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## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020**

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# The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

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of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2020 – School of Social Sciences

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

## Abstract

Since joining UNESCO in 1972, two years after the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said took power in Oman, the Sultanate has witnessed significant development in various fields, including culture. This thesis highlights the role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in Oman over fifty years. The research seeks to answer two questions: how has UNESCO contributed to the development of the cultural scene and cultural diversity in Oman in this period, and what is the relationship between the aims and the outcomes of UNESCO activities in relation to the Sultanate? The study assesses UNESCO's role as a major multilateral actor facilitating collective cultural diplomacy and preserving cultural heritage.

The first part of the thesis explains how UNESCO's activities are designed to help member states preserve and maintain their cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. It assesses the effectiveness of UNESCO in relation to member states and discusses the obstacles UNESCO encounters in its effort to carry out its responsibilities. This leads to a discussion of Oman-UNESCO relations, and their impact on Oman's cultural heritage. The argument of the thesis is supported by empirical research using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study population included everyone involved in UNESCO's work in cultural affairs relevant to Oman, both in UNESCO headquarters, Paris, and in Muscat. The interviews included a series of questions on the meaning of cultural diplomacy, cultural diversity, tangible heritage and intangible heritage.

A mixed method, qualitative and quantitative, design was used to collect data. A survey questionnaire, with 34 questions, was distributed to 10 main institutions that deal with culture and heritage in Oman. This produced quantitative data that was analysed using SPSS. In addition, 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Oman and UNESCO-Paris with some experts from both sides. The results lead to an analysis of themes which include understandings of some UNESCO themes like cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible heritage, and cultural diversity.

The findings show that despite many challenges and the financial crisis, UNESCO is an effective instrument of soft power and the strong ties with Oman have mutually facilitated their activities in cultural diplomacy. The results also show that the cultural scene in Oman including sustaining cultural diversity developed strongly in the last five decades and that the Sultanate's international experience, including membership of UNESCO, helped the country to promote its cultural and natural heritage.

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.

Lastly, this thesis is dedicated to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may God rest his soul, who passed away while I was writing this thesis. It is also for my late father and my mother, the most beautiful thing decorating my life; my wife, without which and her encouragement and patience, I would not have accomplished this huge work; my brothers, sisters and family, who always I thank God for being in my life and for standing always with me.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

The concept of cultural diplomacy is an extension of the concept of traditional diplomacy, and it refers to the use of culture in relations between states. Generally, it has the positive meaning of interaction to enhance understanding and cooperation.

The framework of reference of this thesis is the social sciences broadly speaking, including culture, institutions, policy and international relations. The particular focus is on the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from a cultural perspective. Therefore, the other four fields of UNESCO (education, natural sciences, human sciences, communication and information) will not be included in the thesis except when the researcher considers the importance of mentioning some themes which are relevant to the research. Cultural diplomacy is strongly present in the content of this study as it is an essential component of international relations and central to the activities of UNESCO which is a "cultural" organisation.

The major objectives of this research are, first, to identify the role of UNESCO in supporting member states so that they can uphold the spirit of culture and heritage as well as enriching and sustaining cultural diversity; and second, to relate these initiatives of UNESCO to the attempts of the Sultanate of Oman to preserve its natural and cultural heritage.

The research investigates the role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman between 1970 and 2020. In particular, it sheds light on the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in terms of culture and heritage, and assesses the strength of this relationship, and challenges that could restrict their collaboration. It endeavours to answer two questions:

1. In what respects has UNESCO played a role in the development of the cultural scene and supported cultural diversity in Oman during the last fifty years, 1970-2020?
2. What is the relationship between the aims and outcomes of UNESCO's activities within the Sultanate of Oman?

The year 1970 is chosen as the starting point as it was the year in which the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said came to power in Oman on 23 July 1970, initiating a chapter of prosperity and modernity in Oman, widely acknowledged to be the 'Renaissance Era'. The study ends in the year of the Sultan's death; Sultan Qaboos passed away on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020.



A point to note here is that the Sultan indicated anywhere in this thesis refers to Qaboos bin Said, who died aged 79 in January 2020. He was succeeded by Haitham bin Tariq Al Said. The research for this thesis was completed in 2019, and the scope does not include events which have taken place since then.

The study affords an opportunity for decision-makers in both Oman and UNESCO to gauge the role of UNESCO in supporting its member states, in addition to the dimensions of this support. A further research aim of this thesis is to elicit views on whether participants in the Omani sample are satisfied with the work that has been done by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science insofar as this commission is supposed to work as a bridge between UNESCO and Oman. There is a direct question which examines this issue at the end of the questionnaire.

The big challenge of the study is fundamentally the lack of previous research and references directly related to the central theme. No previous studies have been undertaken on this subject in Oman or UNESCO. Although this is the first study of its kind on the local and regional levels, there are relevant literature sources in the field of history, politics, international relations and cultural policy, which will be included in this study.

With regard to Oman, as Caquet (2013: 3) argues, UNESCO's role cannot be properly studied without a reflection on the role of the country itself as well as the organisation. Therefore, to suit the aims of this study, I have divided the literature review into three chapters: Oman, UNESCO, and Oman and UNESCO. The review extends across the next three chapters in order to lay a solid conceptual and historical foundation.

Getting to know the Sultanate of Oman through its history, civilisation and culture on the one hand, then introducing UNESCO and its history and culture and the principles that it advocates on the other hand, lead naturally to the third chapter which links the two sides together in points of agreement and partnership that have extended over the past fifty years, to allow a deeper understanding of the nature of their relationship.

The next chapter (Chapter 2) talks about six subjects related to Oman, namely its history, modern renaissance, democratic development, building identity, diplomacy and foreign policy, and heritage and culture. Chapter 3 is purely focused on UNESCO in terms of its history, main principles, globalising heritage, UNESCO's role in world cultural diversity, and work determinants. The next chapter then turns on the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in several aspects including: the establishment of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (ONCECS); the agreements and conventions between

Oman and UNESCO, especially in the culture sector; the main joint-action stations between Oman and UNESCO; Omani world heritage; and Omani cultural diversity.

Undoubtedly, this study would not have existed if Oman had not joined UNESCO. It was on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1972 when Oman became a member of UNESCO. Subsequently, a Royal Decree No. 5/74 was issued on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1974 stipulating the establishment of the Oman National Commission for UNESCO, which was later renamed in 1982 to become the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. Later, just one year after joining UNESCO, the Sultanate joined the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1973, and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1982.

The establishment of national commissions for UNESCO is a prerequisite for all member states joining the organization, in order to have a contact and information point with UNESCO as well as to represent the state in the various events, programmes, conferences and activities organised by UNESCO that relate to education, culture, science, and communication and information. As will become evident during the next chapter of this study, which covers aspects of Oman's history, the delay in Oman joining UNESCO until 1972, unlike Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which joined the organization in the 1940s, was due to "the closed door" policy imposed on Oman by the former Sultan Said bin Taimur - the father of Sultan Qaboos (Saif, 2014; Al-Busaidi, 2009).

The literature review will examine the relationship between Oman and UNESCO, which has been characterized by rapid development and the enhanced international status of the Sultanate. The study will not discuss ALECSO or ISESCO, as it is limited to studying the relationship between the international organization (UNESCO) and the Sultanate of Oman. The Sultanate has occupied many positions and memberships at the international level. Joint agreements and memoranda of understanding have been signed between Oman and UNESCO to achieve UNESCO's lofty goals, and to gain the maximum benefit for the Sultanate in various educational, cultural and scientific fields. The roots of this relationship are best demonstrated by the historic visit of the late Sultan Qaboos to UNESCO headquarters on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1989, when he announced the establishment of the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation . Oman has joined several cultural conventions to protect heritage in its various forms whether tangible, intangible or documentary heritage.

The literature review concludes that despite the depth of the relationship between Oman and UNESCO, it is time to evaluate this relationship, from a purely cultural perspective. Evidence is needed to confirm or refute the argument that the Sultanate benefits from the organization's experiences in preserving its heritage and supporting cultural diversity. Oman is sometimes held up as a model member state, a proposition that deserves scrutiny.

To reach its objectives, the thesis derives its original data from both sides: Oman and UNESCO. A mixed methods design is used because of its added value in social science research. The researcher planned to combine qualitative and quantitative research using a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews in both Oman and UNESCO headquarters. For the questionnaire, which was applied only in Muscat for reasons that are mentioned later in Chapter 5, the response rate was high due to the officially-supported questionnaire distribution mechanism, taking advantage of the researcher's current professional position to do this. The distinction in this research design is that offers ways to compare concepts and perspectives held by UNESCO officials, who plan strategies and prepare guidelines for member states, and a member state itself, Oman in this context. The full details of the research instruments and process will follow in Chapter 5, the methodology chapter.

The three data analysis chapters (6,7,8) present and discuss the findings of the analysis of both kinds of data. The analysis of the questionnaire is presented in Chapter 6 for a total of 82 participants, while the analysis of the interviews is presented separately, the UNESCO interviews in Chapter 7 and Oman interviews in Chapter 8. A total of 19 interviews were conducted in Paris and Muscat. The intention of discussing the results of the interviews in two chapters is to get an idea of the UNESCO perspective on the one hand and Oman's perspective on the other hand about the themes under discussion, then compare them in the last chapter, to reflect the logic of the literature review chapters (2-4).

The discussion chapter (Chapter 9) presents an understanding of the thesis results within the context of the broader literature. It also discusses some useful aspects of strengths and limitations of the Oman-UNESCO relationship, leading to some recommendations for decision-makers in Oman and UNESCO and the Oman cultural institutions to reinforce this relationship. The policy recommendations can be taken and adapted to become future plans for these establishments. Overall, this thesis aims to point the research community to some practical implications for cultural and international relations by offering new and original results.

## Chapter 2. Oman - Historical and Cultural Roots

### 2.1. Introduction

No discussion of cultural diversity is complete without an elaborated discussion about the historical genesis of the existing culture and its trajectory of evolution. In this pursuit, this chapter first provides a summary of the history of Oman, highlighting some important aspects including geography, maritime history, culture and society which are necessary for understanding the heritage and culture themes of this thesis. This is followed by a brief overview of Oman in the modern era or 'Renaissance', as many Omanis and historians choose to call it, since His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said took power in 1970. This regime change represents one of the most important turning points that took place in Oman over the last 50 years, and most notably the political reforms since 1996 when the Sultan adopted the Basic Law (statute) of the State.

In order to frame some of the questions of the research, there is a discussion on the building of Omani identity and its uniqueness in terms of lifestyles, languages, customs and traditions inherited from ancient times. This has influenced Omani diplomacy and foreign policy, enabling it to play important roles on the regional and international arenas. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a section about Omani heritage and cultural diversity, which is a core theme in this study, and the transfer of this heritage to future generations through the school curriculum.

### 2. 2. History of Oman

#### 2.2.1. *A Geographic sketch*

Oman is located on the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, the first Arab land touched by the sun every morning. Oman is between latitudes 16° and 20° North and 52° and 60° East, and its coastline is about 3165 km starting from the Musandam Peninsula on the coast of the Strait of Hormuz in the north through the Gulf of Oman to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean facing Dhofar in the south (Mowafi, 2002). Oman is like an island between the sea and the desert where the Empty Quarter (Desert) *Ar Rub al Khali* constitutes a natural barrier. This fact has contributed to making the sea the access road to Oman and exit to the outside world. Figure 2.1 shows the map of Oman.

Figure 2.1 Map of the Sultanate of Oman



Source: BBC website, accessed on 22/3/2020.

Oman had several names in the past, most notably *Magan*, which is linked to Oman's reputation for shipbuilding activities and copper smelting in the language of the Sumerians. Another name of Oman was *Mazoon* which originated from the Persian words meaning heavy clouds. The current name of Oman refers to a place in Yemen from which certain Arab tribes emigrated after the collapse of the Marib Dam to settle in Oman. Other historians say that the name 'Oman' came from *Oman*, a descendant of the Prophet Abraham (Badr, 2009).

This implies that there is a strong indication of the antiquity of the Sultanate of Oman. It is one of the oldest states, settled for thousands of years. The Arab tribes *Alazd* from Yemen were the most important migrants that settled in Oman after the destruction of the Marib Dam in the middle of the sixth century AD, when the Persians controlled parts of Oman (Al-Afifi, 2006). Over the next hundreds of years, a distinctive pattern of historical development was observed in Oman shaped by the interaction between geographic, political, economic and social factors within the territory and the surrounding regions. Despite the full or partial isolation that shaped Oman at different stages of its long history, the geographical location of the Sultanate contributed greatly to attracting regional and international attention especially at times of prosperity and strength. Like other regions of the world, the maritime history of Oman contributes greatly to the modern cultural development of Oman.

### 2.2.2. Maritime History

Oman preserves a remarkable place for its navigational history and cultural links with ancient and modern people around the world. The country was able to sail ships that reached Canton, China, Indian Ocean and East Africa in the eighth century AD. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Omanis arrived in the New World- the United States - and their ships docked in the port of London in the United Kingdom and Marseille, France. The Ministry of Heritage and Culture of Oman (1991) traces these voyages as the roots of the deep motivation to establish economic and cultural links with the outside world.

The role played by Omani people, especially maritime adventurers, to enrich the modern culture of Oman and facilitate trade exchange is very old. Oman is a crossroads where trade caravans crossing between the East and West could stop. Also, the country was a place that could supply essentials for seafarers and a place of refuge from rough seas. This has enabled Oman to be a site of cultural interchange. His Highness the late Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al-Said, Minister of National Heritage and Culture at the time, said in his opening speech to a symposium on “Silk Roads Trade” held in Sultan Qaboos University on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1990:

“It has been said that trade is the vehicle of civilisation; the mobile merchant carries with commercial items his ideas, customs and beliefs. When he returns to his country, those new ideas, beliefs and customs were infused. This is a cultural communication among nations. Omani people have benefited from this communication because of the fact that this country acted as a forum for traders who came from various countries. These traders enlightened the minds of locals by transferring the former’s knowledge to promote the productivity of the latter. Also, these properties help contemporary Omani people to move forward towards achieving the goals of the blessed renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos”.

The Omani historian, Mal Allah Allawati, highlighted the early origins of Oman’s maritime past:

“The acquisition of broad experience in overseas navigation by Omanis is not a wonder but rather the result of their constant endeavours. Omanis reached Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC. Sargon, the Akkadian king, praised the ships that moored in the port of Akad in Iraq and came from *Magan*, a name given by the Sumerians to Oman” (Allawati, 1991:3).

In the second millennium BC, commercial goods were being transported from Oman to Muhinjudaro in Pakistan, where the Andalus River civilisation thrived at that time. The author

of "Circling around the Sea of Eritrea," which was published in the first century AD talked about Oman as the source of imported planks of wood from India for the manufacturing of ships. The completed ships from Oman then exported to Yemen. In the Valley of Mayser, to the east of Oman, pear-shaped seals of mud dating back to the second millennium BC have been discovered. It is believed that these seals are linked to export trade, and are evidence of a trade route in that period between Oman and Egypt. Pictures of ships from Oman, dating back to the era of the Egyptian queen Hchipsot, who ruled Egypt at the end of the fifth century BC, were discovered on the walls of the marine temple of Deir in South Egypt. They were depicted as carrying frankincense, dates, perfumes and timber (Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 1991).

Chaudhuri (1985) argues that the final stage of the transfer of goods from the Far East and India to the Middle East and Africa was carried out through the land route. Ships were unloaded in the port of Obolla near Basra after crossing the Arabian Gulf in their course to the Middle East and Central Asia. If the destination was Africa the unloading took place in the port of Alexandria. In both cases, the ships would stop in Muscat or Sohar to replenish essentials and to wait for favourable winds. It was obvious that the arrivals exchanged commercial goods between them. The other aspect of the importance of Oman to the Silk Roads, particularly the seaway, was the fact that the naval fleet was instrumental in expanding relations built on external trade.

Here are some examples that illustrate the reach and power of ancient Oman. In 750 AD, Abu Obeida Abdallah bin Qasim arrived in Canton, China, before any Europeans reached there. Although there were perhaps thousands of seafarers at that time, the reason for singling out Abu Obeida Abdallah bin Qasim, who wrote extensively about his experience in China, is "... his record of early China in Arabic has survived intact" (Nabhan, 2014:98). In 860 AD, Imam Salt bin Malik sent an armada to fight against the Ethiopians on Socotra Island in response to an event in which an Omani lady was imprisoned by the Abyssinians. The Imam won the war and the Ethiopians were expelled from the island. In 942 AD, Omanis occupied the port of Obolla and then occupied the city of Basra in 1039 AD. The Omani naval fleet played a significant role in fighting the Portuguese invasion in 1650, and expelled them from the Gulf region and subsequently from the East African coast countries. This led to the establishment of Omani rule in that region for more than two hundred years (Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 1991).

Among the most famous Omani sailors of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was Ahmed bin Majid, known as *the lion of the sea*. He was the pioneer who developed the navigational compass *Alhaqa*

and wrote several books. A Turkish captain described Ahmed bin Majid as the best captain the Indian coast had known in skill and integrity over two centuries. Moreover, Ahmed is known for his famous, if disputed, story of guiding the Portuguese explorer *Vasco da Gama* to India via the Cape of Good Hope (AlQasmi, 1995). Tim Severin, one of the speakers at the symposium “Silk Roads Trade” mentioned above, and one of the participants in the royal yacht *Fulk al-Salamah* expedition, talked about the important and vital role played by Oman for the maritime Silk Roads, emphasizing the human, commercial and navigational factors that led to this great maritime achievement.

This strategic location of Oman, not the oil that many believed, was the primary reason for colonial rivalries around the Gulf region although the importance of oil increased later. By the early sixteenth century, Alfonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515), a Portuguese general, a statesman and Duke of Goa, used his ships in the summer of 1507 to control the trade routes with India. Oman was his target due to the vital role of Omani ports in the trade between India and Europe (Mowafi, 2002).

Oman was not just a subject of competition from all quarters, but it was a strong regional power especially at times of prosperity. This power enabled it to influence conflict on the one hand and show a degree of self-confidence in dealing with the Western world on the other. Despite occasional weaknesses due to internal conflicts, Oman was able to advance and restore its role, especially in the area of naval conflict. Oman's outbound adventures mainly through sea voyages helped it to sign conventions and treaties, commercial or friendly, with major international powers in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century which were rare at that time among states in the Arab Gulf region. There were conventions with Britain, France and the United States. The Omani policy toward Britain and France was an incentive that led to their agreement to confirm Oman's independence in 1862.

