

Congrès annuel des musées suisses | 22 August 2024

# Museums as sustainability pioneers? Global challenge, local action

Prof. Dr. Martin Müller  
Julie Grieshaber



## The «Culture & Sustainability» landscape in 2020

Julie's Bicycle  
CREATIVE • CLIMATE • ACTION

**BROADWAY**  
green  alliance



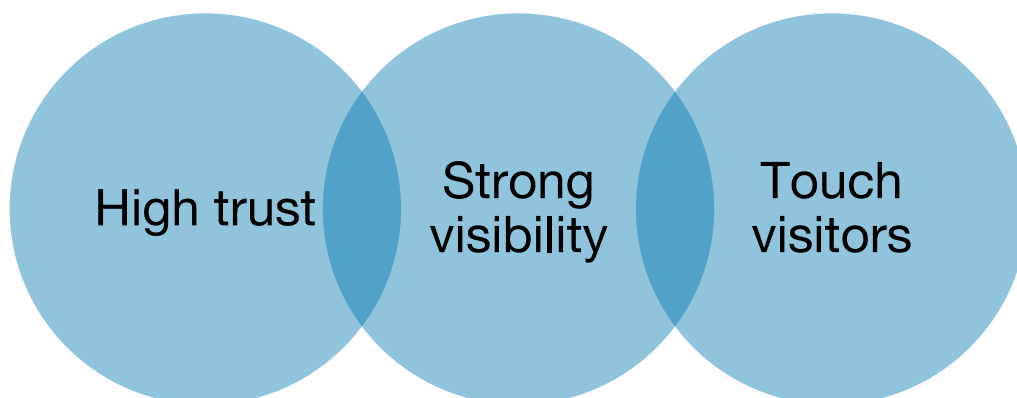
## The «Culture & Sustainability» landscape in 2024



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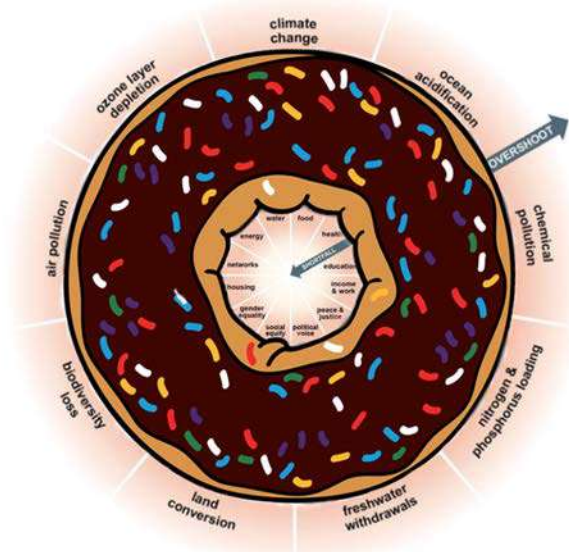
**Museums have a high potential to shape the sustainability transition.**



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## The doughnut is the most established global model.



Raworth 2017

## Culture for the Planet as a transformational research project

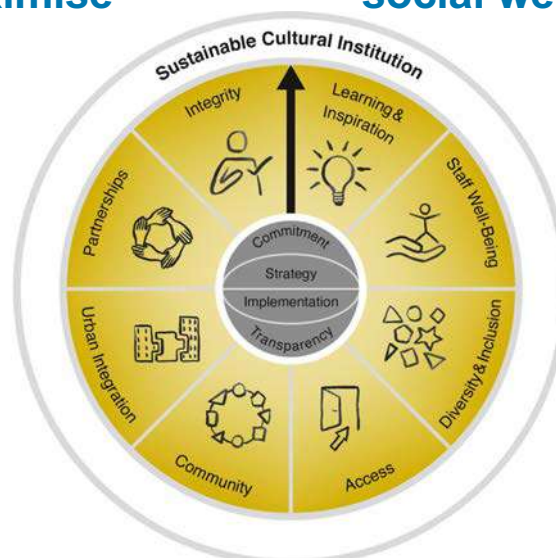
Exploratory Interviews	ICOM International Council of Museums	International Society for the Performing Arts ISPA	Julie's Bicycle CREATIVE • CLIMATE • ACTION	UNESCO World Heritage Centre	Les Angures	Environment & Culture Partners
Best Practice Interviews	متحف المستقبل MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE	MASP	M+	GUGGENHEIM BILBAO	MIEG Musée d'ethnographie de Genève	Smithsonian AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM
Expert Panel	Palais de Lomé	MUSE	FIELD.	TATE	V&A	Museums Association
	DE MUNT LA MONNAIE	THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA MUSEO NACIONAL	馬會氣候變化博物館 THE CLIMATE MUSEUM OF CLIMATE CHANGE	MoMA	SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	iber museos museos

