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## Editorial Note, Special Issue: Cultural Diversity for Sustainable Development in Art & Design

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**Editorial Note for Shodhkosh Special Issue  
'Cultural Diversity for Sustainable Development in Art and Design'  
Professor Catherine Harper, British University in Egypt, July 2023**

The contributors to this special issue consider how urban, rural, local and global communications, experimental and innovative media used alongside indigenous knowledge and folkloric craft practices, respect for disparity of human identity, heritage, tradition and culture, and the importance of documenting, preserving and protecting, and enhancing creativity and cultural diversity is essential for our collective future. They presented their research at the Woxsen and Banaras Hindu Universities' international conference 'Cultural Diversity for Sustainable Development in Art and Design' in June 2023.

The context of their work is the sophisticated networks across nations that link product ideation, production, consumption, post-consumption management, and policy in highly complex chains, that see wealth move upwards often at the expense of those lower in the chain, those nearer to the making of the products, arguably those with the greatest creative talent and technical skill. In an inverted triangle of development, the advancement of economies is often at the expense of sustenance of communities, resources, histories and individual humans.

Radical, and in some cases painful, adjustments to how we live are no longer 'design decisions' or 'sustainable choices'. While we have considered for some time that perhaps we need to slow down, take time to breath, consume less and cease striving, we have not yet come collectively and universally to understanding that advancement is not always positive, that we are operating an obsolete and unsustainable business model, and that thinking in terms of a smaller Earth is conceivably our only solution.

These papers challenge us to think about why humans first created, so that their 'things' were not only functional and utilitarian. Communities from distinct geographic regions across the world developed decorative, expressive, ritualised, secular and sacred objects from early in human development. Individuals sustained themselves, their communities, their beliefs and their environments by applying their creative imaginations to their tools, coverings, shelters, surroundings, this growing rapidly in sophistication, purpose and embeddedness as human societies and cultures evolved.

Our ancestors preserved cultural diversity without even thinking of it, both in their material surroundings and civilisations, but also through storytelling that illuminated their spirit world and imaginations, and gave us the myths and legends, superstitions and belief systems, ideologies and moralities that persist into our folk traditions, societal customs, disparate identities, and artisan-based cultures today. This excellent Special Issue resists a homogenised globalist culture that erases the diversity that nourishes vital philosophical, intellectual, instinctual or imaginary concepts that make up the immaterial and intangible aspects of sustainable development that we so need to protect.