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ICH AND SOCIAL HARMONY - LHASA EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ON SDG

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore the linkage among Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #16 Peace and Design Thinking with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of UNESCO, for example, Lhasa cultural sites and traditional clothing Chuba for quality project design elements of "Human and Peace" for SDG #4.7: Knowledge Transfer. In order to define the possible variables that were connected to Social Harmony, a qualitative N'vivo research was carried out. In the study, six reports and articles were examined for the top three elements for social harmony. From the Lhasa experiential learning trip with UNESCO sightseeing places with ICH elements, for example, traditional clothing knowledge, and community engagement, we understand that create "spaces of play" in photo-tourism may honour both environmental sustainability and cultural identity. The findings underscore the importance of aligning 'Social Harmony SDG#16 Peace with Consistent Social Values of Cultures, Social Constructionist Explanation and Ongoing Research on Peace.

KEYWORDS: Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); SDG; UNESCO, Design Thinking.

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on UN Sustainable Development Goals **SDG #11 & Target #11.3** “By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries”; **Target #11.4** “Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage”; and **Target #11.7** “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities” with the rapid urbanization and environmental challenges faced by cities today, innovative approaches to building design and construction is needed to be considered. Green building practices, which emphasize sustainability, resource efficiency, and environmental stewardship, have gained traction as a response to these challenges. This paper examines how these practices intersect with ICH – elements of culture that are not tangible but are vital to community identity and heritage.

Referring to the official website of UNESCO that The Potala Palace (photo 1), Lhasa is the winter palace of the Dalai Lama since the 7th century. “.. symbolizes Tibetan Buddhism and its central role in the traditional administration of Tibet. The complex, comprising the White and Red Palaces with their ancillary buildings, is built on Red Mountain in the centre of Lhasa Valley, at an altitude of 3,700m. Also founded in the 7th century, the Jokhang Temple Monastery (photo 2) is an exceptional Buddhist religious complex. Norbulinka (photo 3), the Dalai Lama's former summer palace, constructed in the 18th century, is a masterpiece of Tibetan art.”

In this paper, there are two levels of analysis, N’vivo on literature related to social harmony and experiential case study on Lhasa with photographs to highlight the beauty and originality of the architecture of these three sites for SDG#3 wellness of visitors and SDG#16 peace of Lhasa’s rich ornamentation on traditional clothing and photo-tourism in nature and costume for a “space of play” mentioned by Brown (2021, p.3) for harmony with SDG#8 decent job creation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Paliwoda-Matiolanska et al. (2020) mentioned that “*understanding psychology from a cultural perspective starts with a better appreciation of what is culture.*” In order to make the cities are sustainable with green elements”, we may need to explore the integration of culture, race, nationality, and ethnicity from cultural perspective. Paliwoda et al. highlighted

that “*culture can be used to describe activities or behaviors, refer to the heritage or tradition of a group, describe rules and norms, describe learning or problem solving, define the organization of a group, or refer to the origins of a group. Culture can refer to general characteristics; food and clothing; housing and technology; economy and transportation; individual and family activities; community and government; welfare, religion, and science; and sex and the life cycle.*” (p. 7) Therefore, the next section is going to explore the key elements of ICH with green building for achieving **SDG #11** targets of United Nations.

“Green Building Practices, Green Financing, and the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritages” encompasses a range of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate sustainability in architecture and urban planning while respecting cultural heritage.

The literature review can be broken down into three major headings as follow:

2.1. Green Building Practices

Green building practices focus on creating structures that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout their life cycle. This includes:

- Sustainable Materials: The use of eco-friendly materials that minimize environmental impact.
- Energy Efficiency: Implementing technologies and designs that reduce energy consumption, such as better insulation and energy-efficient windows (Samuelson, 2023).
- Water Conservation: Systems designed to reduce water usage and manage stormwater effectively.

2.2. Green Financing

Green financing refers to funding mechanisms that support sustainable development projects. This includes:

- Incentives for Sustainable Practices: Financial incentives for developers who incorporate green technologies and practices into their projects.
- Investment in Renewable Energy: Funding for projects that utilize renewable energy sources, which is becoming increasingly important as regulations tighten around carbon emissions.
- Lifecycle Cost Analysis: Evaluating the long-term savings associated with green buildings, which can offset initial higher costs (Samuelson, 2023).

2.3. Preservation Of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage involves safeguarding traditions, practices, and expressions that are vital to cultural identity.