## Any sustainable organisation must build on a solid governance...



Müller & Grieshaber 2023

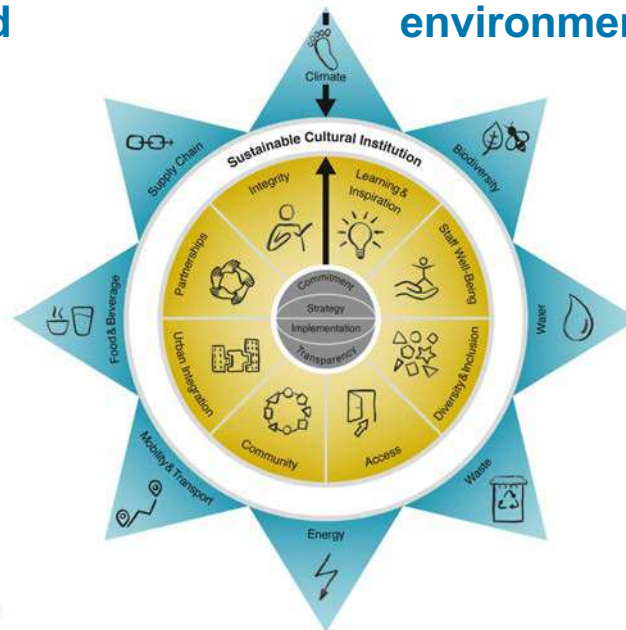
## ...seek to maximise social well-being and...



Müller & Grieshaber 2023

...safeguard

environmental health.

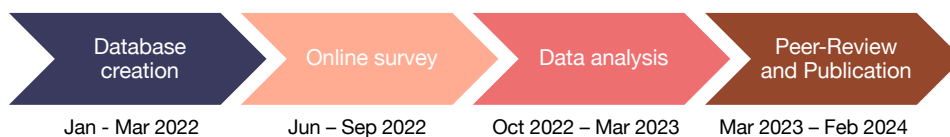


Müller & Grieshaber 2023

**We asked 800+ of the leading museums, theatres and opera houses how they are doing on this model.**

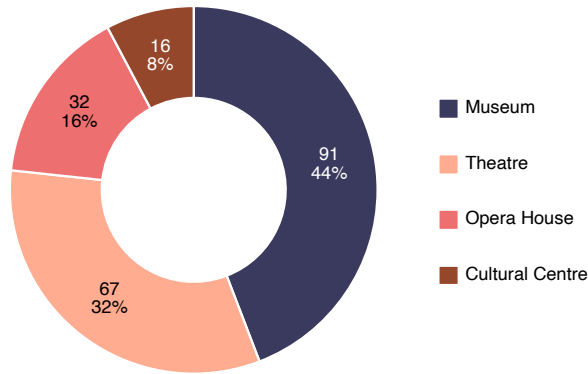
First systematic global survey on sustainability in cultural organizations

- Evaluation of  $4 + 8 + 8 = 20$  sustainability dimensions [0-100]



## 206 organisations participated...

Responses: number of organisations by type



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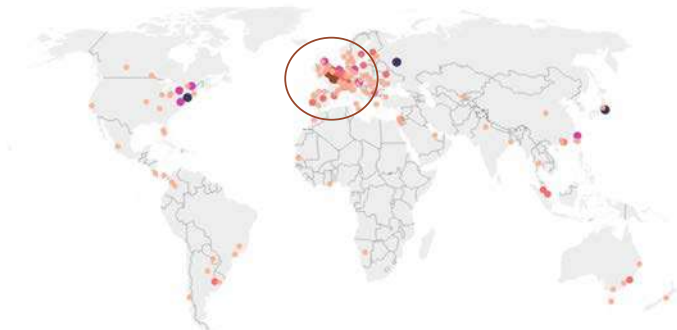
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## ... from all over the world

Results: geographic distribution of organisations per city

Number of organisations  
1 2 3 4 ≥ 5



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Results: geographic distribution of organisations per city, zoom on Europe

Number of organisations  
1 2 3 4 ≥ 5

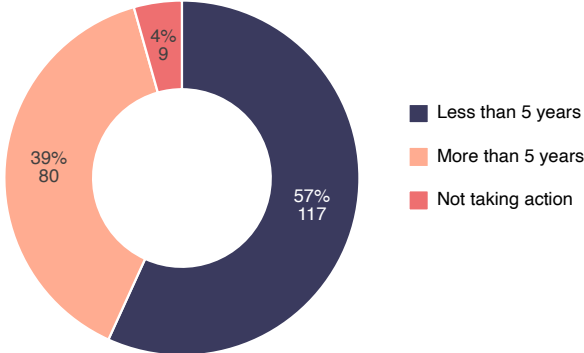


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# Sustainability is recent at the management level.

