutional and structural foundations necessary for the formulation of effective policies, promoting transparency, social participation, and equity in the distribution of resources. Legislation and cultural policies, in turn, guarantee rights, regulate the sector, and encourage the protection and promotion of culture as a driver of development. Without an adequate legislative framework, cultural initiatives may face difficulties in consolidating and expanding their social and economic impact. Funding and partnerships represent one of the biggest challenges for the cultural sector, as access to resources is essential to ensure the sustainability of projects and programs. The involvement of the private sector, international organizations, and public institutions can expand the reach of cultural initiatives and foster innovation in the sector. Finally, education and inclusion are key elements in democratizing access to culture, ensuring that historically marginalized groups have opportunities for active participation. Culture, when integrated into education, strengthens social identity, stimulates critical thinking, and contributes to the construction of more just and tolerant societies. Therefore, these emerging themes should not be analyzed in isolation, but rather as interdependent parts of a system that, when well-articulated, can significantly advance the SDGs and promote a more sustainable, inclusive, and culturally rich future for all societies. The analysis of participants' perceptions on the role of the SDGs in the cultural sector reveals a complex and interconnected panorama of determining factors. As demonstrated by the results, simply identifying emerging themes and their frequency of occurrence is not enough to understand the depth of the SDGs' impact on culture. It is essential to observe the interrelationships between these factors to identify the dynamics that shape the perception and implementation of the SDGs in the sector. When worked synergistically, these elements create a cycle that strengthens cultural policies, expands their reach, and contributes to the objectives established in the 2030 Agenda. Thus, cultural policy makers and managers must consider these factors together, promoting strategies that ensure the effective incorporation of the SDGs in the cultural sector and its transformation into a vector of sustainable social and economic development. Being focused on the perspectives of destination managers, the analysis was limited to the institutional view of

cultural policies and local SDG actions. The absence of residents' perspectives restricts understanding of the lived impacts and community experiences. Future research should incorporate participatory methods, such as interviews or surveys with local residents, to provide a more comprehensive and community-based view of the relationship between culture and sustainability. Adopting an integrated approach to implementing the SDGs in the cultural sector is essential to maximize their impact and ensure the sustainability of actions.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization, A.S.; data curation, I.V.; formal analysis A.S. and D.F., funding acquisition, I.V.; methodology, A.S. and I.V.; supervision, E.A.; writing-review and editing, E.A. and D.F.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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