Oman's interaction with the major powers continued with many treaties and bilateral agreements. The most significant agreements of friendship and trade and consular services were between Oman and Britain, which took place in the years 1798, 1800 and 1839, and the consular agreement with the United States in 1933 and similar agreements with France in 1844 and the Netherlands in 1877 (AlQasmi, 1995: 26)

Oman was able to maintain its interests as it built friendly relations with Britain and France. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Sultan of Oman developed business relations with both parties, although cooperation with Britain was closer because of its business interests in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. In addition, Sultan Saeed collaborated with the British to eliminate sea piracy in 1809 (AlQasmi, 1995). Although these treaties and



conventions bear important testimony to Oman's eagerness to establish friendly relations with other countries, perhaps the relation between Oman and the USA portrays itself as a model that depicts international cooperation between Oman and friendly countries throughout history.

### *2.2.3. Oman- the US relation: a model of coexistence*

Business relationships were developed between the United States and Oman after the 1833 agreement. Despite being thousands of kilometers apart from each other, Oman succeeded in building a strong relationship with the US during the 19<sup>th</sup> century owing mainly to its powerful navy. For several centuries Omani ships had plied routes across the Indian Ocean from Sur, Sohar and Muscat, visiting East Africa and the East Indies and even China in search of trade.

Throughout his reign from 1804 to 1856, Sultan Saeed had close relations personally and commercially, not only with American consuls but also with ship captains, as well as with American traders who did not leave their country but knew him through the postal service. The Ministry of Heritage and Culture (1985) thus, postulates that rarely had any Arab leader made such an impact on Americans at that time. According to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture (1985), an agreement was signed between Oman and the United States on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1834, written in two parallel columns in Arabic and English, signed by the Sultan from the Omani side, and Edmund Roberts, former Foreign Minister of US and the Special Diplomatic Delegate at that time.

The Sultan's ship *Sultana*, sailed from Zanzibar on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1839, passed St. Helena to arrive in New York on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1840. There was a special messenger from Sultan Saeed on board, his secretary Ahmed bin Noman, carrying with him letters and gifts to the United States as the first Arab ambassador to New York (Mowafi, 2002). Presthold (2009) contends that this journey had positive implications for diplomatic relations between the Sultanate and America. Following some series of negotiations, Ahmed bin Noman and the General Consul of the US, Walter Schoen signed a friendship and economic Convention between Oman and the US, which remained in effect until 1958 when it was replaced by another Convention (Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 1985).

This early Omani experience in international relations helped in the early international acknowledgement of Oman and its regional significance. This kind of recognition brought self-confidence and a positive outlook in dealing with international powers, whether in agreement or disagreement. It also cemented a deep awareness in Omani political thought

of the importance of avoiding reliance on a single international partner, and the need to seek multiple and diverse international relations in order to safeguard the role of Oman commercially and politically (Mowafi, 2002: 49).

#### *2.2.4. Oman in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

Economic life in the inland areas of Oman used to rely heavily on the export of agricultural crops like lemons and dates through the coastal cities. Tax and customs were imposed on imports and on the sale of goods in the Omani ports, providing a major source of income for the Sultanate for a century before the year 1970. Mowafi (2002) reports that there was a tax rate of 5% on all goods received, as well as taxes on all traded goods in Muscat, ports and other places of the Omani coast that received goods from the interior to be sold.

Until the 1970s, economic conditions on the Oman coast and in the interior remained unchanged. The lives of Omanis did not substantially differ from what they had been about hundred years ago. The most striking feature of Oman was the lack of infrastructure. There was no paved road network, a severe scarcity of water which was transported on donkeys. Also, there was no means of modern communication at all. Education was for a tiny segment of society, provided by just only three schools in Muscat, Muttrah and Salalah and there was no higher education system at all (Al-Abri, 2019). The majority of affluent Omanis went to Kuwait and other Gulf countries to access education, and some travelled to London, Moscow, Berlin and other cities. It was extremely difficult for them to return to the country after the completion of study because the Sultan did not welcome their return.

While Oman was in the depths of great economic and political isolation, the Arab region was bustling around her, spreading to the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. The isolation, however, was rooted in Oman's foreign policy which was mainly dominated by its ambition to maintain the sovereignty of the country. Towards this, Oman cemented a tie with Britain, which acted as a great protector of Oman through much of the twentieth century (Lefebvre, 2010). Peterson (1976:285) notes that only Britain (and India in the post-independence era) maintained a resident Consul in Muscat between 1915 and 1970. For Britain, Oman's oil was considered vital for its economic well-being in the post-World War II period.

During its economic trouble period, many Omanis left their country to escape from poverty or to search for better opportunities for life. Oman before 1970 was unusual in being so inaccessible. As Miller says, "The sultanate of Oman has long been known for discretion in its affairs. Until 1970, the strategically placed country, the size of Colorado with two million

people and 1,000 miles of coastline along the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea, was virtually cut off from the world" (Miller,1997:10).

Despite the control exercised by Sultan Said bin Taimur, Sultan of Muscat and Oman and father of Sultan Qaboos, on the interior of Oman in the 1950s following the death of Imam al-Khalili, he did not put an end to the problem of the separation between the coast and the interior (Peterson, 1976:285; Owtram, 2004). Oman in fact faced its greatest challenge when the Imamate encouraged political separation and foreign backing for the separatists. The Imamate made an effort to politicize the dispute with the Sultan by attempting to join the League of Arab States and the United Nations with the support of a number of Arab countries (Mowafi, 2002: 37). Yet, Sultan Said did not take any action to ease Arab criticism or open bridges with other Arab countries.

This event along with other such similar events prompted Qaboos, the only son of Sultan Said bin Taimur who graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, to become the leader of the country on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1970 following a bloodless coup. Qaboos faced big challenges in the struggle with influences and revolutions that surrounded Oman, in addition to its almost total isolation from the outside world. His ascension to power was the beginning of a project to save the country from the impending danger. The next section will briefly shed a light on this issue and the renaissance that has taken place in Oman since 1970.

## **2.3. Modern renaissance of Oman**

### *2.3.1. The reign of Sultan Qaboos*

There is no doubt that Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, the ruler of Oman until January 2020, was the man who built the modern renaissance of the state. Since 1970 when he took over power, Oman has changed to the course of development in all aspects. As Peterson (2004a:1) points out:

“Nearly any Omani, when asked what he or she thought of the new ruler, would almost inevitably reply, “Before him, there was nothing. Now, there is everything.” Over the next decade or more, the Sultanate made enormous strides in developing its potential and raising the standard of living of its people”.

*'Before him there was nothing, now there is everything'* summarizes exactly how the situation in Oman was before 1970. Most neighbouring countries were modern and having

services and technology, while Oman lacked the simplest things. It was like living on another planet. Peterson (2004:2) added:

“The obstacles facing the new sultan and his advisers in 1970 were enormous. There were few Omanis with any education, as a result of the country’s poverty and the previous Sultan’s deliberate policy against formal learning, plus most of the educated worked outside the country. The existing government was minimal and ill-suited to development. The country lacked nearly all infrastructures, including a modern port, roads, schools, electricity outside the capital area, and even office space for the government”.

Qaboos’ plan was to reinvent Oman and to end the isolation maintained by his father. This was encapsulated in the new *Idea of Oman*.

“His idea of Oman, which relied on age-old and proven principles, would mould much of his internal and foreign policies. Aiming to achieve lofty goals, maintaining the country’s integrity and the populations dignity, Qaboos recalled how Omani empires had dared and, without wishing to reconstitute them, imagined a renaissance that would ensure a better life for his people. He would draw inspiration from the past, work diligently in the present, and look forward to the future, making sure that Omanis shared in these same aspirations” (Kechichian, 1995: 37).

Allen and Rigsbee (2000:182) also commented that since the renaissance dawned in 1970, a new era of openness began.

“Almost immediately upon assuming power in July 1970 Qaboos, encouraged by his British advisors, sought to end the isolation of the Sultanate imposed by his father”.

In addition to the lack of infrastructure that Oman was faced with, there were open conflicts in the interior and south Dhofar. Oman is different from other gulf countries because of the fact that it is the only country that faced resistance from internal territory. In fact, Dhofar war motivated change in government (Allen and Rigsbee, 2014). The war not only played a critical role in defining both Sultan Qaboos and the nature of Omani development but also convinced Sultan Qaboos to focus on military affairs through most of the 1970s. The victory in Dhofar made Sultan Qaboos a national hero. At the same time, it motivated him to keep defence a principal focus of Qaboos strategic plan (Martinez, 2012).

It is true that Oman was able to exceed many of the neighbouring countries in a short period. Peterson (Peterson, 2004:1) comments on this point:

“Oman has accomplished as much or more than its fellow Gulf monarchies, despite starting from scratch considerably later, having less oil income to utilize, dealing with a larger and more rugged geography, and resolving a bitter civil war along the way”.

Goals, in particular, policies seeking independence from domestic opinion in determining political, economic, security, and foreign affairs (Gause and Gause, 1994), were clear and well defined at a time when Oman's developmental experience was marked by close alignment with the nature of society, people and history. Policies showed deep awareness of the variables at the national, regional and international arena, which reacted to, and sometimes strongly intersected with, the countries around the Strait of Hormuz.

Under the local, regional and international circumstances in the 60s and 70s, achieving targets was not easy. In the 1960s, serious problems, both foreign and domestic, continued to trouble regime stability and economic development of the country. Foreign affairs still remained under the tight control of the British consul in Muscat. Internal trouble ensued from Sultan's old enemy, the Imam Ghalib, who was defeated in 1961. Ghalib and his allies began actively to court Arab support for their cause in Egypt and Iraq. As a consequence, the Arab League brought the case before the United Nations (Allen and Rigsbee, 2000). However, regime stability began to be restored in the beginning of 1970s after Sultan Qaboos assumed power. Stability and development was a historic achievement described by Mowafi (2002:14) as follows:

“It was the first time for Omani national unity to be again materialized after long years or even decades of absence. The impact was strongly positive in all fields to establish one of the most foundations of stability and security on the banks of the Strait of Hormuz”.

The historical achievement is evident in three major shifts. The first is the transformation of state-building by putting an end to the division between the coast and the interior and the confusion surrounding the title ‘Sultanate of Muscat and Oman’. This came alongside the pursuit of a border demarcation policy with neighbouring countries and the signing of international conventions which ensure permanent security and stability. The second shift was the change in the governance structure based on the rule of law: the ‘Basic Law of the State’ (Siegfried, 2000). The third shift was in the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, between the authorities and the citizens, seen in the transition to a citizenry which participates and contribute their opinions, thoughts and advices in guiding national

development and the exercise of the Shura under the umbrella of the Shura Council and the State Council.

The idea of 'renaissance' in Oman is illustrated in the following excerpts from media interviews. In an interview with a Lebanese newspaper published in 26 January 1974 Sultan Qaboos said:

"We know that our success depends on the largest possible number of citizens in the process of contribution to change. So, we have announced since we received the leadership that Oman's door is open to all, without exception. Hundreds of citizens who were abroad returned and they started with us the process of change. I believe that those people contributed and are part of the current renaissance. We have opened a new page in the history of this country, and we need everyone to continue building and progressing" (quoted in Mowafi, 2002: 79).

As an example of the success of the new policy, Sultan Qaboos answered a question about his proudest accomplishments:

"I congratulate myself for some things, such as the progress women have made. I never said you must do this, or you can't do that. I offered services, such as education, and let the families decide. And more of them, more than I expected, chose to accept school for girls from the beginning. So, we have been able to make progress and safeguard tradition. Then he concluded: We are making progress, but quite slowly. I believe in evolution, and not a sudden evolution. But the progress we've made is very irreversible" (Miller, 1997: 68).

In another interview with Middle East Policy in April 1995, the Sultan said:

"At every stage of our development, which has been built essentially to cover the urgent need to provide health care and education for all, I was concerned with the need to maintain a delicate balance between these two main factors, namely: to accept the update with maintaining the values established, while some needs require speed, others need - including political and social change - from us careful and considerate work" (quoted in Mowafi, 2002: 8).

The first thirty-year period from 1970 to 2000 in the modern renaissance of Oman can be considered a period of evolution and integration of the modern state that has grown through a gradual approach in line with the movement of the Omani society and its culture and circumstances. By the new century in 2000, various political, economic and social aspects

had been developed and Omani society entered the new century with a clear stable vision in all areas of development.

### 2.3.2. *The Basic Law of the State*

In 1996, Sultan Qaboos issued a royal decree setting out the Basic Law of the state, the first written expression of constitutional law in the country's history. The Basic Law enshrined the leadership in the Sultan, limiting succession to the male descendants of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan (who ruled 1871-1888). It enacted a statute for the appointment of a prime minister, endorsed the principle of consultation, stipulated a free economy, declared all citizens equal before the law, guaranteed personal freedoms including freedom of religion and expression, declared the independence of the judiciary, and founded the Council of Oman and a Defense Council (Peterson, 2004).

The Basic Law of the State is equivalent to the constitution in other states. It includes the state definition, its Arabic and Islamic identity, the language, system of rule, and the guiding principles of the policy of the State for the economy, society, culture and security. In addition, there are chapters for citizen rights and duties, the powers and responsibilities of the Sultan, and the Council of Ministers and councils responsible for finance, the judiciary and general provisions. It regulates the work of all authorities and institutions (Fariha, 2007).

Allen and Rigsbee (2000) in the introduction of their book: *Oman under Qaboos from Coup to Constitution* chose the year 1996 as the end of their study because it was a milestone in Omani legislation:

“This study ends with the promulgation of the 'Basic Law of the State' in November 1996, announced as part of the celebration of the 26th national day. Symbolically, of course, the 'constitution' provides a convenient stopping point. However, given the recent development of an expanded state consultative council, significant changes in economic planning and commercial operations, and the promulgation of wide-ranging social legislation, 1996 would appear to make more than just a symbolic date as Oman appears to be undergoing a significant change in its development” (Allen and Rigsbee 2000: 100).

Hammad and Washington (1986) have described the post-1970 development process of Oman by identifying three distinct stages: preparation (1971-1975), a formal phase (1976-1980), and a momentum phase (1981-1985). On the other hand, Kechichian divided the Qaboos' era into four stages: a consideration period (1971- 1975), a transition period (1976-1980), a maturity period (1981-1985) and the current period (1986-1994). The consideration

period represents the desire to protect the state from dangers such as superpower rivalries and radical movements and to cut the ties of informal empire. In the transition period, the state moved to establish good relations with neighbours and bring the necessary funding to meet key requirements. The maturity period, from the point of view of the author, was when Oman became ready to play a role in the regional and international arenas. Its foreign policy had matured by this time, as shown in the example of its fundamental role in establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In the fourth period, between 1986 and 1994, three important global events took place that made an impact on Omani policy: the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the collapse of communism and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (Kechichian, 1995). Especially, Oman focused on cementing ties with strategic partners regionally and internationally while trying to maintain internal political stability by elevating the standard of living. Rising oil prices helped the Sultanate to progress towards this move.

Among the major tasks that attracted the attention of the state since the beginning of the modern era of the renaissance is the development of human resources and promotion of Omanization. According to Allen and Rigsbee (2000:177) "the overall goal of all human resource development programmes was to provide Omanis with skills to replace expatriates, at both the skilled and unskilled levels". Part of the challenge faced in the programme was the reluctance of Omanis to seek employment in manual labour or other positions of less prestige. Furthermore, no concerted programme of Omanization existed until the early 1990s. Some of the blame for this can be directed against government officials with major business interests who realised the economic advantage of employing inexpensive South Asian labour over Omanis in their various industries. Government attempts to impose Omanization often caused difficulties, as with the 1994 mandate that all retail clerks be Omanis (Allen and Rigsbee, 2000). Despite efforts at Omanization, the number of foreign workers is still high. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, as of February 25, 2019, there were 2,040,274 expats in the Sultanate, which accounts for 43.7 per cent of the country's total population (Times of Oman, 2019)<sup>1</sup>. The national programme to modernize Oman's state prioritises human development as the first condition for renovation which will lead towards sustainable development and competitiveness in production, services and technology (Badr, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Expat numbers drop as Omanisation kicks in, Times of Oman, February 26, 2019.



### 2.3.3. Sources of political thought of Sultan Qaboos

The most notable sources of the political thought of Sultan Qaboos are Islamic religion (specifically the Ibadhi School); history, heritage, traditions, social and political reality, and the personal experience of the Sultan. The religious dimension or the religious theme is evident in all the speeches of the Sultan. On the other hand, history, heritage and traditions of Oman are the subjects that Sultan Qaboos studied before and after graduating from Sandhurst military college. He was always concerned with maintaining sovereignty of Oman as well as the close link between the state and the society. He represented this on occasions like official speeches and annual tours, where he differentiated between what is good and what should be banished from the prevailing customs and traditions in order not to undermine the identity of the conservative Omani society. For example, in his speech on the occasion of the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the renaissance on 18/11/1993, Qaboos said, "the desire to build a modern state that adopts the methods of science and technology did not make this country ignore its authentic heritage and ancient glories, but always sought to blend originality with contemporary practices" (Fariha, 2007:157).

For example, alongside the development of modern facilities, great attention was paid to preserving the architectural heritage by conserving castles and forts and archeological sites. In addition, there was a revival of scientific and cultural commitments through the collection of manuscripts and dissemination of religious, literature and language books contributed by Omani scientists and writers in the movement of Arab culture throughout the ages. The Sultan himself always maintained a traditional Omani uniform. Also, the Sultan's personal experience of education, the military, and contact with Western culture complements these traditional features. When popular protests erupted in Oman in February 2011, targeting mainly economic problems and corruption, protestors still pledged their loyalty to Sultan Qaboos.

## 2.4. Political participation in Oman

### 2.4.1. *Shura* in Oman

One of the institutions that has served Omanis and Ibadhi religious doctrine throughout history is *Shura*. Considered as one of the principles of the Islamic religion as a whole, it is currently the most important characteristic of the ruling regime in Oman. Sultan Qaboos enhanced this feature and built a new system of democracy that is based upon it. Goldsmith

(2017:1) referred to Oman's system of governance as 'a consultative democracy' different from the Western system of democracy. Jones and Ridout (2005:378) also highlight *shura* as the key to the success of Omani democracy.