This can intersect with green building practices in several ways:

- **Community Engagement:** Involving local communities in the planning and design processes to ensure that cultural values are respected and integrated into new developments.
- **Adaptive Reuse:** Transforming existing structures in a way that honors their historical significance while upgrading them to meet modern sustainability standards.
- **Cultural Sensitivity in Design:** Ensuring that new buildings reflect local architectural styles and cultural practices, which can enhance community acceptance and pride (Ong, 2017).

The integration of these elements presents both challenges and opportunities:

- **Regulatory Landscape:** As cities implement stricter environmental regulations, developers must adapt quickly to remain compliant while also considering cultural heritage.
- **Technological Advancements:** Innovations in building materials and energy systems can facilitate the creation of sustainable buildings that also respect cultural contexts.
- **Funding and Resources:** Access to green financing can help bridge the gap between traditional building practices and modern sustainable approaches, fostering a more holistic view of development that includes cultural preservation (Samuelson 2023).

In summary, the intersection of green building practices, green financing, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritages is a complex but essential area of study that requires collaboration among architects, urban planners, cultural historians, and financial experts.

3. DESIGN THINKING AND LHASA ICH

The application of Design Thinking in photo-tourism for “space of play” involves an understanding of the cultural context and emotional needs of local and overseas tourists. Green buildings with different colors of yellow, red and black in harmony with the nature in Lhasa increasingly incorporate tourist-centered design, emphasizing authentic color schemes that resonate with local traditions and visitor expectations. Service quality in this context extends beyond physical infrastructure to encompass aesthetic coherence, cultural authenticity, and sensory experiences. As Zhang et

al. (2023) argue, integrating color psychology with service design enhances tourists’ emotional well-being and satisfaction, fostering a memorable cultural experience.

In the past five years, there has been significant research on the application of color in architecture, emphasizing its role in cultural preservation and tourism development. For instance, Wang (2020) mentioned that “In the long-term development and evolution process of Tibetan architecture, due to the unique geographical location, natural environment, climatic conditions, religious beliefs and national customs, it gradually formed a national architectural image with strong national color. The color of Tibetan architecture is one of the most visual elements that can reflect the shape and characteristics of architecture. Its colorful and simple colors have become one of the most obvious features of Tibetan architecture, expressing a strong and strong plateau atmosphere and ethnicity, heterogeneous.” (p.440)

Wang further pointed out that color of architecture conveys beauty and emotional substance to the audience and can be extended to specific cultural connotations. (p. 44))

“Tibetan architecture likes to use simple but strong colors to express the unique ethnic and religious personality of the building, combining architectural style and material selection to highlight its distinctive features” (Wang, 2020, p. 441)

Besides, Zhang et al. (2023) highlights culturally sensitive color schemes can reinforce identity and promote sustainable tourism. Similarly, Li et al. (2021) demonstrate that environmentally friendly color materials contribute to eco-tourism and local economic growth. Design thinking approaches encourage innovative yet culturally respectful color applications, ensuring that modernization does not dilute cultural symbols. These strategies support the development of Lhasa as a peaceful, wellness-centered, and economically vibrant cultural tourism destination.

Lhasa’s building colors embody a profound cultural heritage that promotes wellness and peace, aligning with SDGs #3 and #16. Through strategic color application rooted in traditional symbolism and modern design principles, Lhasa fosters a sense of spiritual harmony, mental health, and social stability. The vibrant cityscape not only serves as a living cultural archive but also as a catalyst for economic opportunities through tourism, photography, and memory preservation. Understanding the significance of colors in architecture and urban design is crucial for sustainable development. The integration of Wang’s

insights with recent literature demonstrates that culturally sensitive color schemes, combined with innovative design thinking and quality service, can transform Lhasa into a model of peaceful, wellness-oriented, and economically sustainable cultural tourism.

4. PART 1 - QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Research was performed to analyse the factors possibly related to six selected articles published from 2023 to 2025 on social harmony by using NVivo for a text search for the mentioned keywords. The search result showed that a few of the factors for Social Harmony SDG#16 (1,123 references): 1)

Consistent Social Values of Cultures (1,642 references), 2) Social Constructionist Explanation (1,138 references), and 3) Ongoing Research on Peace (646 references), Shared Values to Reduce Conflict (385 references), and Positive Self Identity (332 references). (Table 1. And Diagram 1). This is managerial relevant to understanding community development with social harmony from a new perspective for understanding the importance of culture, identity and research on peace for photo-tourism with decent job creations for the community. However, qualitative NVivo findings need to have case study and / or experiential learning on actual sites for competency building on photo-tourism service providers.

Table 1: - Text Search on Factors for Social Harmony.