Since when has sustainability been a topic/question for your organisation?



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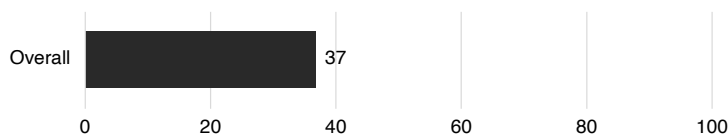
## The overall composite score is 37...

### Results: overall scores



“In sustainability, I would say we are just ahead of hydrocarbon and manufacturing - **but behind everybody else.**”

*Interview with sustainability expert*



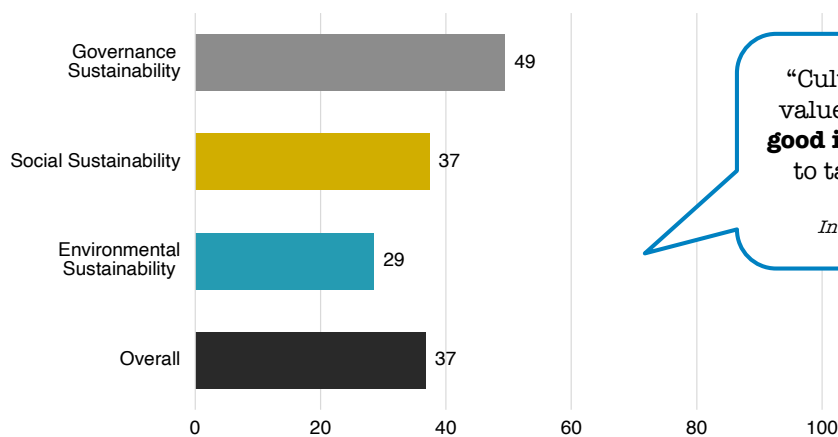
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## There are important differences between the 3 spheres.

### Results: overall scores



“Culture used to argue for their value to be intrinsic: “**culture is good in itself** and it doesn’t need to take climate into account” .”

*Interview with board member of ICOM*

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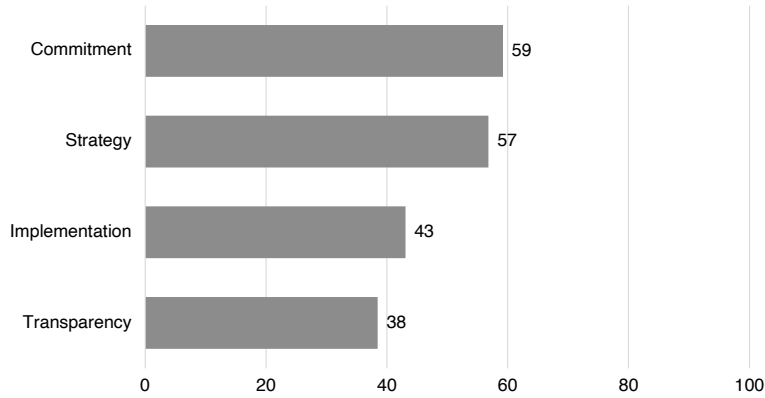
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# Governance sustainability

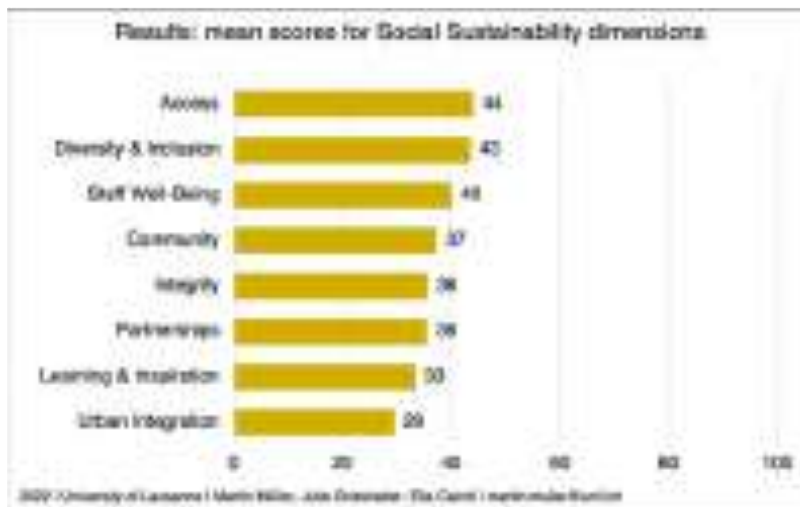
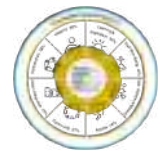