Of particular importance to the present discussion is the traditional practice of *shura*, in which both consultation and participation are highly valued, not so much as a matter of principle - although principles of wide involvement in decision making are clearly articulated within the framework of *shura* - but for reasons of efficacy. Decisions agreed upon by all on the basis of a consensus reached through participatory consultation, which called *ijmaa* in Islam, are likely both to be better decisions, because more thought by more people has gone into them than decisions taken by one person alone, and to stand more chance of being efficient and effectively implemented.

The Ibadhi doctrine sets Oman apart from others in the Gulf, and protects it from the vagaries of the political situations and the tendencies of religious extremism in the surrounding region. Although the doctrine presupposes the existence of the imamate regime, the Sultanate's policy in recent decades has demonstrated that new changes can be absorbed without prejudice to the unique characteristics of Oman (Alqasmi, 1995). In addition, the integrity of Omani society underlies several facts including the enhancement of Omani society, the rights to participate through governors' councils at the local level, the advisory board at the national level and the Sultan's visits across the country each year.

#### *2.4.2. Oman Council*

Oman's Shura Council was established in 1991 as a replacement for the advisory council, without legislative power though, that had existed since 1981. The council consists of representatives who are elected by Omani citizens in general elections held every four years. The right to vote and to run for office are guaranteed for both men and women. It is Oman's elected representative council whose members, including women, are chosen directly by the citizens in the governorates under defined and precise rules (Zaccara 2013). The government thus ensures transparency of the election process. Political parties do not exist, and the authorities do not allow other forms of organised political opposition, although there is space for non-governmental associations.

The Shura Council is made up of representatives of the 61 cities (*Wilayats*) of the Sultanate by the end of 2019. Each *wilayat* with a population of more than 30,000 has the right to nominate two candidates for membership to the Shura Council while the *wilayats* with a population of less than 30,000 have only one candidate. The Minister of Interior is concerned with the procedures for running the Council, according to an organised electronic

mechanism, and the winners of the Council seats who obtained the largest number of votes are announced by the Ministry of Interior itself (Global Security, n/d).

To contest for election to the Shura Council, candidates must meet the following requirements. He/she must be an Omani national by law with no less than thirty years of age, possess good reputation in the governorate, have no criminal record or indicted by law, never have been condemned for a crime of breach of honour unless his dignity was restored, be of an acceptable standard of culture, and have suitable work experience. The requirement that the candidate be 30 years or more has excluded two thirds of the Omani population according to the latest published statistics of the Omani population with a relatively equal proportion between males and females. According to *omandaily* newspaper's website accessed on 3/8/2019:

“The youth and children under 29 years of age represent the largest segment of Omanis, forming two thirds of the Omani population (64%). A bulletin, based on mid-2018 data, stated that the population pyramid for Omanis by gender for the year 2018 is almost equal, as the percentage of males and females reached 50.4% and 49.6%, respectively”.

It is not allowed to be a member of the Shura Council and the State Council simultaneously, or in conjunction with a public service post or a seat on another public council. The Shura Council has a bureau made up of the speaker of the council, two deputies and six members of the council. Ghubash (2014) provides details about the obligations that the bureau of the Council should exercise like fixing dates, making agendas, supervising activity within the council, handling letters received by the council, and some other tasks.

The Council's headquarters, which is financially and administratively independent, is located in Muscat. The Royal Decree 86/97 granted the Shura Council several powers of great social and development importance (Al-Shukaili, 2018).

Establishing the consultative Shura Council was delayed for two decades due to the unprepared of the citizens at the beginning of the new regime on the one hand, and the concern of the government to build a modern state and provide the necessary services on the other. It has passed through several stages since its establishment and has developed in accordance with the laws, regulations and legislations granted to it. Jones and Ridout (2005:387) express a positive view:

“The gradual development of majlis al-shura is one of the most important institutional processes in Oman's evolving political ecology, and there is a dynamic interaction between traditions of shura, and the requirements of modern government. Shura itself

can therefore be seen as a factor that contributes to the fluidity and open-endedness of evolving political institutions”.

Following the success of the experiment in the creation of the Shura Council and its development, the State Council (like the Senate in other countries) was established in 1997, to support the government in the formulation of development policies. The State Council's members are appointed by the Sultan, who chooses experts in various fields of state affairs. The State Council and the Shura Council form together 'Oman Council', which works as a common legislature, and convenes an annual cycle or when the Sultan asks them to meet (Fariha, 2007: 40).

The State Council was established in order to ensure a realistic and effective representation of the different segments of society (male – female) and to cover the various tribes of Oman. However, although the cities' representation at the state level is realistic, gender representation is far from equal, as the female participation in the Shura Council in its different periods does not exceed 1 per cent. Only one woman was elected to the Shura Council in 2015 and two women in 2019. The reasons for this low representation rate in Shura Council may be due to the preference of women to work away from the political sector and parliament, which makes the percentage of female candidates for election much lower than for men.

It is important to say that women are active participants in the Omani leadership system, as either ministers or part of the Shura council (Jones and Ridout, 2005 and Fariha, 2007). However, some reservations exist in this regard as AlWahaibi (2020) argues that a substantial gender gap remains in the Gulf State of Oman, although a significant rise of female representation was observed within government institutions in the last two decades.

The Sultan appoints a number of experts in each session to cover the shortfall in representation in the Shura Council. However, the effectiveness of state council is not beyond question. Katzman (2011) argues that the state council in some cases provides checks and balances to the consultative council and acts to limit the excesses of the elected body.

#### *2.4.3. The Sultan's Annual tours*

Another factor in political participation in Oman is the Sultan's annual tours which started in 1971. The last tour of the late Sultan Qaboos was in 27 January 2013 to Al-Dakhiliya. Omanis and observers called these annual tours 'the popular parliament' or 'the open parliament' due to the direct role of the citizens in them. It is described by a Lebanese

magazine *Alhawadeth* as a mobile parliament among the people, which is the pursuit of a successful kind of democratic practice open to all opinions and facts of life” (quoted in Fariha, 2007: 41). Sultan Qaboos, in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *A’siyasah* in 2006, stated “in the domestic tours, I meet with people face to face, listen to their demands, and they listen to my point of view. There are citizens whose circumstances may not allow them to knock on certain doors, so, I go directly to them” (Fariha, 2007: 42).

These periodic visits of the Sultan follow the principle of simplicity and tolerance that the Omanis have been accustomed to since ancient times, and respected by subsequent generations. Jones and Ridout (2005:42) describe:

“Perhaps most significant is the fact that Omani traditions of tolerance, as exemplified in the behavioural performance that is tact, encourage people not to speak ill of others in public, not just because it would be regarded as damaging to the person or people thus spoken of, but because it undermines the grace and therefore the honor of the person speaking”.<sup>1</sup>

The value of tolerance is frequently mentioned in discussions of Omani culture and it calls for further elaboration in the context of nation and identity.

## **2.5. Building identity**

Oman is a country which manifests strong commitment to its identity, authenticity and inherited traditions. Distinctions between Omanis and others, and what is ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are stressed. Valeri (2019:121) states:

“This nationalisation of each individual involved, for adults, mechanisms of strong differentiation from foreigners settled in Oman, whether Arab, Western or from the Indian subcontinent, in order to strengthen awareness of belonging to an immediately and concretely identifiable community”.

All Omani men have to wear a white robe called ‘dishdasha’ and a wrapped scarf called ‘masar’ at work. Outside the workplace, they wear ‘kumma’, a cap of different colours, and a ‘dishdasha’ of any colour. At official occasions like marriage or other ceremonies, they wear a special curved dagger called ‘Kanjari’ hung on the waist with a special belt. Valeri (2009:122) continues, “Omanis help to concrete the new national community, and everybody has the duty to belong to it with pride”.

The historical authenticity of these 'traditions' is open to dispute. Valeri (2009), for example, claims that the new Omani government undertook 'the invention of tradition', a phrase coined by the historian Eric Hobsbawm (2012). Jones and Ridout (2005) refute this view arguing that the traditions did not need to be invented in the case of the Sultanate of Oman. Traditions such as clothing for both males and females have been in existence for generations. The truth is that national symbols of Oman were already in place but were deliberately mobilised to become more visible and pronounced under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos. This is evident in the dress of the Sultan himself and his adherence to customs and traditions in his life in general. Allen and Rigsbee (2014:175) emphasize:

"Sultan Qaboos himself shows every indication of being a devout Muslim who never appears in public in anything other than traditional Omani dress or military uniform. Public prayers are also a regular feature of National Day celebrations, major religious holidays, and the Sultan's annual 'meet the people' tour. Furthermore, the government has made particular efforts to tie the military to Islam: the press regularly carries accounts of religious lectures being presented to the various branches of the armed forces".

In Omani schools, the national identity building is integral to the curriculum. Valeri (2009) captures this:

"At school, not only nation's language, history and geography are taught, but also how to be and how to think as a national. Without mentioning teaching contents, the perception conveyed of the national school system has been of an effort to inculcate individual feeling of belonging to the nation, like raising the national flag and singing the national anthem before entering school".

To this day, in all Omani schools at every stage, any visitor can see the greeting of the Oman flag (the version created in 1970) every morning by pupils and hear the national anthem (also a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention) before the start of the new school day. So national belonging is supported by invented as well as traditional practices.

Pedagogy in Oman reflects the national ideal through one of its principles, which stipulates that the Omani people are Arabic Muslims who maintain their authenticity, heritage and civilisation. These elements of Islam, Arabism and heritage have turned into the tradition and modernity of Oman. This tradition has further, harnessed the care about heritage and national culture and paved the way for admiration and appreciation of universal values. Also,

the Sultan's support was generous for craft and traditional industries that have been maintained in Omani society for hundreds of years.

## **2.6. Omani diplomacy and foreign policy**

### *2.6.1. Oman's foreign policy*

On taking the Omani throne in 1970, Sultan Qaboos promised to restore key social institutions which carry the unique identity of the nation. The pinnacle among them was the establishment of an efficient, fair and people-oriented government. Obviously, the task was not easy given the internal feud between and among different tribes that not only characterized the pre-1970 period but also facilitated the regime change. Qaboos restored internal order through effective military and economic measures (Kechichian, 1995:28). The internal focus, however, did not deter the government's determination to maintain cordial and friendly relations with neighbouring countries. The Sultan, thus, adopted long-term principles that facilitated the introduction of capable foreign policy initiatives, based on non-intervention in the affairs of other countries, respect for international law, and nonalignment.

These principles of foreign policy remained in place from his early days in office to this present time and ensured the stability of Omani foreign relations. This is reflected clearly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policy. The main principles of Oman's foreign policy as described by the ministry are:

- The development and maintenance of good relations with all Oman's neighbours.
- An outward looking and internationalist outlook, as befits Oman's geographic location and longstanding maritime traditions.
- A pragmatic approach to bilateral relations, emphasizing underlying geostrategic realities rather than temporary ideological positions.
- The search for security and stability through cooperation and peace, rather than conflict (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Oman, n/d.).

This foreign policy based on both principle and pragmatism, has given Oman a reputation for moderation and dialogue in international affairs. The sultanate has pursued independent and nonaligned positions, good neighbourly relations, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and mutual respect for the rights of national sovereignty. Sultan Qaboos earned respect for extending a hand of friendship to all nations and peoples (Badr, 2009: 44).

The beginning of the reign of Sultan Qaboos was difficult because of internal conflicts and the external pressures of the Cold War. Kechichian (1995:1) asserts:

“Although Omani foreign policy was articulated in classic Cold War terminology when Sultan Qaboos acceded to the throne in 1970, it has adapted to the changing Middle Eastern and international environment of the 1980s. To be sure, the “communist” threat was dealt a significant blow on the Sultanate’s southern border, but Muscat was also quick to properly assess the demise of that scourge on the world scale, identify more-immediate regional threats, and address the most crucial internal demands of a rapidly growing population. This shift was possible because Omani foreign policy was guided by an awareness of the country’s internal capabilities”.

The success of foreign policy in dealing with regional and international changes is not a random coincidence, but rather an extension of Oman's foreign policy for hundreds of years, when Oman was a great empire. Omani politics always kept a vigilant focus on foreign diplomacy, the success of which permitted prosperity of the country. Alan and Rigsbee (2000) support this claim and conclude that Oman played an active and vital role, especially in the Arabian Gulf after 1970 for pragmatic and utilitarian reasons. Alan and Rigsbee (2000:211) restate:

“While it is an overstatement to proclaim that Oman has become a key country in Middle Eastern and global diplomacy between 1970 and 1996, the sultanate did develop a foreign policy based on its particular security and economic needs all within the context of a paternalistic political structure. The focus of that policy was the Arabian Gulf region in which Oman had been a major power for several hundred years, and where border disputes, overlapping economic issues, oil production and economic development, and strategic concerns (disputes among neighbours, the Strait of Hormuz) required an active role”.

Early in his reign, Sultan Qaboos conducted goodwill missions, and his leadership team visited many neighbouring countries in order to transform the prevailing perception of Oman’s old isolationist regime, and to open areas of common interest. Subsequently, ‘the success of the goodwill mission paved the way for Oman’s admission to the Arab League and then the United Nations. Membership in various international bodies followed soon after’ (Peterson, 2004: 129).

Oman’s non-aligned foreign policy is unique and resists external interferences, yet it is open to international participation. Oman foreign policy measures have been pragmatic and consistent. Iran-Oman relations have historical as well as contemporary significance. In particular, Oman mediated the negotiation between the US and Iran. . At the same time, Oman hosted the prime minister of Israel, Netanyahu in October 2018 in Muscat. This



reflects the foreign policy balance of Oman. Peterson (2004b: 132) provides further evidence:

“Oman surprised the United States and the world by agreeing to start diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. These developments laid the basis for what was to become the essence of Omani foreign policy: moderation, balance between opposing viewpoints, and a rejection of breaking ties to anyone”.

This is exactly what happened when the Sultanate refused to sever its relations with Egypt after signing the Camp David Agreement in the late 1970s. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Oman not only condemned the invasion that it regarded as a bad precedent, but also played a huge diplomatic role in finding a solution (Alan and Rigsbee, 2000). Omani-Iranian friendly relations have enabled Oman to play a role of mediation in many of the disputed issues with neighbouring countries, and even with the US and other Western countries. This is also what has been happening recently (since June 2017, when the KSA-Qatar crisis erupted) in relation to the embargo imposed on Qatar by KSA-led alliances, mainly KSA, UAE, and Egypt (Wahyuni, 2018). The Sultanate refused to participate in the embargo and did not sever its relationship with its neighbour. Another contemporary example is how Oman deals with Yemen. The Sultanate totally refused to participate in the Yemen War, carried out by some Gulf and Arab countries under the name of 'Al-Hazm Storm' which has not yet ended, under the pretext of beating the Houthis (Baabood and Baabood, 2020).

Indeed, Oman's conviction of the importance and the need for peace and stability to the present and the future of the region have led to lines of communication being permanently open to all Arab and international parties. Therefore, Omani policy did not face any 'boycott' in relations with the Arab countries, and it has the ability to make positive moves towards the Indian Ocean basin countries. This explains much of the Omani foreign policy as argued by Mowafi (2002).

Many political analysts argue that the personal qualities of the Sultan as well as the Ibadhi doctrine based on peace, respect for others and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, have been and continue to play a major role in Oman's high standing in the United Nations and other international arenas. Kechichian (1995:257) states:

“This was not due to its size, although Oman is the second GCC state in area and third in population. Nor was it because of its oil production (of about) 800,000 barrels per day. The reason for the sultanate's importance was its geography, the strategic

consideration of Western powers, and more importantly, its government which has an unrelenting pursuit for an independent foreign policy”.

Oman continues to play a role in resolving outstanding issues regionally. This is visible to all observers and local politicians.

In short, based on the concept of openness and honesty, as well as the interests of the country regionally and internationally, Oman has pursued a progressive policy in international relations. Since 1970 it has held an international position which commands respect for being consistent and open-minded.

#### *2.6.2. Sultan Qaboos' Academic Chairs*

Oman is proud of its heritage, history, and culture. It proceeds from this historical depth and as a member of the international community to join countries of the entire world in supporting and encouraging global culture of peace and coexistence. Being aware of its responsibility as a member of the international community, and as a generous devotee of scholarship and learning, Sultan Qaboos established sixteen 'Academic Chairs and Scholarships'. The Chairs are gifted to highly rated Universities across the globe, like the £2.8 million bestowed on the University of Cambridge for the permanent setting up of professorship of Modern Arabic (University of Cambridge, n/d).

According to the Ministry of Higher Education, the common purposes of all the Sultan Qaboos Chairs are

“to encourage the creation of a contemporary global community living in peace and governed by mutual understanding and tolerance, as well as to present contemporary views on how the voice of Arabs can be perceived in a more enlightened way for the sake of understanding and tolerance in this age of globalization” (Ministry of Higher Education, n/d).

In addition, enhancing Arab heritage and Arab language studies as well as Islamic culture, is also a fundamental role of the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs to change the stereotype common thoughts about the Arabs and Islam.

The responsibility for supervising seven of these 16 Chairs rests with the Oman Ministry of Higher Education. While, the responsibility for overseeing the remaining chairs lies with five other Omani authorities that include: "foreign communications office; cultural affairs office; ministry of foreign affairs; ministry of Awqaaf and Religious affairs and Sultan Qaboos University". A National Committee of all these authorities chaired by the MOHE was formed,

to report on and follow-up all activities and affairs related to the Academic Chairs (Ministry of Higher Education, 2017).

In recognition of the Sultan Qaboos's strenuous efforts in supporting international peace, safeguarding the environment and balanced foreign policy, he has been the recipient of many international awards (See for example Badr, 2009: 45).

## **2.7. Omani Heritage and Cultural Diversity**

### *2.7.1. Omani Heritage*

Since the beginning of the Sultan Qaboos era, the Sultanate's government has sought to strengthen its ties with other countries, particularly through cultural diplomacy.

As mentioned before, Oman's geographical situation plays a fundamental role, in the past and present, in connecting with other countries via the sea, and transferring their culture and religion to others with ease. As a result of this geographical location and the cultural role played by Oman throughout the ages, Oman has many historical sites; some of them date back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC such as Samahram Port in Salalah. In the modern era of the new renaissance since 1970, Oman has paid great attention to its cultural heritage and it has enacted laws which ensure safeguarding and protection from damage.