Name	Sources	References
'Social Harmony SDG16 Peace	6	1123
'Consistent Social Values of Cultures	6	1642
'Social Constructionist Explanation	6	1138
'Ongoing Research on Peace	6	646
'Shared Value to reduce Conflict	6	385
'Positive Self Identity	6	332

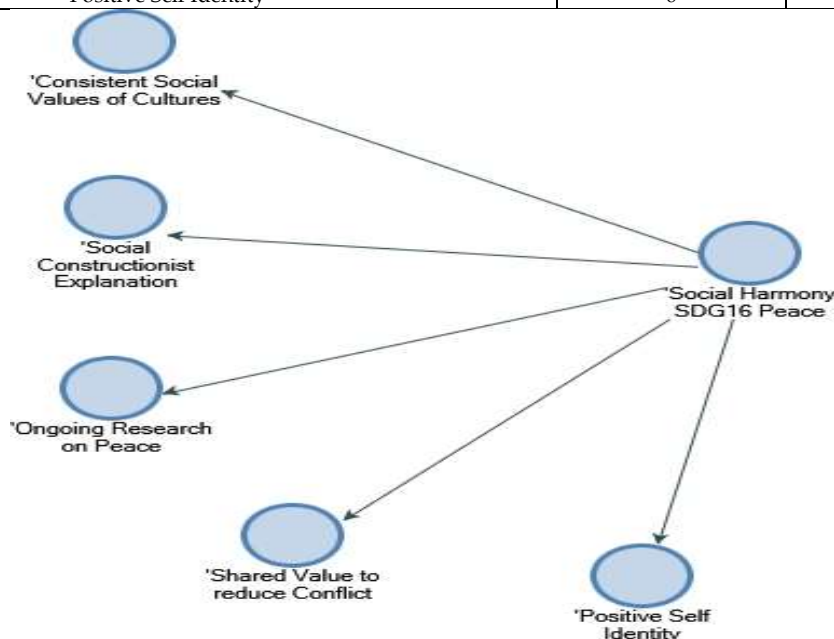


Diagram 1: - Elements For Social Harmony Sdg16 Peace.

Table 2: - Social Harmony Sdg 16 Peace - Text Search.

Name	References	Coverage
MDPI Social_Sciences_Teaching_in_the_Face_of_the_Global_Challenges_of_the_21st_Century (1)	771	0.26%
Polarization in research What is it why is it problematic and how can it be addressed	39	0.17%
Shock and Recovery SDG s41599-024-03973-8	47	0.17%
Social Polarization s44271-024-00089-2	149	0.50%
Societal Polarization esau-2025-the-quality-of-connections-deliberative-reciprocity-and-inclusive-listening-as-antidote-to-destructive	90	0.41%
WCCAE_UNESCO Framework_EN_0	25	0.19%

Table 3: -Consistent Social Values of Cultures - Text Search.

Name	References	Coverage
MDPI Social_Sciences_Teaching_in_the_Face_of_the_Global_Challenges_of_the_21st_Century(1)	1043	0.36%
Polarization in research What is it why is it problematic and how can it be addressed	92	0.40%
Shock and Recovery SDG s41599-024-03973-8	45	0.18%
Social Polarization s44271-024-00089-2	152	0.51%
Societal Polarization esau-2025-the-quality-of-connections-deliberative-reciprocity-and-inclusive-listening-as-antidote-to-destructive	99	0.45%
WCCAE_UNESCO Framework_EN_0	211	1.91%

Table 4: - Social Constructionist Explanation - Text Search.

Name	References	Coverage
MDPI Social_Sciences_Teaching_in_the_Face_of_the_Global_Challenges_of_the_21st_Century(1)	780	0.27%
Polarization in research What is it why is it problematic and how can it be addressed	58	0.36%
Shock and Recovery SDG s41599-024-03973-8	40	0.15%
Social Polarization s44271-024-00089-2	153	0.52%
Societal Polarization esau-2025-the-quality-of-connections-deliberative-reciprocity-and-inclusive-listening-as-antidote-to-destructive	89	0.40%
WCCAE_UNESCO Framework_EN_0	18	0.14%

4.1. Findings

Based on the context of Lhasa during the experiential learning journey in April, 2026 and the themes of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), along with the application of design thinking of 5 steps – empathy, define, ideate, experiment and validate, photo-tourism with decent job creation for SDG#8 is feasible. In order to promoting SDG#3 wellness with social harmony in Lhasa and SDG#8 Decent Jobs through Photo-tourism in Lhasa, it is realised that a Design Thinking Approach is needed to educated the young people in Lhasa for job creations, for example, marketing team for recruiting tourists who intend to try chuba and traditional clothing for creating a space of play, photo-shooting and photo-editing team for relationship building with tourists for understanding chosen sightseeing sites for photo shooting with poses for self-confidence and make-up, hair stylist with try-on team on assisting tourists to dress up traditional clothing for a sense of the spiritual and cultural heart of Tibet. This user experience of “space of play” in Lhasa offers a unique spiritual and cultural for tourists that can significantly contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)#3 and #8.