Results: mean scores for Governance Sustainability dimensions



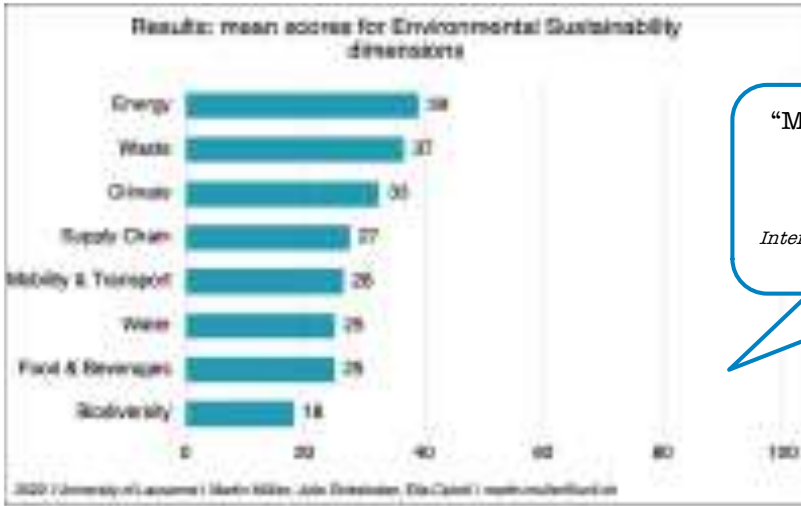
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# Social sustainability



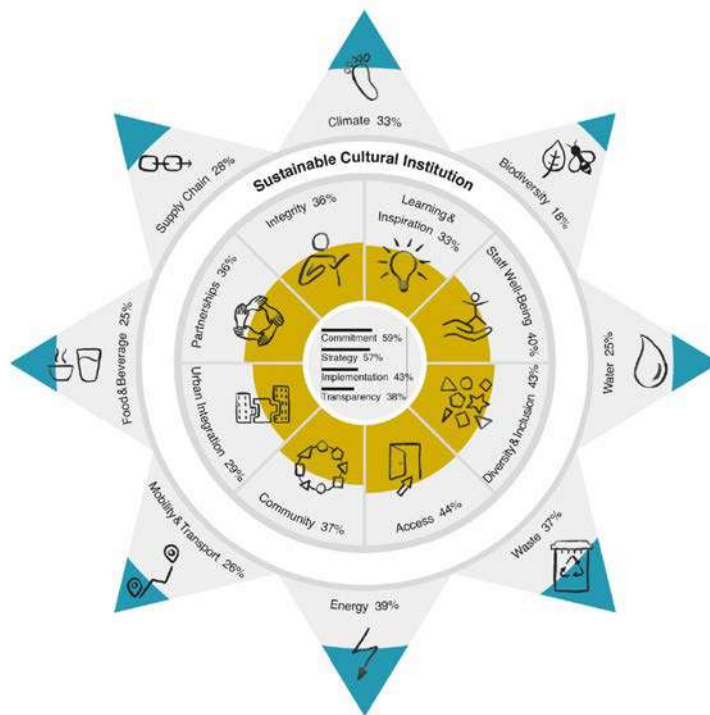
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# Environnemental sustainability