An early example of this was a royal decree issued to establish the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture in 1976. The Ministry immediately embarked on projects to preserve and promote the national identity and to safeguard Omani culture and heritage. Its name was later changed to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture by deleting the word 'National' which probably refers to the transition from the concept of national heritage to world heritage; a topic which will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

The Protection of National Heritage Law became operational in 1980. It is divided into several branches related to the concept of protection of the national heritage and the role of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and the penalties incurred by those who break the law. Omanis are proud of their cultural heritage, which is largely unknown to the majority of the Arabs. There is evidence that Omanis are eager to preserve this unique heritage (Fariha, 2007). A new law for Omani heritage was issued in May 2019, which includes items related to the Omani heritage inscribed in the World Heritage List (See Appendix 1 page 235).

The ministry has faced many challenges in terms of functions that overlap with other institutions that have responsibilities pertaining to culture. This was the case until 2017 when the spheres of specialization were clearly spelt out. The ministry collects and protects Oman's rich heritage. It has successfully delivered many projects including the 'Sindbad project', the Historical and Natural History Museum', the restoration of castles, forts and old villages (Allan and Rigsbee, 2000), and 'the National Museum in December 2015.

The focus on heritage culminated in the designation of 1994 as a year of Omani heritage. In the celebration of the Omani heritage, many activities were organised to remind the citizens of their rich heritage that must be preserved and transferred to the new generations. It can be seen as an extension of the nation-building activities.

Sultan Qaboos justified the conviction and the interest in heritage and in educating generations their proud heritage when he stated

“Who has no past, has no present, nor future. Who forgets his heritage and history becomes a son who does not know his father and he may become homeless. In this sense, it was our interest and the people as a whole to maintain heritage and traditions” (quoted in Fariha, 2007:150).

The Sultanate of Oman represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science maintains close ties regarding heritage with international organizations including UNESCO (France), ALECSO (Tunisia) and ISESCO (Morocco). For example, Gugolz (1996:297) refers to the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in this regard, although the Omani world sites mentioned here have changed somewhat over the past twenty years.

“The Ministry of Culture and Heritage maintains close contact with international organizations such as UNESCO, which has listed Bahla Fort (...) and the tombs of Bat, Al-Ayn and Al-Khutm in the inventory of World Heritage. Listing has been proposed for "Jidat al Harassis" where the endangered Oryx Antelope has been given a protected area (Sultan's Decree 4/94). [...] The UN recognises Oman as one of the exemplary countries which implement the conventions and recommendations and proceed to act on them (Popp et al. 2010:20). The Sultanate of Oman can boast of having more historic buildings per square kilometer than the majority of Arab countries (Walls 1978:11). The restoration of historic citadels, forts, palaces and similar monuments is a carefully planned activity, well organised and carried out continuously by the Ministry”.

In addition to Bahla Fort site, Bat site and the Oryx site, which were registered on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 1987, 1988 and 1994 respectively, there are three other sites of Omani tangible heritage: Land of Frankincense in the south of Oman in Dhofar, which was listed in 2000, the Irrigation System of Aflaj which was listed in 2005, and the Qalhat site which was listed on September 2019. The Oryx site was removed from the world list for economic considerations. All the Omani world-heritage sites both tangible and intangible will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

The irrigation system of Oman is a unique system in which there is a 'shura' policy and agreed system of water sharing known as 'Aflaj'. This shura system contributes positively to the building of Omani character and diplomacy to avoid any conflicts and disagreements. Jones and Ridout (2012: 13) conclude that some social elements such as heritage, maritime location, falaj system, shura and Islam have helped Oman to shape its unique cultural diversity and diplomacy.

#### *2.7.2 Oman religion and languages*

Like other Arab societies in general and the Arabian Peninsula societies in particular, Omani society is tribal. Although tribes sometimes appear as a threat to modern society owing to their institutions and customs which may clash with modern law, Oman is an example where they can coexist. In Oman, unlike other tribal nations, tribes have contributed in several positive ways to the formation of the general features of the state (Carter, 1976). Tribes have played a significant role economically, socially, culturally and politically. For example, tribes have turned into an incubator of the state providing leaders at the national level. Historically, Oman has been ruled by a number of tribes, including the Alyahmad, Bani-Kharus, al-Nabhanah, al-Ya'aribah, al-Khalili, and, since 1744, al-Bu Sa'id (Rabi, 2011).

Religion is a part of the culture of society for some, or culture stems from religion for others (Bhaskar, 2010). There are three main religions in Oman: Islam (the majority), Christian and Hinduism. There are seven Christian churches and two Indian temples located in Oman (Jones, 2012), beside hundreds of mosques. Muslims in Oman are from three Islamic schools of thought (Mathhab)- Ibadhi, Sunni and Shi'a. Apart from the original Omanis, there are three other Omani nationalities: Zinzibari, Lawati and Baluchi. Omani political life has been affected by the presence of both Ibadhi and non-Ibadhi (Sunni and Shi'a) tribes.

Petersen (2004: 32) shows that among the indigenous Omani population about 45% are Ibadhi, 50% are Sunni Muslim, and the rest 5% are Shi'a Muslim and Hindu. Given the importance of the role played by the tribe, the rulers of Muscat were keen to maintain strong

relationships with the tribes and their leaders. Disagreements sometimes occurred between the coast and the interior, but that did not eliminate or weaken the sense of belongingness of the whole land to one Oman. External threats to Oman or certain of its regions have represented, throughout history, an element of consolidation, integration and convergence.

### *Islam and Ibadhi doctrine*

Omanis came to Islam peacefully in response to the call of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). They played a significant role in spreading Islam especially in Africa, via Omani sailors who helped to spread Islam by their commercial transactions and reputation for honesty. The Ibadhi sect originated in Basra, Iraq, immediately after the caliphate period following the dispute between the Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib and Muawiyah in July 657. Ibadhism moved to Oman, which then spread its doctrine on a large scale due to its distance from the domination of the Umayyad state on the one hand, and because of its location which is protected geographically from land and sea on the other. Hence, from the beginning, Ibadhism sought to establish a pattern that simulates the Islamic caliphate in the early years which later became known as the State of the Imamate (Mowafi, 2002). The first Omani imam was Aljulanda bin Masoud (749 - 751).

Since the first Imam, the history and culture of Oman has been based on three fixed basic principles which helped to shape the distinctive political culture of Oman in contrast with its neighbours:

1. The principle of authority: The Imamate system based on the principle of consensus, contracting, and the free election of the imam, building on the principle of Shura (consultation).
2. The concept of the nation, as it is after the transfer of Ibadhi people and scientists from Basra to Oman, by the end of the second Hijri century/seventh Milady century, Oman was considered as a "Nation Spirit" of the Ibadhian as well as a haven for fugitives from the persecution of the Abbasid authorities.
3. The principle of independence and sovereignty, a principle practiced since the separation of Oman from the Umayyad state, and then from the Abbasid state in the second half of the second Hijri century (Gubbash, 2014).

It is important to emphasize that the role of the State of the Imamate, especially in periods of prosperity, had political, military, and religious aspects, as well as relations with relevant parties or states, limitedly though. Thus, considering only the Ibadhi religious perspective would overlook an important aspect of Omani policy (Allen, 2016).

Most importantly, Ibadhism established the principle of the Shura as a feature of Omani society regarding the selection of imams, contributing to the development of a kind of political 'democratic' culture, which made Gubbash (2014) consider the Ibadhi experience as the longest historic period of democracy of all (see section 2.4.1 in this Chapter for more detail).

Although the discussion here in this chapter is generally far from UNESCO, it is important to say that the three main principles mentioned above on which the history and culture of Oman are based to form a democratic thought from a purely Omani perspective, are entirely consistent with UNESCO's principles. UNESCO is an organization that calls for peace in all its strategies and actions on all occasions, educationally, culturally and scientifically. Therefore, the common interest has contributed to enhance the organization's confidence in the Sultanate and strengthening the bonds of cooperation between them. This meeting of principles between Oman and UNESCO will be discussed in detail during Chapter4.

### *Languages in Oman*

Several dialects are spoken in the Sultanate of Oman, including the dialect of the people of the East, the interior, Batinah, Dhahira, Dhofar, Musandam/ Shihhi, the Gulf and others. In addition, there are several languages with their unique vocabulary and dictionaries such as Baluchi, Patricia, Persian, Harsusi, Habbiot, Kimzari, Shahri/ Jabali, Mahri, Lawati, Urdu and Swahili.

According to the Languages of The World Website<sup>2</sup>, 'the number of individual languages listed for Oman is 17. All are living languages. Of these, 10 are indigenous and 7 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 2 are institutional, 3 are developing, 5 are vigorous, 4 are in trouble, and 3 are dying'.

In an article entitled "Non-Arabic Languages in Oman: The Diversity of Culture and History", published by the website "Hafriat" (Basheer, 2017), the Jordanian writer Khaled Basheer notes that among the languages found in Oman are: Baluchi, Persian, Agamiyah, Zadjali, and Swahili. Some of the languages that were originally found in Oman were: Jabalia (or Shahriya), Mahriya, Tahrirism, Hasarism and Hobbit. Each language tells a unique story about the interaction between speakers of these languages, the Omani people, the Omani environment and the Arabic language. Unfortunately, most of them are in decline today, and some of them are threatened with extinction, because most of them are not written.

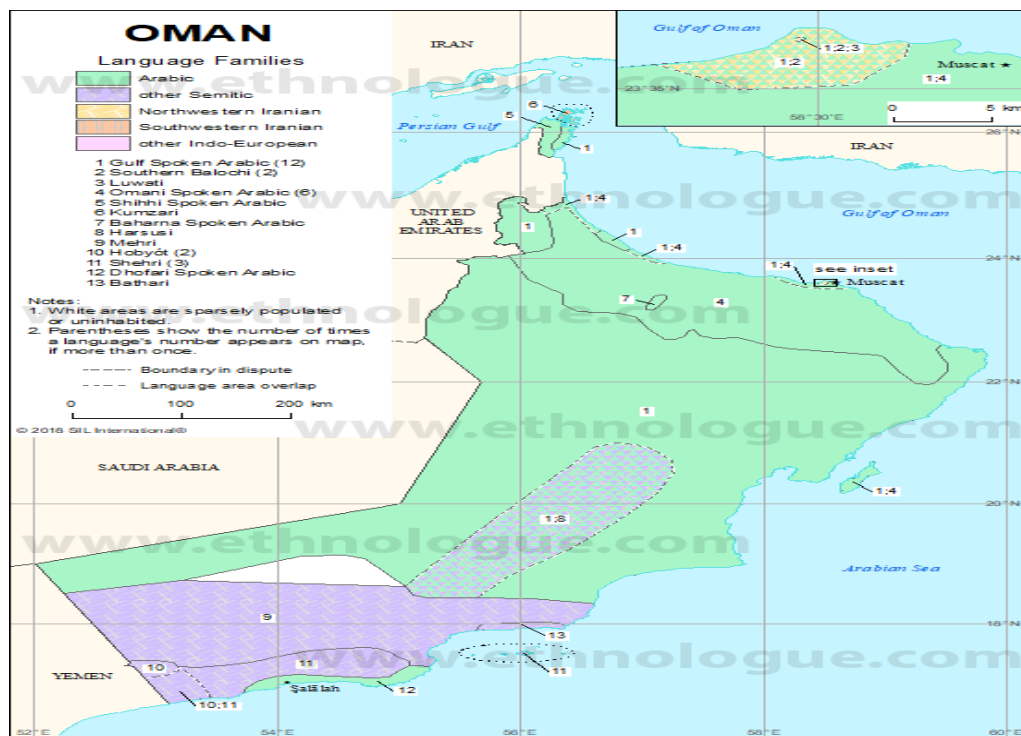
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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/OM>

According to Ethnologue<sup>3</sup>, as many as 720,000 native Omani speak Arabic language, which is the dominant among all spoken languages.

The following map shows the distribution of languages in Oman.

Figure 2.2 Languages in Oman



Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/OM>

The enduring strength of the 'idea of Oman' of the leader and the diversity of religious beliefs, origins and languages has contributed to the formation of Omani diplomacy and cultural diversity.

### 2.7.3 Oman Cultural Diversity

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/OM>



Despite all doctrinal, sectarian and tribal differences, Oman is regionally known for its successful experience of peaceful coexistence between all this diversity. Referring to religious differences, Valeri (2009) notes:

“Recreating a national identity within the framework of an omnipresent state and unifying cultural and religious references have also occurred in the religious field; the authorities have tried to smooth over doctrinal differences between schools in order to promote an Omani Islam which is impervious to any historical or political takeover” (Valeri, 2009:127).

Moreover, there were some consequences of the oil economy and the new era of Sultan Qaboos on the family model culture. Again, Valeri comments,

“The Muscat urban area, which grew from 40,000 inhabitants to more than 500,000\* within 20 years, best illustrates the resulting drift from the land. This kind of work-induced migration represented certainly the most powerful victor for language standardisation at a national level, but also for changes in cultural customs, with fast adoption of a nuclear family model - especially since, in many cases, it was a stipulated in a marriage agreement that the couple had to settle independently as soon as possible, as young women usually refuse to live under the same roof as the husband's family” (Valeri, 2009: 122).

Educational culture is also susceptible to structural changes, both national and global. With the cooperation of international organizations, especially UNESCO, the Omani educational system has developed rapidly since 1970. The Sultanate of Oman adopted the education for all goals at the Jomtien conference (Thailand, 1990), which were reaffirmed in 2000.

The majority of western and Arab visitors who have written about Oman share the consensus that Oman is expected to develop further as a tourist destination, due to the availability of the elements required by tourism like biodiversity, cultural diversity and heritage. Security is a pre-requisite and Oman is one of the safest countries in the world. For example, the 2019 Migrant Workers Report, released by InterNations, a company looking at the services countries provide to expats moving there - Oman is on the top of the list in terms of safety, security, and friendliness of expats<sup>4</sup>. The Omani people are hospitable, non-aggressive and respectful to all foreigners regardless of their identity and nationality

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.shabiba.com/article/233394>

(Fariha, 2007: 54). Many archeological sites are available in Oman, along with more than five hundred castles and forts, which form elements of cultural tourism.

Kechichian (1995: 20) explains the underlying attractions of Omani biodiversity and the combined presence of the Omani desert and marine environments:

“Oman has been profoundly affected by its trading role. The country's desert and marine environments defined Omani character, as trade was bicoastal: its powerful tribes maintained important trading contacts within the mainland and developed sea routes to the Indian subcontinent and beyond. Omanis were therefore particularly well equipped to deal with two cultures, and the combination of the desert mainland and the maritime legacy created a society that has survived and prospered through time”.

UNESCO conferences, particularly the recent ones, have focused on heritage themes by asking the states to preserve their local heritage, languages and dialects, to save them from extinction as they face globalization pressures. Sultan Qaboos was attentive to this global risk from the beginning of his reign. Education, he urged, should be designed to help students to cope with their community and live a productive and successful life in spite of the changes and the circumstances that prevail at the time in which they live. It should inculcate the values of global citizenship and enhancing global cultural diversity. This theme of education calls for further elaboration.

#### *2.7.4. Education System in Oman*

In 1976, Yahya bin Mahfuz al-Manziri was appointed minister of education.. He implemented some of the reforms proposed by the World Bank including the opening of a teacher training institute in Muscat. Recognition of the curriculum and teaching materials, undertaken in corporation with UNESCO and modelled based on the British system, began in 1978. The shortage of qualified teachers posed a threat to the education system, in which even by the mid-1980s only about 10% Omani teachers were qualified. However, demand for education was intense, and many schools operated with boys being taught in the morning and girls in the afternoon (Allen and Rigsbee, 2000: 168).

According to a report by the Omani Ministry of Education entitled *From Access to Success* (Ministry of Education, 2006) the initial goal of the Omani education system was to involve all parts of the country and all sections of society by providing free education including books, transportation and meals for low income pupils in order to raise educational levels. The Ministry reports:

“The main priority for the Ministry of Education in the years immediately following 1970 was to increase access to its services as quickly as possible. Its success in doing so was recognised in a report from the World Bank in 2001, which described the development of Oman’s education system since 1970 as ‘massive’, ‘unprecedented’, and ‘unparalleled’ by any other country” (Ministry of Education, 2006:57).

In 1997, the attention in the Sultanate of Oman shifted from quantitative to qualitative education when the basic education system, which lasted 10 years, was implemented in two phases: (1-4) and (5-10). The current Omani educational system is now in line with international trends. It supports global principles, which are advocated by Islam and international values like ‘peace’, ‘respect’, ‘diversity’, ‘democracy’ and ‘multiculturalism’.

## **2.8. Summary**

This chapter has discussed the historical background of Oman that is the basic foundation for the discussion of culture and heritage of the country. It has been shown that Oman’s geographic location provided a coastal refuge for foreign ships and vessels during ancient times. In addition, its citizens were hospitable towards travelers and seafarers who navigated in Oman’s waters. This interaction created an exchange of culture that benefited both Oman and the exchanging countries. Thus, the present-day culture of Oman has a historical root that is still shaping its unique identity for the citizen of the country.

In particular, Oman’s rich maritime history is discussed referring to its relationship with the United Kingdom, the USA, and Iran. These relationships created an opportunity for friendliness and amicability among all the citizens that contributed a great deal to the cultural richness of Oman. Also, they have influenced the language and religious belief, to some extent, of Oman which are the building blocks of cultural identity of a country. In addition, the diplomatic relations between these countries paved the way for Oman to become a strategic ally to many of its neighbouring countries, which is a prerequisite for sustaining cultural identity and cultural diversity.

There is no doubt that, after the regime change in 1970 that brought Sultan Qaboos bin Said into power, Oman experienced an unprecedented positive change in regard to political stability and economic prosperity that led to the creation of unity among the population. This stability has been the bedrock for institutionalizing the basic foundations of the country such as law, education, and foreign policy. Thus, Oman owes a lot to the regime change which can be the starting point for the discussion of culture and heritage of Oman. That is what we

aim to achieve in our next few chapters. We will discuss how various initiatives of the Sultan were conducive to nurturing and maintaining cultural heritage and cultural diversity of Oman. Special emphasis will be placed on Oman-UNESCO relations with regard to the installation of universal cultural values.

Although Oman-UNESCO relations have been smooth over the years, the relation has sometimes turned cold due mainly to state unilateral decisions which sometimes go against the cultural wellbeing prescribed by UNESCO. However, mutual respect has been restored by honest and empathic efforts and initiatives by both parties. These issues will be enumerated in the forthcoming chapters. The next chapter highlights UNESCO in terms of its history, main principles, globalizing heritage, world cultural diversity, and work determinants.