SDG 3 emphasizes ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being, while SDG 8 advocates for sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth through decent work. With educating the local Lhasa community on applying the 5 steps of design thinking into photo-tourism in Lhasa of creating ‘space of play’ is undoubtedly foster wellness and create meaningful employment

opportunities, aligning with these SDGs. On top of a team of professionals in marketing, photo-editing and makeup / try-on, storytelling techniques in photo-tourism involves with commitment of visitors also help to develop a higher order thinking skill of local young people and women, for example, visual storytelling with peace and cultural expression mentioned by Chen et al that a sustainable tourism strategy is needed for (Chen et al., 2023). Chen et al. highlighted that “The threat of climate change and the advancement of sustainable development goals to control this threat have been among the country’s priorities. The tourism sector can be essential in promoting sustainable development goals by implementing sustainable processes. “They highlighted that SDG implementation and policy on foreign direct investment (FDI) are needed to bring in positive impacts on the increase in the general level of prices which has a significant and long-term adverse effect on the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the provinces of China.

In Lhasa, the integration of traditional Tibetan architecture and cultural practices into photo-tourism initiatives for “space of play” can enhance visitor experience, promote cultural preservation, and support local livelihoods which align with the NVivo findings - 1) 'Social Harmony SDG16 Peace with Consistent Social Values of Cultures, 2) Social Constructionist Explanation, and 3) Ongoing Research on Peace. Furthermore, the scenic landscapes and spiritual sites, such as the Jokhang Temple, serve as powerful symbols to attract tourists and promote mental well-being, aligning with SDG 3’s focus on health.

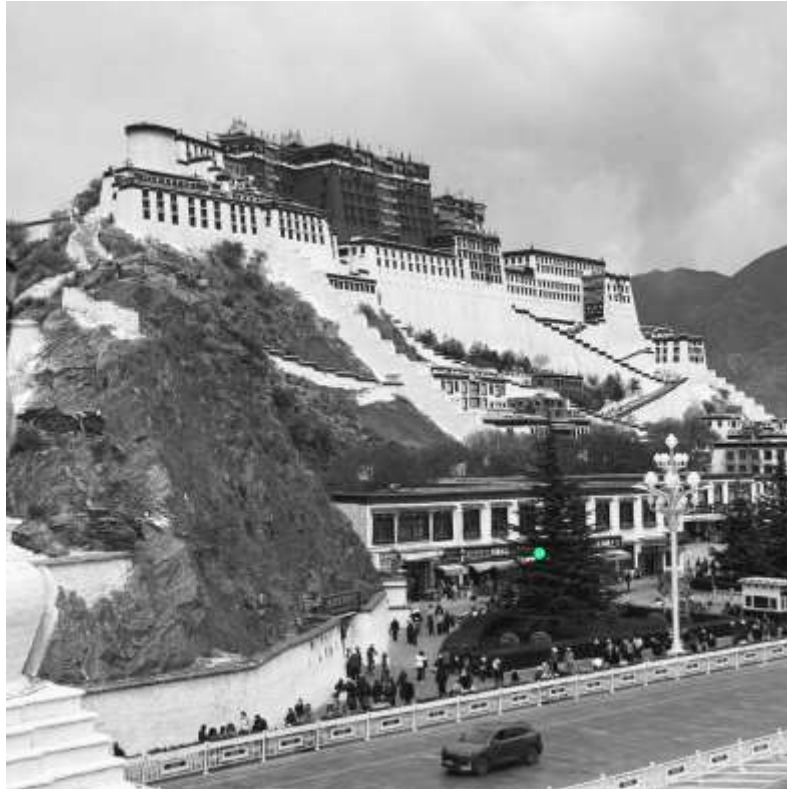


Photo 1: - Potala Palace, Lhasa.



Photo 2: - Jokhang Temple Monastery.



Photo 3: – Norbulingka.

When applying the 5 steps of design thinking, empathizing with stakeholders, for example tourists and photo-tourism service providers, scope of service delivery, ideate of executing photo-tourism, experimenting the services with “space of play” and validating the user experiences with satisfaction as mentioned by Brown (2020). For example, local photo-tourism teams of marketing, photo-editing and make-up/ try-on may guide tourists to co-create authentic cultural experiences in Lhasa with readings of UNESCO to educate the tourists for ICH and inclusive economic growth. Such an approach fosters community participation, enhances the quality of photo-tourism services with decent jobs creation for the targets of SDG 8. Furthermore, recent research highlights the importance of artificial Intelligent (AI), digital platforms and social media in promoting photo-tourism for “space of play”. In conclusion, integrating design thinking into the development of photo-tourism to align with NVivo findings of social harmony provide good practices of SDG#3 wellbeing and SDG#8 decent job creations.