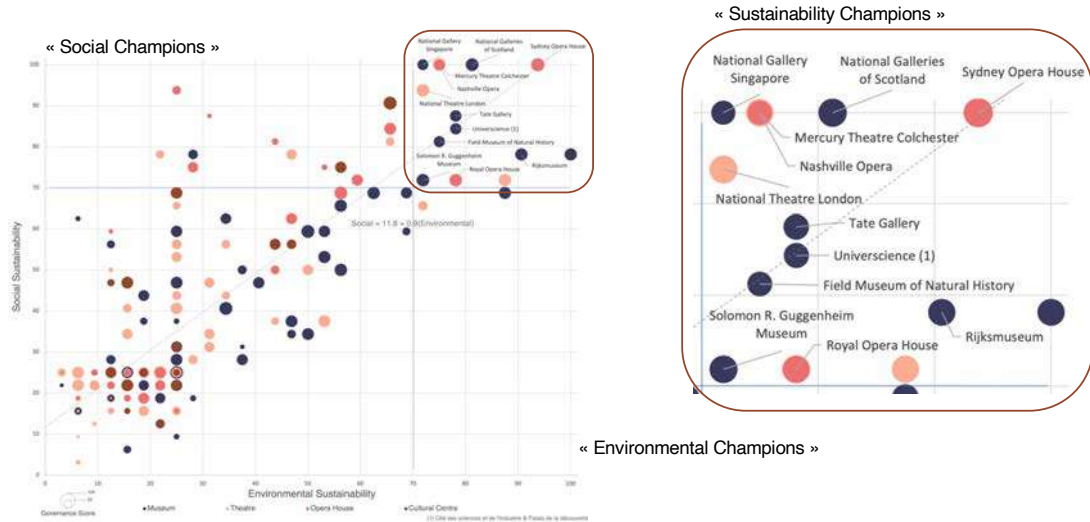
“More frequently, it’s individuals that take on the recycling because there is no system” .”

*Interview avec une consultante en durabilité, spécialiste du secteur culturel*



# Sustainability Champions are rare.

Results: sustainability scores by organisation



## Four factors predict higher sustainability scores.



Green team



Government requirements



Size of the institution



Location

“Everyone brought their expertise to producing [the Sustainability Plan], so everyone felt they had a stake in it.”

*Interview with Sustainability Officer at V&A*

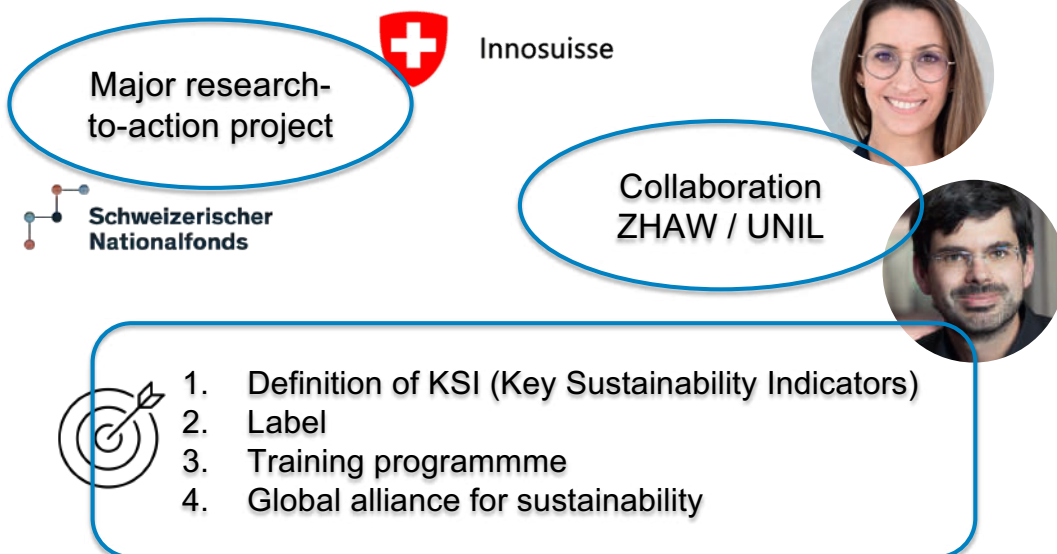
## So what can museums do for sustainability?

- Make a collective commitment to a sustainability agenda.
- Define and adopt sector-specific baseline indicators.
- Tie a part of funding to sustainability objectives.

“I just think that everyone [in the sector] is doing bits and pieces, which is great, but **it just doesn't feel consolidated** and strong enough.”

*Interview with Sydney Opera House*

## Next step: Culture Goes Sustainable



## Things are moving - stay tuned!

CIMAM

ICOM international council of museums

iber museos museums

prohelvetia

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Ki Culture

HAPPY MUSEUMS  
Nachhaltigkeit konkret!

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GCC



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SUSTAINABLE THEATRE ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN ENVIRONMENTAL SHIFT

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<https://iqd.unil.ch/martin.muller/>

### Publications

Müller, M., & Grieshaber, J. (2024). How sustainable are cultural organizations? A global benchmark. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 20(1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2024.2312660>.

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