## **Chapter 3. UNESCO - World Cultural Diversity, and Intercultural Dialogue**

### **3.1. Introduction**

UNESCO plays a critical role in promoting culture and heritage for its member states as well as associates. It adopts various guidelines and principles for its member states so that they can preserve and maintain their own cultural heritages independently and in cooperation with UNESCO. However, UNESCO provides member states with technical assistance without directly interfering in the decisions of a sovereign state. In this sense, it would be wise to evaluate the role of UNESCO from the perspective of a member state partner instead of evaluating its role in isolation.

This chapter aims to portray the basic structure of UNESCO. In so doing, it sheds historical light on the evolution of this intergovernmental organization as well as its governance structures. The chapter will argue that despite some reservations about the effectiveness of UNESCO's role in maintaining and preserving cultural heritage of the world in general and member states in particular, the organization has undertaken various initiatives that have been proved worthy. Thus, the birth of UNESCO was a significant one in terms of preserving heritage and culture. In line with this argument, this chapter will further highlight the basic conventions and principles of UNESCO. It attempts to extensively review seven broad themes and goals of UNESCO which underlie its major work, to give a balanced view. It will show how these conventions and principles help to enhance cultural diversity and sustainable development.

Heritage, especially cultural, is the core of UNESCO's work because this organization has identified world heritages across the globe.

These initiatives are described along with their pros and cons in this chapter. Also, the chapter highlights the major conventions of UNESCO which are related to maintaining and preserving heritage. Some of their shortcomings are also identified for further improvement.

The chapter is structured as follows: section two describes the foundation of UNESCO including its genesis, governance, member states, and principles of UNESCO's work. Section three illustrates the various initiatives of UNESCO to maintain and preserve culture and heritage globally. In particular, major conventions of UNESCO, which are related to heritage, are also covered in this section. Section four sheds analytical light on the determinants of UNESCO's work and major challenges this intergovernmental organisation faces in performing its activities. Also, the concept of independent external evaluator and its effectiveness are discussed in this section. The issues of world cultural diversity, such as

the forces that hasten cultural diversity worldwide and its opposite forces that slow the tempo down, are highlighted in section five. This is followed by a conclusion that links the major findings of the chapter to the forthcoming chapters.

## **3.2. UNESCO**

### *3.2.1. A brief history*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (henceforth, UNESCO) is a Specialized agency of the United Nations, with headquarters in Paris, which has 193 members and 11 associate members as of March 2020. Other antecedents include the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation (CICI), Geneva 1922-1946 and the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation (IICI), Paris 1925-1946 (Heywood, 2011: 189). However, World War II stopped the work of these organizations. Having suffered from the scourge of the First and Second World Wars, participating countries have created a global institution dedicated to inculcating the principles of peace and the values of tolerance through education. UNESCO (2009)<sup>5</sup> states in its official website

"As early as 1942, in wartime, the governments of the European countries, which were confronting Nazi Germany and its allies, met in the United Kingdom for the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME). The Second World War was far from over, yet those countries were looking for ways and means to reconstruct their systems of education once peace was restored. Very quickly, the project gained momentum and soon took on a universal note. New governments, including that of the United States, decided to join in".

At the end of the London Conference, 16 November 1945, 37 countries signed the Constitution of UNESCO and it came into force with the 20th ratification in November 1946. The UNESCO General Conference took place as the first session in Paris on November 19 - December 10, 1946 with the participation of 30 countries entitled to vote. Meanwhile, other countries joined UNESCO like Germany in 1951, Spain in 1953, and the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1954. In addition, as many as 19 African countries became UNESCO Members in the 1960s (UNESCO, 2010). Among the first 22 founding members that ratified the Constitution in 1946, only three countries were Arab (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Lebanon). This indicates that these three countries enjoyed a good international exposure worldwide and warm relations with Britain and France.

The purpose of the new organization as defined in the constitution (of UNESCO) is

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<sup>5</sup> UNESCO. (2009). *Conference of Allied Ministers of Education*

"to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations (UNESCO, 2010)".

The constitution further highlighted "...as long as wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". The primary goal of UNESCO, as displayed on its homepage, is 'building peace in the minds of men and women' (UNESCO, 2014). UNESCO's main programme areas include education, culture, natural sciences, and social and human sciences. In addition, it works on communication, information and informatics, as well as some other transverse themes. Within these areas, UNESCO is engaged in the 'establishment of international norms', which are pursued through conventions, agreements, recommendations, and declarations; the coordination of research and publications; and the provision of technical and advisory services to member states.

Discussion is on-going as to the relative priorities in UNESCO's work and the main objectives it seeks to achieve. UNESCO's overall aim is to contribute to the eradication of poverty, building of peace, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, sciences, culture, communication and information. Other priorities include quality 'education for all' and lifelong learning, fostering cultural diversity, addressing emerging social and ethical challenges, and building inclusive knowledge societies through disseminating information and strengthening communication. Whereas the mode of shared-governance is emphasized, global priorities change from time to time according to member state's needs. For example, although education remains the priority, UNESCO has become better known for its various initiatives and activities associated with culture or heritage conservation. Brumann (2014) provides evidence to this shift arguing that the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was adopted in 1972 and ratified by 190 states, is the pinnacle and the most successful international treaty adopted by UNESCO. By the same token, Singh (2010) argues that the Convention is now the flagship activity of UNESCO although the organization's educational priorities remain in place.

### *3.2.2 Governance*

The Organizing structure of UNESCO consists of a General Conference, Executive Board, Secretariat, Subsidiary Committees, Field Offices and National Commissions. The General

Conference (GC) is the main decision-making body of UNESCO. It consists of the representatives of all states with each country, regardless of its size or the extent of its contribution, possessing one vote. It meets every two years, attended by member states, associate members, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) to determine the policies of UNESCO, and approves the programme and budget. Every four years, it appoints the Director-General upon the recommendation of the Executive Board. The Executive Board is composed of 58 member states and meets normally twice a year. It is responsible for the execution of the programme adopted by the GC. The secretariat consists of the Director-General (DG) and the staff appointed by DG. The DG prepares the draft programme and budget and formulates proposals for appropriate action. Five programme sectors and a number of transverse units work in collaboration with the administrative services to carry out the programme. Table 3.1 shows the names of UNESCO Director-Generals since its establishment.

Table 3.1. Director-Generals of UNESCO since 1946

Name	Country	Years
Audrey Azoulay	France	2017- present
Irina Bokova	Bulgaria	2009-2017
Koichiro Matsuura	Japan	1999-2009
Federico Mayor	Spain	1987-1999
Amadou- Mahtar M'Bow	Senegal	1974-1987
René Maheu	France	1962-1974
Vittorino Veronese	Italy	1958-1961
Luther Evans	United States	1953-1958
John W. Taylor	United States	1952-1953
Jaime Torres Bodet	Mexico	1948-1952
Julian Huxley	United Kingdom	1946-1948

Source: Kozymka, 2014 (With update)

The table shows that there has been no Arab national selected as the Director-General of UNESCO. This proves that Arab representation at the top level of an international platform like UNESCO still has a long way to go, despite many attempts to win the position, especially in the last two periods. Only more effort and networking from this region can enhance such a possibility.



There are 199 National Commissions (NCs) for UNESCO across the world, as of 2020, which form a global network making it unique in comparison to the rest of the United Nations agencies. These NCs have a considerable role in coordinating UNESCO's activities, making relations with partners, and promoting UNESCO's principles in member states. NCs function on a permanent basis, to associate their governmental and non-governmental bodies in education, science, culture and communication with the work of the organization. Each member state has to establish a national commission in their territory because they form part of the overall constitutional architecture of the organization. Article VII of the Constitution of UNESCO identifies the importance of the establishment of national commissions in the Member States and their roles and responsibilities (UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, UNESCO has many regional offices across the world as well as two categories of Institutes /Centres. Category 1: Institutes/ Centres that are a central part of UNESCO, and help it in supporting the capacity of Member States. UNESCO bears the full costs relating to the institutions under this category. Category II: Institutes/ Centres that work under the sponsorship of UNESCO. These institutes are not legally part of UNESCO, but are related through its formal jobs. They help the organization through capacity building and exchange of information.

### 3.2.3. UNESCO Staff numbers

As of January 2018, there were 65 UNESCO field offices across the globe staffed by 727 staff members. Staff at UNESCO headquarters numbered 1035 (UNESCO, 2019). Table 3.2 shows the details of UNESCO staff since 1950.

Table 3.2 UNESCO Staff number

Year	Headquarters	Field	Institutes	Total
1950	855	807	48	1710
1960	1593	1005	588	3186
1970	3197	1852	1345	6394
1975	3457	2193	1264	6914
1980	3390	2377	1013	6780
1985	3148	2350	798	6296
1990	2763	2000	763	5526
1995	2483	1856	627	4966
2016	1018	649	397	2064

2017	1017	692	371	2080
2018	1035	727	358	2120

Source: UNESCO, 1995; UNESCO, 2018

From Table 3.2, it is clear that the number of UNESCO staff had shrunk considerably after the United States withdrew its membership in 1984 (to re-join in 2002 and to subsequently withdraw, along with Israel, again in 2018), followed by Britain and Singapore in 1985 (Britain re-joined in 1997 and Singapore returned in 2007). UNESCO's budget was severely affected by these withdrawals, especially loss of the US contribution amounting to nearly a quarter of the budget. The 2010-11 sliding scale (of UNESCO) showed that four countries contributed more than 50% of the budget: U.S. (22%), Japan (15%), Germany (8%), and France (6%) (Engel and Rutkowski 2012: 6). This challenge led UNESCO to resort to an austerity policy, including reduction of staff numbers. In 2018, the UNESCO staff total was 2120. This number is also under pressure due to the withdrawal of the United States and Israel from UNESCO in December 2018.

#### *3.2.4. Principles of UNESCO's work*

The core functions of the organization and the ways in which they are implemented have evolved in response to changing circumstances over time. After its foundation in 1945, UNESCO was hampered by a Cold War that made it virtually impossible to carry out its primary function of contributing to the maintenance of peace and security, and later by a North-South impasse that blocked significant progress in the relations between developed and Third World countries. At the same time, a number of systemic changes, including the end of the Cold War and increasing globalization, have brought about new challenges for humanity that call for rethinking the organization's role in world affairs (Pavone, 2007).

Although the education sector's share of the UNESCO's budget is greater than the rest of the sectors (see Figure 3.1, p.70), UNESCO's reputation in the field of culture as a cultural organization is more, due to the global competition for listing heritage sites on UNESCO lists. Yet, UNESCO has seven broader themes and goals- education for the 21st century, fostering freedom of expression, protecting heritage and fostering creativity, learning to live together, building knowledge societies, one planet one ocean, and science for a sustainable future. Fostering creativity is one of the themes of UNESCO which is rightly emphasized. Cerisola (2019) argues that creativity acts as a mediating factor in explaining the capability of a particular community or state to exploit cultural heritage for economic purposes. Although UNESCO programmes and work are carried out in accordance with short, medium

and long-term plans, with punctuality in carrying out work on time, the organization has flexibility in many aspects of scheduling such work, as well as in extending the programmes to the available budget.

The assessment and reforms carried out by the organization from time to time contribute to the success of its mission (Blanchfield and Browne, 2013). Blanchfield and Browne (2013:8) further argue that a 2010 independent external evaluation report commissioned by member states suggested to "...change some of UNESCO's management processes, enhancing UNESCO's field presence, and strengthening the organization's governance mechanisms." Similarly, UNESCO's former DG, Irina Bokova, was called by the former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, to take the lead in creating a scientific advisory board on sustainable development. She pointed out at the time

This positioning is central to the reform of the Organization. The reform should be based on two components: structural reform, reduction of costs and search of efficiency on the one hand, and the development of our role as a leader in the areas where we provide added value (UNESCO, N.D).

In terms of structural reform which is about reduction of cost, UNESCO was successful to some extent. This reform was a *sine qua non* after the stop of US payments of membership fees (more detail in chapter 7). However, the success with regard to developing UNESCO as a leader is somewhat blurred (Burnett, 2010). Obviously, cost reduction will have a negative impact on attaining the leadership role of UNESCO in its prescribed area because doing so would diminish the amount of available human resources at UNESCO's disposal. One of the challenges in this regard, raised by Burnett (2010), lies in UNESCO's achievement of its goal of universal education.

### *1. Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO's mission has been to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of its principal activities as means to achieve this aim. Education is treated as a top priority on the organization's agenda compared with the other sectors of the organization (see for example: Rieckmann, 2017; Leicht et al., 2018; Michelsen and Wells, 2017). To fulfill this role UNESCO aims to provide global and regional leadership in education, strengthen education systems worldwide and respond to contemporary global challenges through education. However, UNESCO's legitimacy to act as a global leader for education has been under threat several times. For instance, Mundy (2006:42) argues that in 1970s, UNESCO was plagued by political divisions which can be attributed to the demand of newly

independent member states for new world economic, information, and communication orders. The centre of the crisis resulted from various factors including “turmoil over alleged mismanagement, and a tendency to use UNESCO as a battleground for cold war politics” (Heyneman, 1999:68). Mundy (2006:39) relates the political polarization of UNESCO to education, “UNESCO’s educational activities were no longer providing the organization with the kind of legitimacy and authority which they had once afforded in the 1960s and early 1970s.” Since then, it was a great concern for UNESCO as to how this intergovernmental organization should recover its loss of image. Singh (2010:57) typifies the shaky stands of UNESCO in 1990s when this institution was on the verge of “... losing its status as lead agency for education.”

Perhaps, driven by this fear as well as by the impetus provided by its rich history of making fruitful attempts to establish peace and security in, UNESCO strategically increased its efforts basically with the focus on establishing “...partnership with other multilateral and bilateral donors, rebuilding of UNESCO’s global leadership through public relations, fund-raising and gala meetings of heads of states and ministers of education” (Mundy, 2006: 44). This has resulted in rebuilding the image of UNESCO to be fit for the leader in expanding education. For example, in the World Education Forum, which was held in the capital of Senegal in April 2000, the participants awarded the coordinating role for Education for All (EFA) to UNESCO (Daniel, 2010).

It is, however, difficult to evaluate whether UNESCO has been successful in fulfilling its leadership role in education as it depends on the perspective we consider for evaluation. For instance, the role of UNESCO in promoting education in many third world countries including Africa and Asia is highly regarded (Uvalić-Trumbić, and Daniel, 2016; Jones, 2018). But Edwards et al. (2018:53) refers to an interview with former UNESCO officials and quotes, “with one or two shining exceptions, they have not provided the sort of intellectual leadership that many people would expect UNESCO, as the leading UN agency on education, to provide.” This proves that there some shiny sides of UNESCO, although its drawbacks are to be considered in light of the given resource constraint. However, the ‘shiny side’ can be broadened with some internal reforms within UNESCO. For instance, UNESCO’s education for all leadership role has been restricted by a combination of factors including dysfunction, restructuring, and partial implementation of reforms to address systemic issues (Edwards et al., 2018; Limage, 2010)

## *2. Fostering freedom of expression*

UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organization, is committed to the freedom of speech, or as it is stated at its constitution, 'the free flow of ideas by word and image' (UNESCO, n/ d). The organization is committed to foster free, unbiased, and pluralistic media in print, broadcast and online. It further states

"UNESCO today promotes policies for press freedom and the safety of journalists, and it support independent journalism based on professional ethics and self-regulatory principles. For UNESCO, pluralistic and diverse media provides information options so that the public can make good choices. This is why today it also helps to build community media in particular, and why it foster gender equality in the media. In order to empower individuals as informed producers and consumers of information, UNESCO has initiatives in media and information literacy and in journalism education" <sup>6</sup>.

Nordenstreng (2007:15) however, does not hesitate to label UNESCO's primary mission of promoting freedom of information, as a 'misleading myth', He argues that this belief (freedom of information) is at best an 'ideological position'; rather UNESCO should advocate "a notion of positive freedom whereby freedom is not an end product to be protected as such but a means to ensure other more general objectives such as peace and democracy" (Nordenstreng, 2007:16).

Like other goals of UNESCO, freedom of speech is not an easy target which UNESCO can achieve alone or in a short period of time. It should be kept in mind that UNESCO commits to help member states as a partner where it has to respect the sovereign decision of the state. It can notify the national government what policies and actions are required to ensure the free flow of information and freedom of speech; but UNESCO itself does not have the mandate to implement these policies and actions at the state level. More importantly, it is beyond the scope of UNESCO's function. If the national governments, for their own political interests, repress the freedom of speech, UNESCO does not have enough tools and authority to do much about it. Abramowitz (2018:1) notes "political rights and civil liberties around the world deteriorated to their lowest point in more than a decade in 2017, extending a period characterized by emboldened autocrats, beleaguered democracies." While the whole world deteriorates with regard to the freedom of speech, free flow of information, and democratic participation, UNESCO has very few tools to fight such evils, to be realistic.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression>

### 3. *Protecting heritage and fostering creativity*

As the present study focuses primarily on culture, it is important to understand UNESCO's approach to this sector. Albert (2017) considers culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development along with the other three dimensions namely: social, economic, and environmental dimensions. UNESCO is grounded where cultures of the world meet; it ensures that regardless of race, social condition or class, it shall recognise the 'best works of every land and every age' (Yusuf, 2007:149). Culture is used here in a holistic sense as 'knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society' (Tylor, 1871:14). To quote UNESCO's official position

"In today's interconnected world, culture's power to transform societies is clear. Its diverse manifestations - from our cherished historic monuments and museums to traditional practices and contemporary art forms - enrich our everyday lives in countless ways. Heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities disrupted by bewildering change and economic instability. Creativity contributes to building open, inclusive and pluralistic societies. Both heritage and creativity lay the foundations for vibrant, innovative and prosperous knowledge societies".<sup>7</sup>

Isar (2017:148) defines sustainability referring to the Brundtland Commission of 1987 as "a process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This definition heralds the primary message for culture and heritage that heritage must be protected for the future generation whereas the current generation can use it without hurting its future usability. The tension between current use and preservation for future use can be eased by creativity and innovation. Lucia and Trunfio (2018) show that hybridization of cultural heritage facilitated by creativity that seek engagement of stakeholders in a bottom-up cultural regeneration approach is the key towards sustainable culture heritage. Among various stakeholders, private actors mostly rely on innovative thinking and creative ideas to stimulate cultural regeneration.

UNESCO espouses the same tradition when it argues "only a human-centered approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue among cultures can lead to lasting, inclusive and equitable results<sup>8</sup>." To blend culture with creativity for sustainable heritage, UNESCO has introduced a three-dimensional approach. For example, it undertakes a pioneering role for promoting culture and development worldwide; it engages itself with the international community to strategies clear policies and legal frameworks; and

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<sup>7</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity>

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/beirut/CLT>

finally, it works on the ground to support governments and local stakeholders to safeguard heritage, strengthen creative industries and encourage cultural pluralism.