4.2. Part 2 - AI Analysis on Images from Lhasa Experiential Learning

Based on the images from Lhasa Experimental Trip with AI analysis on the story conveyed through the colours, costume, and facial expressions, the following findings can be identified from the photograph, capturing a person dressed in Lhasa traditional attire with a pose leaning against a backdrop of a Lhasa Jokhang Temple Monastery founded in the 7th century to promote Buddhist religion with intricate architectural window designs and vibrant colours.

SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):

- 1) Colours of costume: features a mix of earthy greens representing fresh and growth, blacks for deterring toxic materials, and vibrant accents, which symbolize a connection to nature and cultural heritage. The green sash may represent growth, health, and vitality, aligning with SDG 3's emphasis on well-being.
- 2) Colourful traditional beads and accessories for hair and hands: symbolizes cultural identity, resilience, and community strength, which are vital for social cohesion (SDG 16).
- 3) Costume: The traditional attire highlights Lhasa cultural pride and the preservation of local cultural identity. Such clothing often reflects historical continuity, community belonging, and social stability which are relevant to SDG 16 peace.

The layered clothing in green and black provides a sense of adaptability to the environment and resilience to the challenging environments.

- 4) Facial Expressions: Although the face of the uploaded image onto Deep AI analysis is blurred, the posture and gesture of the image seemed to have a moment of relaxation with dignity, resilience, and introspection. This reflects individual peace and the coexistence of image and the environment, reinforcing the importance of social stability and justice (SDG 16).

Based on Deep, Ai analysis on the submitted image from Lhasa, a story of cultural resilience and individual dignity with SDG#11 sustainable architectural significance has been identified. Hence, photo-tourism service providers in Lhasa may consider to adopt design thinking with SDGs for promoting traditional costume and architectural buildings' colour design for community

development with commitment to preserving their identity to align with NVivo findings.



Photo 4: - Image Taken in Jokhang Temple Monastery for AI Analysis.

The Lhasa UNESCO Sites

5. RECOMMENDATION ON UNESCO'S POTALA PALACE AND RELATED SITES

Based on qualitative NVivo analysis and AI analysis on image uploaded, here is a structured rationale and impacts aligned with SDG, design thinking concepts to serve the community for social harmony via quality project design elements of "Human and Peace" for SDG #4.7: Knowledge Transfer.

5.1. Preservation Of Local Architecture

- Impact: The Lhasa cultural and architectural sites preserve the unique architectural features of the heritage site with a sense of cultural identity for peace SDG #16.

5.2. Promotion Of Photo-Tourism

- Impact: The chosen Lhasa cultural and architectural sites need to provide knowledge of culture, social and environmental sustainability for appreciation of responsible tourism practices (SDG #12 - responsible production and consumption).

5.3. Community Engagement

- Impact: The chosen Lhasa cultural and

architectural sites involve the local community of young people and women in service operations to empower women for SDG#5 and #8 decent job creation. It is recommended to engage with local and overseas artists and content creators with social media for socioeconomic development opportunities (SDG #3 wellness and #8 economic impacts).

5.4. Educational Initiatives

- Impact: The chosen Lhasa cultural and architectural sites is suggested to involve with research scholars and educators for storytelling and impress tourists on the importance of ongoing research and social harmony in economic development. (SDG #4.7 Knowledge Transfer)

5.5. Local Sourcing of Culture Related Products

- Impact: Prioritizing local sourcing on green and responsible suppliers, for example, sheep toys and herbal medicines for wellness to reduce the carbon footprint and support the local economy. (SDG #13 Climate Action)

6. CONCLUSIOIN AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #16 Peace and Design Thinking with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of

UNESCO highlights the importance of integrating sustainability with cultural heritage. Projects on promoting photo-tourism that incorporate local culture, traditional clothing, community engagement of youth and women, and sustainable practices of “space to play” can create spaces that honor both the environment and the community's identity. By applying 5 steps of design thinking in photo-tourism,

we can ensure that both cultural SDG#3/16 and environmental awareness on SDG#13 are preserved for future generations. Green financing and foreign direct investment may help to support the preservation of ICH and advancing green and photo-tourism quality projects on SDGs. Moreover, AI may also support research analysis for project optimization, storytelling, and tourist engagement.

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