#### *4. Learning to live together*

Another important goal of UNESCO is to promote and motivate people to live together peacefully. For instance, the organization “...continues to accomplish every day its fundamental humanist mission to support people in understanding each other and working together to build lasting peace.” Needless to say, UNESCO rightly emphasizes promoting social cohesion and intercultural bonding because these elements are the pinnacles to foster amiability and peace among nations. However, this is a tough task and difficult to achieve especially at a time when the world is plagued with war and terrorism. At the same time, inequality, the gender gap, social exclusion, and communal violence are on the rise. In such an environment, UNESCO reiterates, “learning to live together among all members of the global community becomes more topical than ever before” <sup>9</sup>.

The question is: what UNESCO has done to achieve this goal despite all those hurdles? UNESCO’s Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (UNESCO, 1995:34) spelled it out: “co-operation between different peoples with different interests and from different cultures will be facilitated and conflict kept within acceptable and even constructive limits, if participants can see themselves as being bound and motivated by shared commitments. It is, therefore, imperative to look for a core of shared ethical values and principles” This implies that UNESCO looks for common ethical values and principles that can be highlighted as a centre so that communities come together and be united. Such a unity may sometime seem to be counterintuitive as UNESCO also believes in individual freedom and cultural diversity. Power (2001:17) explores a hybrid idea, “our vision and action must combine universalistic principles with cultural differences, and our debate must include and respect everybody - every culture and social group...”

In the same report (UNESCO, 1995:10) UNESCO highlights that “...peace and democracy, the enlargement of people’s capabilities could be rooted only in a people’s ethics and values that shape its patterns of daily behaviour.” Toward this, UNESCO has identified the values that would be acceptable to all communities regardless of their religion, race, culture, gender, and sect. This common value is ‘human rights’ as declared in the UNESCO’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The core of this concept lies in education (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). UNESCO, from its headquarters, “intervenes to accompany its member states and all its partners to better

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<sup>9</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/learning-live-together>

understand and address the challenges of our more and more diversified societies, particularly through its intergovernmental Programme for Management of Social Transformations (MOST) as well the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence Programme which include, inter alia, initiatives for democracy and global citizenship, intercultural dialogue, education for peace and human rights and peace-building" (UNESCO website, accessed on 2/4/2019).

In addition, UNESCO encourages several extracurricular activities which include practice of sports activities, creating awareness, anti-doping practice and so on. These exercises are believed to enhance social integration, amiability among communities of different cultural geographical areas etc. In reality, the success of achieving this goal depends largely on achieving other interrelated goals including the goal of enhancing universal education, fostering freedom of speech as well as human rights. Thus, if UNESCO falls short of achieving these objectives, obviously it will fail in the litmus test of uniting societies.

This aim has been elaborated more than others, due to its direct link to the subject of this research, which relates to cultural diversity. UNESCO and the rest of the UN are currently in the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), which works in the same direction. Another important point here to mention is the UNESCO approach to open the door for countries to jointly submit files to the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which enhances the goal of discovering the commonalities and learning to live together (this issue will be discussed at length later in this chapter).

### *5. Building knowledge societies*

Another significant goal of UNESCO, which is also interrelated to the culture of universal education, specifies that sharing of knowledge and information has the ability to bring a change to the economic and social life of people. It is perceived that societies which are empowered with knowledge and information are capable of furthering their economic well-being as well as social peace and unity. Moreover, knowledge economy requires a new type of partnership between government, firms and universities (Rieu, 2011: 26). UNESCO proposes four basic pillars to build a society based on knowledge and information. These are: freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, and quality education for all.

UNESCO's impetus to rebuild knowledge societies hinges on the idea that universal access to information is the pinnacle towards building a peaceful, sustainable, and secured world (Dutton, 2004). Dutton (2004:5) further argues "in knowledge societies, the production



and dissemination of educational, scientific and cultural materials, the preservation of the digital heritage, the quality of teaching and learning should be regarded as crucial elements.” Since conservation of cultural heritage, especially the intangible one is inherently related to the preservation of knowledge and information, UNESCO, as a promoter of culture and heritage, advocates openness in content, technology, and processes through awareness raising, policy formulation and capacity building. To achieve this objective, UNESCO proposes open access to scientific information, open educational resources, free and open source software, an open training platform and open and distance learning. These initiatives are believed to help researchers, policymakers, innovators, students, and the like with necessary access to data and information. In addition, UNESCO supports the preservation of documentary heritage by solidification of existing preservation frameworks, and emphasizing long-term protection of digitized and digitally born information.

Singh (2012) strongly argues in favour of the effectiveness of the UNESCO's support to promote knowledge societies. He (2012:161) says “whether or not one agrees with the policies of the issue, the fact that UNESCO along with other organizations has galvanized important stakeholders to deliberate the issues is important.” However, a line of caution is hinted by Mansell and Tremblay (2013). They argue that UNESCO cannot emphasize knowledge societies in isolation because the basic building block of the knowledge society lies decisively in the learning processes. From this vantage point Mansell and Tremblay (2013:xii) suggest “UNESCO should call for continuous evaluation of the opportunities and risks of knowledge societies, and for principles, enabling policies, and programmes that will help to accelerate inclusive knowledge societies that also contribute to peace and sustainable development.”

## *6. One planet one ocean*

Protecting diversity in life on land and water is a prerequisite for sustainable living on this planet. Essential resources, on which life on earth and in the ocean critically depend, are at risk of improper exploitation, overuse or wasteful use, pollution, etc. In particular, marine life is the critical element for the sustainability and ecological balance of the planet. The realm of marine life includes coastal areas, open-ocean, continental margin, sea-ice covered systems and their interfaces with the atmosphere, land and ice (Drinkwater, 2020). Recently, discussion on the marine ecosystem and its sustainability has received widespread attention from scholars, policymakers and strategists. Uchiyama and Kohsaka. (2018) explain how resource managers and social scientists are concerned about the degradation of the world's seascapes.

Preserving water resources has importance not only for countries which are associated with coastlines but also for countries which rely in various ways on freshwater as well as and ocean resources. Hence, UNESCO considers marine diversity as one of the areas which needs attention for its survival and further development. In line with this expectation, UNESCO was the lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), which sought to organise the educational resources of the world to help make a more sustainable future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) envisions the idea that we should increase our capacity to constructively and creatively address present and future global challenges so that a sustainable and resilient planet can be formed.

UNESCO undertakes various initiatives to increase and sustain biodiversity in marine resources. For example, UNESCO has undertaken more than 30 programmes in the sciences, education, culture and communication which aim to contribute to creating knowledge, educating and communicating about climate change, and to understanding the ethical implications for current and future generations. In addition, UNESCO has listed 49 ocean places - spread in 37 countries - in the World Heritage List to recognise these sites for their unique marine biodiversity, remarkable ecosystem, and unparalleled beauty of Outstanding Universal Value (Mannaart et al., 2019).

To realise UNESCO's objective with regard to promoting and sustaining ocean resources, it has formed a separate commission known as the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO). This commission aims at improving human relationships with the ocean by educating and disseminating scientific knowledge and information so that the general public pays due attention to the unprecedented environmental changes caused by them. Moreover, the commission urges for increased international cooperation between and among various agencies to create knowledge concerning the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas.<sup>10</sup> The knowledge thus created is to be used for properly managing and protecting marine resources. There are some initiatives between UNESCO and Oman in this regard, which will be discussed in the next chapter. (See Chapter 4 pages 88-89).

### *7. Science for a sustainable future*

Since UNESCO focuses on fostering creativity and innovation, it is natural that it has to find some pragmatic routes through which creativity and innovation can be nurtured. Support for developing science and technological innovation is thus, the logical corollary of UNESCO.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://ioc-unesco.org/>

It is widely held belief that science has the answer to many unsolved questions that are the key for the survival of the planet. As such, Irina Bokova (2012:143) postulates “for UNESCO, science must lie at the heart of the new agenda for sustainable development.”

UNESCO’s emphasis on science and technology has a historical root. UNESCO was first named as UNECO (United Nations Education and Cultural Organization). On the sixth day of the United Nations Conference for the Establishment of an Educational and Cultural Organization (UNECO) in 1945, the delegates decided to include ‘S’ to emphasize the importance of science. Bokova (2012) attributes much of the credit of including ‘S’ to the first Director-General of UNESCO, Sir Julian Huxley, who was purely a scientist. Since then, UNESCO has continued to promote science and technology. It supports member states to invest in science, technology and innovation, to improve national science policies, to reform their science systems and to build capacity to monitor and evaluate performance.

In 2015, UNESCO published its roadmap, ‘UNESCO Science Report: Towards 2030’ charting the future trajectory for the progress of science and technology. In its lengthy report, UNESCO looks first for an effective growth strategy for science and technology, then characterizes the trends in innovation brought about by technology, and finally, connects these to the gender gap that persists in the field of science and engineering.

There are other multifaceted approaches UNESCO has undertaken to develop technology and to spread its benefits to the society. with special focus on underdeveloped economies. One former Director-General, Koichiru Matsuura, emphasises that “science and technological innovation capacity building is an absolute necessity for poor countries” (Watkins, 2008:187) Ogunniyi (2000) describes various UNESCO initiatives which focus on the development of science and technology in African countries.

While UNESCO’s efforts for the promotion of science and technology are laudable, some areas require further attention for improvement. For example, it is time for UNESCO to extend its focus more on actual use and diffusion of science and technology, and the parallel construction of society with technology. Also, it is argued that UNESCO is concerned about sustainability. However, it has to augment its efforts to increase cooperation between and among researchers, politicians, civil society and so on to enhance the implementation of invented technology at the end-user level. Only then we can expect that innovation and creativity will have a significant impact on heritage conservation and sustainability.

### **3.3 Globalising Heritage**

In one of her addresses in 2011, the UNESCO Director-General called for a year of renewal for World Heritage. ‘Heritage stands at the crossroads of climate change, social

transformations and processes of reconciliation between peoples. Heritage carries high stakes - for the identity and belonging of peoples, for the sustainable economic and social development of communities' (Bokova, 2011). National heritage, both cultural and natural, is a symbol that all countries around the world are racing to preserve and take care of. This has led to the formation of international alliances and various organizations for heritage safeguarding and maintaining including UNESCO. Its focus recently has been directed to promoting dialogue and coexistence, sustainable development, and poverty reduction, as each of these issues in one way or another is closely linked to global peace and security issues. In the field of culture

"UNESCO's renowned cultural conventions provide a global platform for international cooperation and establish a holistic cultural governance system based on human rights and shared values. These international treaties endeavour to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage including ancient archeological sites, intangible and underwater heritage, museum collections, oral traditions and other forms of heritage, and to support creativity, innovation and the emergence of a dynamic cultural sector" (UNESCO website, accessed on 5 June 2019).

UNESCO has stepped up its efforts and responsibilities in collaboration with members in the field of cultural development, and heritage conservation. This considerable effort resulted in the adoption and ratification of several cultural agreements and contracts, like the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which comes in the forefront of all heritage conservation conventions.

According to Kozymka (2014), the cultural activities of UNESCO in the early years of its existence focused mainly on maintaining cultural property and expressions only. UNESCO's role in the cultural field was limited to providing a forum through which states could share the richness of cultural expressions, due to the considerable challenges that were faced by UNESCO at that time, and certainly the Cold War was in the forefront. However, UNESCO's cultural role has changed and evolved gradually with the beginning of the new millennium, to promote the richness of cultures and preserve their variety and diversity. By now, UNESCO has turned itself into a global guardian for protecting and maintaining cultural heritage.

### *3.3.1 World Heritage*

According to the 1972 *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC)*, 'cultural heritage' is defined as

"all monuments (architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science), groups of buildings (groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science) or sites (works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view)". (World Heritage Centre, 2005)

On the other hand, it defines 'natural heritage' as

"all natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view; or geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation; or natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty". (World Heritage Centre, 2005).

Heritage, especially cultural, is very central to the works of UNESCO, which has identified world heritages across the globe. Labadi (2013:11) contends that UNESCO's guiding tenet towards heritage is 'outstanding universal value' by which she means "...some sites are so exceptional that they can be equally valued by all people around the world and, therefore, must be protected for mankind as a whole". As such, world heritage has become increasingly popular to a large number of countries in the world. For these countries, world heritage has become an integral part of their national culture. Turtinen (2000:3) rightly mentioned "... world heritage sites are, for various reasons, highly desired symbolic capital locally, nationally and internationally"

There is no doubt that UNESCO has the mandate to preserve world heritage by creating awareness, providing appropriate guidance and motivation. As Finnemore (1996:54) argued "UNESCO is indeed a powerful producer of culture, and a highly influential actor, capable of defining and framing conditions, problems, and solutions, and thus framing the interests and desired actions of others, especially those of the world's nation states." Turtinen (2000) further pointed out that world heritage is significant as a cosmopolitan project which aims at

rising consciousness at all levels of society. The primary locus of this significance lies on the idea as to how we can make our living together in one system meaningful or even possible.

Turtinen (2000:7) however, does not perceive world heritage as 'a manifestation of an all-encompassing world cultural order' but rather as 'part of attempts to organise the world.' Turtinen explained that there are many reasons why UNESCO recognised world heritage.

"Over the years, the world heritage institutional system has been subject to numerous reorganisations, and the conceptual, methodological and procession apparatus has often been revised. Among the reasons is that the concept of heritage itself has become broader over the years, leading to revisions of the guidelines. Another is that world heritage has changed, from initially being a safeguarding project to a global democratic and regulatory one" (Turtinen, 2000:6).

Behind the reorganization of world heritage, some conventions have played a greater role than others. Primary among them are the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972; the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003; and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005. Labadi (2013) persuasively highlights the importance of conventions. She argues that conventions are not only tools for heritage conservation but also the instruments to pursue other some noble goals like peace, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Labadi, 2013:1). Thus, these conventions deserve to be discussed in more detail for the puprposes of this thesis.

### *3.3.2 The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention, WHC), 1972*

The World Heritage is categorised into two main classes: cultural heritage and natural heritage. Heritage sites mainly consist of historic buildings, monuments, cities and cultural landscapes, as well as natural areas. UNESCO, in its General Conference, adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in November 1972 to preserve world heritage. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, also called the World Conservation Union) initially developed the proposal of this convention in 1968. This took place after the United States initiated the idea of cultural conservation with nature conservation. A White House conference in 1965 called for a 'World Heritage Trust' to preserve "the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic

sites for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry". (World Heritage Centre, 2005).

According to Kozymka (2014), the idea of preserving the world's superb cultural sites originated much earlier, circa 1954, when the government of Egypt decided to build the new Aswan High Dam. In line with this thinking, the governments of Egypt and Sudan called for the attention of UNESCO to extend its cooperation for protecting endangered monuments and sites. Responding to this request, the Director-General of UNESCO launched an appeal to the Member States for an International Campaign for endangered sites which, subsequently, resulted in the excavation and recording of hundreds of sites, the recovery of thousands of objects, as well as the salvage and relocation to higher ground of a number of important temples. The campaign, which finally ended in 1980, was considered one of the noteworthy drives to save cultural heritage (Kozymka 2014:39).

Early in 1972, the IUCN proposals were presented to the United Nations conference on Human Environment in Stockholm and were adopted in the same year. This has resulted in the World Heritage List, to record all the heritage sites of outstanding universal value. The list began in 1978 with a few world sites, but the list has been growing ever since. According to UNESCO statistics, there are 1121 listed sites on the World Heritage List, as of March 2020, consisting of 213 natural properties, 869 cultural sites, and 39 mixed (cultural and natural) properties. Among them, 53 sites are on the endangered list. (World Heritage Centre website, accessed on 28/3/2020).

An Intergovernmental Committee called 'the World Heritage Committee' was established within UNESCO. It comprised 15 State Parties to the Convention, elected by State Parties to the Convention meeting in general assembly during the ordinary session of the General Conference of UNESCO. Indeed, the World Heritage List 'WHL' has a long series of Nominations procedure. Only countries that have signed the World Heritage Convention, pledging to protect their natural and cultural heritage, can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory to be considered for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

However, from the outset some countries appeared to dominate this list in power, authority and influence. The countries with the largest number of sites on the list in descending order as of 2020 were: China: 55, Italy: 55, Spain: 48, Germany: 46, France: 45, India: 38, Britain: 32, Russia: 29, The US: 24, Australia: 20 and Canada: 20. More discussion about the Sultanate of Oman in this Convention will be included in the next chapter (page 96). (UNESCO website, accessed on 22/12/2019).

The challenge for UNESCO lies in the equitable geographical distribution in registering world heritage sites. Commenting on that, Janet Black says

"One must recognise that the identification of cultural heritage is based on an active choice as to which elements of this broader 'culture' are deemed worthy of preservation as an inheritance for the future. Through this, the significance of cultural heritage as symbolic of the culture and those aspects of it which a society (or group) views as valuable is recognised. It is this role of cultural heritage, which lends it its powerful political dimension since the decision as to what is deemed worthy of protection and preservation is generally made by State authorities on national level and by intergovernmental organizations - comprising member States - on international level. The national legislation and international law relating to cultural heritage are the formal expression of these political decisions and, as with most political questions, there is always room for controversy and competing claims" (Black, 2000 cited in Kozymka, 2014).

To list any file on the WHL, there are four steps. In order, they are: preparing a Tentative (inventory) List, preparing the Nomination File, the evaluation process by the Advisory Bodies (with special criteria/norms called 'the Outstanding Universal Values OUV', and finally making the final decision by the World Heritage Committee during its annual regular meetings (See Jokilehto, 2008; Appendix 2, page 236)

Even though some changes to the World Heritage Criteria were made in different versions of the Operational Guidelines, the fundamental condition for acceptance of any heritage site on the list is to be of outstanding universal value. According to a useful summary by the Australian Government (2012), Outstanding Universal Value is the central idea of the World Heritage Convention. Broadly, its meaning follows the common sense interpretation of the words described briefly as follows:

**"Outstanding:** for properties to be of outstanding universal value they should be exceptional, or superlative – they should be the most remarkable (wow factor) places on earth.

**Universal:** properties need to be outstanding from a global perspective. World heritage does not aim to recognise properties that are remarkable from solely a national or regional perspective. Countries are encouraged to develop other approaches to recognise these places.

**Value:** what makes a property outstanding and universal is its 'value', or the natural and/ or cultural worth of a property. This value is determined based on standards and



processes established under the World Heritage Convention's Operational Guidelines".

All properties inscribed on the WHL must have adequate protection and management mechanisms in place. How a country chooses to protect and manage its properties can vary, so long as it does so effectively. Turtinen (2000:118) opines

"Although the convention prescribes that the World Heritage is part of the heritage of humankind and that its basic idea is identification, preservation and conservation, the inclusion of a new heritage site on the list is often a source for local and regional pride".

UNESCO places strong emphasis on making world heritage popular all over the world. One attempt of this is the Committee's efforts to include more countries as signatories to the convention. The growth in the number of sites and countries involved shows that UNESCO has been successful. There are 193 member states to the Convention as of December 2019. It has also improved overall knowledge of world heritage that adds not only to the protection of the sites, but also to the promotion of a culture of peace and intercultural tolerance. 'This is an aspect that has come to be more pronounced over the years' (Turtinen, 2000).

### *3.3.3. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003*

Since its inception in 1972, the World Heritage Convention has been successful to some extent in preserving the tangible cultural and natural heritage of the world. However, there is another type of cultural heritage which remained neglected, if not ignored, for a long time; it is known as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Hence, UNESCO's interest in this type of heritage began with the end of the previous millennium, where it made a recommendation regarding the preservation of traditional culture and folklore in 1989, then the UNESCO World Declaration on Cultural Diversity for the year 2001, which was followed by the Istanbul Declaration of 2002, one year before the issuance of the 2003 agreement.

UNESCO (2003) recognises that the disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage have been on the rise recently due mainly to the increased intolerance among people as well as lack of resources required to safeguard such heritage. Realising the importance of the ICH as a symbol of cultural diversity and sustainable development, the UNESCO General Conference on the 32<sup>nd</sup> session held in October 2003 adopted a convention for the safeguarding of the ICH. The convention mainly aimed to promote increased awareness among the public, younger generations in particular, about safeguarding ICH. UNESCO also emphasized on the critical role of ICH as a factor

that brings people and communities closer and creates exchanges and cooperation among them to the benefit of all when safeguarding their uses, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques as an integral part of their cultural heritage. The convention first, defines ICH as

"The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills- as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity". (UNESCO, 2003).

The above definition implies that intangible cultural heritage includes all types of spoken expressions and traditions, such as language, social practices (like rituals and festive events), performing arts, traditional workmanship and handcrafts, or knowledge and practices about the universe and nature.

The convention also forms an Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which has nearly the same objectives as the world heritage committee, but the former deals with intangible heritage only. In addition, the 2003 Convention (in Article 16) endows authority to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee to create lists of ICH called the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as well as the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. They include 549 worldwide elements from 129 member states, including Oman, as of 2020. From the lists, the member states of the largest number of ICH elements in descending order are China: 40, Japan: 21, Korea: 20, Spain: 19 and Turkey: 18. (UNESCO website, accessed on 22/12/2019). There will be more discussion about the Sultanate of Oman in this Convention in the next chapter (page 100). There is also an Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund to support the activities and projects that serve this heritage.

#### *3.3.4 UNESCO's role in world cultural diversity and world sustainable development*

It is very important to find an appropriate definition of culture in general and cultural diversity in particular. The challenge is that there is still considerable debate about the concept of culture in all cultural areas. The common definition of culture can be approximated as a comprehensive representation of personal and community life, which includes everything such as practices, beliefs and values. For the purpose of this research, it is reasonable to

accept the UNESCO concept of culture because this definition is more specific. UNESCO first defined 'culture' at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City, 1982), and then used it in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) where culture is described as

"The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

Based on the above specification, cultural diversity can be defined simply as the difference in the patterns of cultures and multiculturalism in general. The exact concept mentioned in the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions defined cultural diversity as 'the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies'. Hence, the concept of cultural diversity is relatively new. It emerged during the twentieth century as an unavoidable response to social change. However, people differ in their views of this concept. Some see it as a positive factor that unites different cultures of the world, and the cultures within each region or people. While others see it as a negative factor that reveals human cultural differences, leading to increased cultural distance and more conflicts, especially with the globalization movement and its impacts that strengthen some cultures more than others. Globalization and the subsequent massive development of information and communication technologies has become a challenge for cultural diversity because of the imbalance between countries according to their economic situation, but globalization can be invested to create unprecedented conditions to promote interaction between cultures (Chinnammai, 2005).

Therefore, according to UNESCO, "as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (UNESCO, 2011b).

Furthermore, Article 4.1 of the 2005-convention says that 'cultural diversity manifests not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used'. Hence, cultural diversity as a concept assumes *the existence of an exchange process* which is open to innovation and tradition together, and not maintaining a consistent set of behaviours, values or expressions (UNESCO, 2005).

Although the concept of 'diversity' or 'multiculturalism' may appear at a first glance to be inimical to sustainability, the opposite is true. Sustainability lies in the preservation of this cultural diversity by safeguarding heritage, both tangible and intangible, as well as the documentary heritage. Therefore, promotion of cultural diversity leads to peace, by understanding others, recognizing them and identifying them, to build bridges of cooperation and rapprochement between cultures at the horizontal local level or the vertical global level. Kozymka (2014:22) argues that UNESCO has been promoting the concept of 'unity in diversity' in order to reconcile the competing notions of universalism, on the one hand, and diversity, on the other hand. She reiterates that universalism should not be prescribed at the expense of diversity and *vice versa*; but they should be emphasized equally. After the disaster of the first and second world wars, it was obvious that UNESCO aimed to enhance cultural diversity and multiculturalism, promoted respect for all cultures, and dispelled any distinctions based on race, sex, colour or religion.

Kozymka (2014: 33-36) points out some examples to clearly illustrate the intrinsic sense of cultural diversity. At the same time, she dissects the role of UNESCO in promoting cultural diversity. She refers to a 1947 report of the Director-General which advocates a middle way between uniformity and incomprehension, summarized in a noble formula of 'unity in diversity'. (UNESCO, 1947). The primary aim of this proposition was to ensure mutual understanding of the cultural tendencies and achievements of different peoples so that we can "share in the riches of a single diversified world culture." Kozymka (2014) further notes that UNESCO's supreme function is to foster international relations by arranging for thinkers, writers, artists and their ideas to move freely across national frontiers. UNESCO prepares a breeding ground for the cultures of the world. This institution encourages nations to develop their literature, art and science and considers them as part of world heritage. Ascribing such importance to heritage internationally helps societies to protect works of art from neglect or violence and from the ravages of time. The international attachment to heritage was clearly pronounced when UNESCO stated that any damage caused to cultural property, regardless of the society it belongs to is equivalent to the damage caused to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Stenou (2007:90) also reflects on UNESCO's interest in the promotion of cultural diversity

"The 1950s also saw a certain move to bring culture into the political domain by establishing that culture was no longer only an expression or a product of the identity

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<sup>11</sup> Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954. Retrieved from: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13637&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Accessed on: 26/12/2019.

of individuals and groups, but an integral part of that identity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community', enhanced the importance of culture by regarding it as a legal entitlement rather than merely a matter of observed practice and a subject of scientific enquiry. This connection of culture with legal protection was later invoked in several of UNESCO's legal cultural instruments".

After that, during the eighties,

"The association of culture with human rights and democracy was gaining ground within UNESCO. The organization's official documents from this period call attention to the management of cultural pluralism within societies as much as between them" (Kozymka, 2014: 245).

In the nineties, as Kozymka (2014) explains, the situation was not much different, but the focus on individual cultural rights appeared more clearly. For instance, there was a noticeable increase in the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by Member States and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well. The diplomats and experts used UNESCO as an arena to voice their concerns about a major challenge from globalisation facing cultural diversity in the twenty-first century. The aim was to negotiate a declaration on enhancing cultural diversity, which was meant to be an international frame of reference and a legal text for dealing with these concerns, on a par with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kozymka, 2014).

UNESCO continues to promote cultural diversity within countries themselves in several ways, especially after the establishment of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), which was established by the 2005 Convention. The IFCD, since 2010, has been providing project funding to government authorities, public institutions and NGOs. These projects cover a wide range of areas, from the development and implementation of cultural policies, to capacity-building of cultural entrepreneurs, mapping of cultural industries and the creation of new cultural industry business models. The IFCD claims to 'invest(s) in creativity and supports projects that spark transformational change in developing countries' (UNESCO website, accessed on 12/6/2019).

Many researchers argue that there is a dynamic positive relationship between culture and sustainable development (Throsby, 2008). Particularly, the relationship between traditional knowledge and sustainable development makes the protection and promotion of the former imperative for all countries. UNESCO emphasizes the need to preserve 'traditional knowledge' as a source of world wealth for world cultural diversity. It defines 'Traditional knowledge' as

"Knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment, traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation(..). Traditional knowledge is mainly of a practical nature, particularly in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, forestry and environmental management in general" (UNESCO, 2017a).

UNESCO did not distinguish between two types of cultural diversity: locally (on the inner perimeter of each country), and globally (between all countries). As Kozymka (2014) affirms

"There are two distinct levels on which cultural diversity operates. On the one hand, there exists diversity at the global level, which may or may not be associated with the variety of states as it often cuts across state boundaries and which is subject to the homogenizing effects of globalisation. On the other hand, there exists diversity within any given state, potentially on the rise due to increasing population movements and global and regional interconnectivity. These two levels interact and influence each other" (Kozymka, 2014:186).

Cultural diversity as a concept has gradually evolved from diversity between countries to diversity within them, which relates to the issue of multiculturalism. This concept has appeared in many documents since the Mexico City Universal Declaration on Cultural Policies in 1982. Nevertheless, the role of UNESCO in the protection and promotion of cultural diversity over the years has been a reflection of the expansion of the concept of cultural heritage, from tangible cultural expression to a broader approach to cultural heritage as expressed through various intangible appearances, which are fundamental expressions of diverse cultural individualities.

### *3.3.5. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005*

During the early twentieth century, important relationships and connections emerged between culture and three other major domains - security, nature, and development. Vincent, the author of '*Non Intervention and International Order*', illustrates that "the utility of the concept of culture is to distinguish one society from another, not to describe what they have in common" (Vincent, 1986: 86). Then, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new understanding came about in terms of the link between culture and nature as a vital factor for protection of both biological and cultural diversity. Since then, UNESCO's focus on the

link between culture and development has continued and has become even more outspoken (Kozymka, 2014).

Despite all the challenges UNESCO has encountered, especially with regard to cultural coexistence within countries in conflict, and trade in cultural goods, its General Conference in November 2001, succeeded in issuing a universal declaration on cultural diversity. Cultural diversity was recognised as 'the common heritage of humanity' and "the best way of ensuring harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities." It is an important factor in development as "a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence" (UNESCO, 2011b).

The advantages of this declaration are the involvement of governments, civil society and the private sector together, and the existence of an operational action plan. As a result, the echo of the 2001 Universal Declaration was the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The main objectives of this Convention are 'to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions; to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace; and to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international levels'. It also helps to "strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in a spirit of partnership with a view, in particular, to enhancing the capacities of developing countries in order to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions" (UNESCO, 2001).

The role of culture in development is recognised by, for example, Francisco Bandarin, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, when he said: 'this convention is the first international standard-setting instrument that explicitly aims to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication. Thus, it is a valuable tool for attaining the Millennium Development Goals' (quoted in Kozymka, 2014:158).

UNESCO's consideration of this convention as a 'milestone in international cultural policy' as it is described on the Convention's website has not come about arbitrarily. It aroused great controversy in the international arena, especially by the United States as the source of Hollywood, the world's most famous film production venue. The influence of the 2005 convention on the US film's industry is traced in Chiang (2007: 379).

Authors like Mayor and Banda (2002) reiterated UNESCO's point of view as they stated that

"The principles of democracy, human rights, justice, sharing, solidarity and respect for the dignity of every person do not belong to a particular culture: they form part of

the common moral heritage. It is a universal and indivisible wish that requires us to exercise all our responsibilities vis-à-vis the present generations, but also, as UNESCO stressed, to future generations" (Mayor and Banda, 2002: 447).

UNESCO's strategy relies in this regard on a two-pronged approach: integrating culture in development policies, and supporting the development of the various creative and cultural sectors. It is worth saying that the intimate relationship between the two concepts 'culture' and 'diversity' and 'sustainable development' is mentioned in more than one place in the UNESCO 2005 Convention. For example, it is foregrounded in the following: "cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore, is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations" (UNESCO, 2005).

### *3.3.6. The shortcomings of the 2005 convention*

One of the most significant challenges facing the UNESCO 2005 Convention for the diversity of cultural expressions is the lack of legally binding provisions and mechanisms of implementation, in common with most UNESCO conventions (Burri, 2013). In particular, this convention lacks incentives for countries to join it. For example, with the conventions of 1972 and 2003, tangible and intangible heritage, the world heritage lists, encourage states to register their symbols of heritage in these lists which requires ratification of the Convention at the first place.

Another drawback of the 2005 Convention is the lack of involvement of cultural minorities in the cultural field. UNESCO can do little about this because it is the role of the countries themselves to do so as mentioned in the convention (Graber, 2008). In addition, no provisions are mentioned in the 2003 convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage or the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions relating to the maintenance of languages and minorities that are still practiced. UNESCO realised this omission later on and launched a special project to make an inventory of endangered languages called the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, in order to ensure continuity, and avoid the fate of many of the minority languages in various countries around the world.

Cultural diversity is difficult to measure. To confront this challenge, UNESCO uses quantitative (as well as qualitative) measures of the extent of support for cultural diversity of Member States that ratified the Convention, and obliges these countries to provide a comprehensive report every four years, including methods and techniques used by the State in order to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions within it. However, the



rate of response from Member States to deliver these reports does not exceed 20%. In addition, it requires Member States to involve civil society institutions, NGOs and private companies working in the cultural sector. The cultural effects and approaches can be measured only in the long term, making the work of researchers and interested experts very difficult (Kozymk, 2014).

Finally, another obstacle for UNESCO in fulfilling its duty towards supporting cultural diversity is the focus on the ratification of the 2005 Convention rather than the ultimate goal: to support diversity. This is of course in addition to other factors related to human weakness and financial resources.

### **3.4. UNESCO work determinants and cultural challenges**

There is apparently, a lack of consensus among scholars concerning theories in the field of international relations (Linklater, 1990; Guilhot, 2011; Mingst et al, 2018). However, three basic approaches can roughly be identified: realist, holistic, and the internationalist approach. The realist approach perceives that states cooperate with each other in order to achieve common benefits and possible gains. Conventions, laws, and regulations are made for the sake of mutual benefit and contribution to the international system. The second type of theory can be labelled as the 'holistic approach', which presupposes the existence of groups of people that constitutes the human group in general. This theory assumes that there is one player on the international scene. Between realistic and holistic lies the 'internationalist approach', which believes that the states are the basic elements in the international arena, and that mutual relations are not just utilitarian, serving only common interests out of necessity, but are responsive to a moral imperative. This is the approach to which UNESCO mostly conforms in its functions. The institution is founded for the embodiment of the presence of the international community, and as the voice of human demands in the areas of work (Kozymka, 2014). Of course, the classification of international relations is more complicated than these categories imply.

UNESCO relies heavily on partnerships with all segments and levels of the hierarchy of the international community for accomplishing its goals. There are many global issues and themes that UNESCO is known for such as literacy/education for all, sustainable development, gender equality, the empowerment of women, human rights, tangible and intangible heritage of humanity, world cultural diversity and others.

There may be question as to how far UNESCO can be successful in achieving its goal by forming cooperation with national governments. Some recent academic theories argue that the role of government has contracted whereas the role of civil societies is increasing

(Sillman, 1999; Powell, 2013; Millie, 2011, Punch et al., 2013), leading to what has become known as 'global civil society'. Kozymka (2014:23) explains this,

"Although UNESCO has no coercive power over state behaviour it arguably has a lot of influence: the methods at its disposal, if used intelligently, can bring significant progress in the advancement of international cooperation, not least since all governments rely heavily upon non coercive means for producing and maintaining social order. The organization's universalism implies that it is formally politically neutral thus reinforcing its norm-setting function. The main criteria against which UNESCO's role as "an international actor in its own right" shall be tested are the following: its autonomous decision making capacity, its ability to exercise influence over and shape states' behaviour, its capability to resist pressure from powerful Member States, and lastly, the strength of its financial and human resources".

Many people believe that UNESCO has been successful in its area of work. Claude (1988:122), for example, remarked, "the international organization has distinguished itself most notably by creating a record of persistence, flexibility, and ingenuity in the development and exploitation of devices for inducing compliance by consent rather than compulsion."

However, UNESCO sometimes suffers from conflicts between the national cultures of member states. Government representatives of one state may have different views on the issue at hand, which leads sometimes to serious cultural conflicts (Warring, 2005; Hahn, 2006). Thus, the decisions taken at the level of international conferences is often affected by the nature of the representatives: the personal charisma and the scientific and academic qualities that affect the support or abandonment of a draft resolution. This difference between the countries in the nature of their representatives made some countries stronger and others weaker with regard to UNESCO. Weak commitment to the decisions agreed upon by some countries can lead to weakness in the relationship between them and UNESCO (Seeger, 2015). Therefore, a great challenge facing UNESCO lies in how to involve all the cultural actors of all countries, including NGOs, in decision-making and participation in conferences and the other cultural activities. There is more discussion below about this issue from Oman's side as a member state (See Chapter 7 page 171, Chapter 9 page 213).

Undoubtedly, the UNESCO Secretariat in general and the DG in particular have a vital role, such as when requiring approval of member states or consensus on or ratification of any treaty. To achieve the ambitious goals in cooperation with the member states, the DG - and all UNESCO staff - should have some distinct characteristics to influence others (Preston, et al., 1989; Girodo, 2007).

Another challenge that UNESCO faces, at all levels of the hierarchy of the secretariat, is how to reconcile the high efficiency needed by the international staff of the organization and the equitable geographical distribution of these functions. In addition, it is very difficult to coordinate employees from various countries with different cultural and academic backgrounds. These challenges are, of course, in addition to the major financial challenge, which has been noted.

### *The Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO*

In accordance with Resolution 102/30, the UNESCO General Conference decided that an independent external evaluation (IEE) of UNESCO of a comprehensive, strategic and forward-looking nature should be undertaken. It requested an (IEE) be presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference in November 2011. The IEE should have the capacity to deliver actionable and timely recommendations to the governing bodies and the Director-General of UNESCO so that the organization can position itself to meet future needs and challenges with regard to all its fields of work. The terms of reference of IEE prescribe that the evaluation should render a clear answer to the question as to how UNESCO can address the 21<sup>st</sup> century's challenges and make the most of potential opportunities.

To achieve the above stated objective, a team of external evaluators consisting of specialists and experts from selected member states was formed. The team recommended to UNESCO that a renewal strategy should focus on five strategic pillars: "increasing UNESCO's focus, positioning UNESCO closer to the field, strengthening participation in the United Nations, and strengthening governance and developing a partnership strategy" (UNESCO, 2011a). An ad hoc working group was formed to examine the IEE's evaluation.

The IEE inferred that "the successful repositioning of UNESCO relies as much on changing institutional cultures as on institutional structures and processes". Culture, which consists of values, beliefs and experiences, "sets the context for action, steering an organization towards its favoured solutions". However, the report warns against the potential negative aspects of culture. It indicated that UNESCO has experienced negative as well as positive lessons in the past. For example, some cultures can be characterized as risk averse and uneasy with partnerships.

Some recommendations were suggested for UNESCO that it should aim at being reflexive, inclusive, innovative, collaborative and outward-looking. They set out a three-pronged approach.

"(a) The formulation of an overarching umbrella statement on the rationale for partnerships by UNESCO.

(b) The development of a set of specific, dedicated strategies for the various categories of partners, such as with the private, media partners, non-governmental and civil society organisations, parliamentarians, and the diverse UNESCO networks to be developed by the relevant sectors of the Secretariat.

(c) The engagement of a consultant for the development of a forward-looking, organization-wide approach". (UNESCO, 2011a).

The later chapters will offer further discussion on these issues.

### **3.5. Towards World Cultural Diversity**

According to Kozymka (2014:191), UNESCO's moral authority in the field of culture is partly due to the fact that it is the only UN body to deal with cultural matters and partly to the visibility and success of its World Heritage programme. Indeed, 'the notion of the common heritage of humanity' has firmly impregnated public discourse worldwide. However, this proposition now faces new challenges stemming from multiple forces. For example, the very notion of an integrated global village is under serious threat, catalysed by several events including Britain's decision to divorce from the European Union (Brexit), the rise of nationalistic political leaders in many parts of the world, the growing ideological rifts between and among nations to mention but a few.

Regarding cultural diversity, the UNESCO 2009 report 'Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue', pointed out the importance of investment in cultural diversity. The report urged for increased investment in cultural diversity and dialogue. Assimilating cultural diversity in the field of public policies can reinvigorate the international community's approaches in two important objectives: development, and peace building and conflict prevention. The report (UNESCO, 2009:31) spelt them out in detail.

"Regarding development, culture is increasingly recognised as a cross-cutting dimension of the three economic, social and environmental pillars of any truly sustainable development. Regarding peace and conflict prevention, acknowledging cultural diversity places the emphasis on 'unity in diversity', that is to say, the shared humanity inherent in our differences.

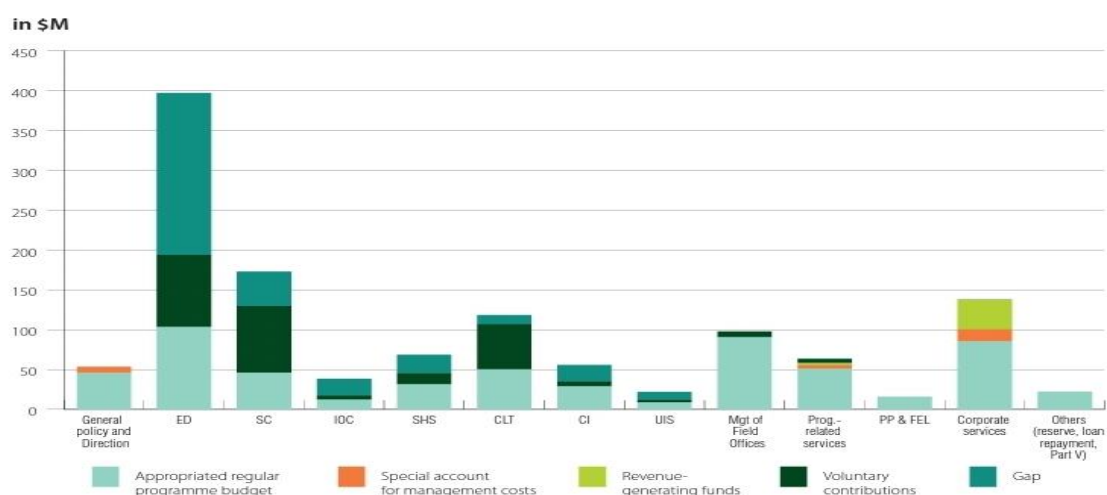
UNESCO (2009) further argues that cultural diversity extends to universally proclaimed human rights instead of restricting their effective exercise. Also, cultural diversity solidifies social bonding and fosters renewed democracy. This argument, however, faces a serious challenge. Recently, the sweeping trend of anti-globalization has been on the rise in many parts of Europe, manifested by the recent upsurge of populism. Italy's former progressive Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, lost a referendum on the Italian constitution in December

2016. In France, it seemed possible that the populist, Eurosceptic, anti-immigrant Front National party's candidate, Marine Le Pen, could be elected as France's president. In the Netherlands, the far-right populist, anti-immigrant and anti-European Union party of Geert Wilders achieved electoral gains, though did not win.

Kozymka (2014:191) however, sees some reasons to hope. She contends that UNESCO plays a proper role in this area when she emphasizes that “it may be expected that the promotion of respect for cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity and, more broadly, of the importance of culture for harmonious and long-term human development are progressively embedding these notions in public consciousness”. Obviously, one of the underlying concerns is that that UNESCO has significantly limited resources at its disposal.

Elizabeth (2011) shows that in 2000, 12.1% of UNESCO’s programme budget was utilized for cultural programmes. These funds are allocated toward five focus areas including the preservation of cultural and natural sites of “outstanding universal value” through inscription on the World Heritage List; the safeguarding of intangible heritage; the prevention of trafficking in art and cultural objects; promoting cultural diversity; and encouraging states to align their national policies with these same goals. The latest Budget and Programme '39 C5' for the years 2018-2019 of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2017b), allocates the Culture Programmes granted \$118,173,700 (12.2%) of the total amount for programmes, compared to \$396,815,900 (40.9%) for the Education Programme. (See Figure 3.1 and Appendix 3 page 237 for details).

Figure 3.1 UNESCO's Budget allocations by Programme for 2018-2019



Source: UNESCO, 2017

That the share of the education programme is more than three times the share of the cultural programme in UNESCO's financial allocations raises a question about the rationale for the

distribution. The most prominent explanation is that it is related to the desire of Member States themselves, because the education sector has high priority. This issue will be investigated in depth through the empirical research to reveal more reasons behind it.

One of the possible solutions to overcome the relatively low share allocated to the Culture Sector is to focus on specific areas in which it can be deepened. There is a small cohort of staff compared to the scale of the tasks and heavy workload. For example, only six staff work at the Secretariat of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural expressions, which weakens the impact of UNESCO and its ability to meet the challenges of sustaining cultural diversity both at the national and worldwide levels. Kozymka (2014) further suggests that UNESCO can perform better if it establishes certain internationally agreed principles and repeats certain formulas and socialises them over time, embedding them among the norms and values of the international system and in world public opinion.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

In the seventy-five years since UNESCO was established it has been through periods of strength and weakness, and the focus has changed from time to time, but the objectives have remained clear and stable. UNESCO's overall aim is to contribute to the eradication of poverty, build a lasting peace, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through the expansion, development, and dissemination of education, sciences, culture, communication and information. It also aspires to ensure human rights, reduce world poverty, connect society to civilisations and cultures by encouraging and promoting dialogue. Like other organizations, sometimes it has been able to fulfil the aspiration of the people at large and sometimes not.

In particular, it has gone through a phase of tough financial constraint due to the withdrawal of certain members, who were significant in terms of financial contribution. The reasons for the withdrawals were sometimes due to lack of confidence in the organization and suspicion that it serves a specific class or lobby, and sometimes for purely political reasons. The resulting effect was observed in UNESCO's activities. Its staff shrank considerably after the United States withdrew its membership in 1984. Such a withdrawal of membership is not only a matter of financial resources; but rather it is sometimes construed as the failure of UNESCO's diplomacy to unite nations. This, in turn, may loosen the confidence of UNESCO itself. In addition, increasing globalization has brought about new challenges for humanity that call for rethinking the organization's role in world affairs. Times and again, UNESCO has to go through serious tests arising from global terrorism, wars, the

gender gap, income inequality, social exclusion, communal violence, climate change and so on.

Each of these tests, perhaps, creates opportunities for UNESCO to reorganise and reform itself. It has always been an advocate of promoting dialogue and coexistence, sustainable development, and poverty reduction, as each of these issues in one way or another is closely linked to global peace and security. Also, despite financial constraint, it has been striving to make its projects sustainable. In so doing, it has attempted to establish partnerships with other multilateral and bilateral donors, rebuilding UNESCO's global leadership through public relations, fund-raising and gala meetings of heads of states and concerned ministers. UNESCO has done a lot to achieve its objectives, obviously with the help and cooperation of its member states. It has raised the need to preserve world cultural diversity worldwide. However, it has not necessarily changed the views of member states governments.,

In light of the above discussion, this chapter has explored in detail UNESCO's official objectives and goals. The associated principles and conventions which aim to achieve these goals and objectives are also elaborated in this chapter. No doubt, achieving UNESCO's goals and objectives relies heavily on fine-tuning its relationship with member states. This chapter has set out the nature and determinants of UNESCO's relations in general. It is now time to turn to a specific case to assess UNESCO's relation with a particular member state, which will provide a more detailed and nuanced view with respect to the scope of its work and the limitations thereof. The next chapter will examine the relation between UNESCO and Oman.

## Chapter 4. Oman-UNESCO Relations: Towards a stronger bond

### 4.1. Introduction

The Sultanate of Oman joined UNESCO on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1972; just two years after Sultan Qaboos came into power.<sup>12</sup> Since then, Oman and UNESCO have built their relationships in education, culture, science and communication via the Oman Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (ONCECS) in Muscat.

Oman's contribution to UNESCO's budget is 0.148% (for 2019) paid in two different currencies: 47% of the total contribution is paid in euros and 53% in US dollars (ONCECS, 2019). The total amount varies according to the total budget approved by the General Conference every two years. (See Appendix 4 page 240 for the most recent contribution of Oman to UNESCO in 2019).

Financial support provided by UNESCO to Member States (including Oman) is done through the so-called Participation Programme in which member states are invited to participate. It complements the regular programme overseen by the Organization. The participation programme is one of the key regular activities of UNESCO which actively contributes to analyzing, evaluating, and facilitating the implementation of national, sub-regional, inter-regional and regional projects, which are submitted by Member States and NGOs. These projects are directly related to the activities of the Organization. In addition, it works as

"a means employed by UNESCO to strengthen the partnership between the Organization and its Member States as well as between the Organization and Non-Governmental Organizations in official partnership with UNESCO. Thus, the Participation Programme enhances the inclusive and generous spirit of UNESCO's noble mission" (UNESCO website, accessed on 15/4/2018).

However, support for the Participation Programme was discontinued since 2012-2013, after the US suspended its contribution to UNESCO, to give priority to island and poor countries. (The direct impact of the United States' suspension of its contribution to UNESCO since

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<sup>12</sup> In the same year as its neighbours Bahrain, Qatar and UAE. Saudi Arabia and Iran joined in 1946 and 1948 respectively.



2012 is noted here). Therefore, the last contribution received by Oman from UNESCO was for the sessions 2008-2009, to the tune of \$ 95,000 and 2010-2011 of \$100,245 (ONCECS, 2019). Table 4.1 provides details of the 2008-2009 contribution of UNESCO to Oman as an example.

Table 4.1 The 2008-2009 UNESCO's Participation Programme – Oman

Name of the Program		Beneficiary	Type of support required	Amount of contribution approved by UNESCO (in US)
1	Training for primary teachers of biology and life skills in grades 9-12 on AIDS concepts and effective teaching strategies to combat the disease	The Ministry of Education  Directorate General of Curricula	Provision of experts and consultants	20,000
2	A seminar on the development of literacy curricula	The Ministry of Education  Directorate General of Education	Provision of experts + a seminar	20,000
3	Project of national exams for the 7th and 10th grade and a bank of questions	The Ministry of Education  Directorate General of Educational Evaluation	Provision of experts + supplies	25,000
4	A national workshop on managing environmental crises and natural resources of the planet	The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs	Provision of experts and consultants	10.000
5	Training for Omani vocational training centre members	The Ministry of Manpower	Provision of experts + a training course	20,000

Source: Ministry of Education, 2014.

Before explaining the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in great detail, it is appropriate to shed light on the establishment of the ONCECS, as the representative of UNESCO in Oman.

## **4.2 The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (ONCECS)**

### *4.2.1. The Foundation of the ONCECS*

The ONCECS is the counterpart of international, Arab and regional organizations on Education, Culture and Science (UNESCO, ALECSO and ISESCO) in the Sultanate of Oman. It was established on 16 September 1974 to work as a contact with these organizations to contribute to the achievement of their objectives and promote the implementation of programmes within the Sultanate of Oman in coordination with the competent authorities. It helps to advance development through targeted initiatives and media efforts in the Sultanate within the framework of relationship with the three organizations.

The National Commission is concerned with coordination and cooperation with the three organizations in the field of education, culture, science and communication. The previous chapter discussed UNESCO, but the role of the other two organizations needs to be explained.

ISESCO (based in Rabat) is *The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* that was founded in January 1981. Oman joined this organization on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1982. ALECSO (based in Tunisia) is *The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization* that was established in July 1970, which Oman joined on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1973. As it is clear from the names, all of them have the same interests related to education, science and culture. Therefore, there is a permanent and continuous cooperation between these organizations in serving all their goals. The purpose of establishing ALECSO and ISESCO was to increase coordination and planning for more programs at the regional level in order to achieve their common aims.

The ONCECS was established by Royal Decree No. 5/1974 to "*keep pace with the requirement of the blessed renaissance, in order to create an authority responsible for communication with the international organizations concerned with Education, Culture and Science*" (ONCECS website, accessed 03/10/2019).

The ONCECS is designed to enhance Oman's efforts in the fields of education, culture, science and communication at the regional and international levels, and keep pace

with developments according to the needs of Omani society through the tasks assigned to the Commission in accordance with the Royal Decree.

#### 4.2.2. The Organizational Structure of the ONCECS

The members of the General Assembly of the ONCECS are:

- The Minister of Education – Chairperson
- The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Curricula - Deputy Chairperson
- Representatives of the Ministries concerned with education, culture, science and information and communication
- Five people interested in Education, Culture and Science appointed by the Chairperson (to be changed every four years).
- The Secretary-General (a member and rapporteur)

The Royal Decree stipulated that the Minister of Education should chair the commission. Hence, a series of ministers has chaired the ONCECS since its foundation, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The chairmen of the ONCECS since establishment until 2020

Period	Chairman of the Commission
1974-1975	HE Mr. Faisal bin Ali Al Said
1976-1979	HE Mr. Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Ghazali
1980-1994	HE Mr. Yahya bin Mahfouz Al-Manthari
1995-2002	HE Mr. Saud bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi

2003-2010	HE Mr. Yahya bin Saud Al – Sulaimi
2011-2020	HE Dr. Madiha Bint Ahmed Al Sheibani

Source: Ministry of Education, 2014, with update.

#### *4.2.3. The Specialized Committees of the National Commission*

The Specialized committees were established 14 years after the founding of the ONCECS by Royal Decree No. 95/88. At present, ONCECS has five Specialized committees, namely: The Education Committee, The Culture Committee, The Science Committee, The Information and Communication Committee, and The Woman and Child Committee (Ministry of Education, 2014). These committees each contribute in their fields to give advice and opinion on all matters relating to the work of the National Commission and the topics and issues that are referred to it for study. Each committee team meets to discuss the core issue, and then submits a formal note to the president of the National Commission about the results and recommendations of the meeting.

From my first-hand observation of working with the ONCECS for more than 16 years, I have found that these committees, since they were founded in 1988, suffer from a great obstacle, their inefficiency. This can be attributed to the lack of direction by the administrators of the National Commission itself, who neglect to refer issues or projects for study, making these specialized committees a formality only.

#### *4.2.4. The ONCECS' Secretariat Specializations*

In order to measure the success of the ONCECS's *Secretariat* in carrying out its tasks, which will be verified during the theoretical research, it is important to mention the specializations of the commission stipulated in the Royal Decree. The Royal Decree No. 95/1988, article 7 identified the terms of reference of the Secretariat of the National Commission as follows, to:

1. Handle administrative, financial and technical work.
2. Study programme and budget projects for the three organizations and set recommendations thereon.

3. Pass the recommendations and decisions issued by the commission to the competent organs of the state.
4. Provide the official delegations representing the Sultanate in international and regional conferences of the three organizations with the necessary recommendations.
5. Study the reports provided by the delegations to the three organizations and make recommendations to the commission for approval.
6. Organise the communication process with authors and researchers to prepare reports and research studies that the Sultanate contributes to the activities of the three organizations.
7. Propose the formation of delegations to all conferences, training and learning forums, meetings, and seminars relevant to the three organizations.
8. Follow-up the local concerned authorities on the implementation of the terms of the Arab and international conventions and treaties related to the three organizations, and the decisions and recommendations issued by the General Conferences of these organizations.
9. Preparation of periodic reports and the annual report on the activities of the Secretariat and the Commission.
10. Propose projects and studies approved by the three organizations, and the possibility of implementation within the limits of development plans in the state.
11. Promote the Sultanate's efforts in the educational, cultural and scientific fields in the context of the relationship with the three organizations and in cooperation with local media.
12. Inform citizens about the objectives and activities of the three organizations via local media and highlight their efforts to support the progress and preservation of cultural and human heritage and to achieve international peace and understanding.
13. Cooperate with the three organizations in the implementation of educational, scientific and cultural programmes in the Sultanate.
14. Cooperate with all Arab and foreign National Commissions, and exchange ideas and advice with regard to the work of the three organizations (Ministry of Education, 2014).

While the majority of the aforementioned tasks are purely administrative, some others (as in 10-12) require higher skills (to propose, promote and inform). This is the true role of the ONCECS to avoid being a postman that receives mails and tasks from organizations and sends them to the relevant authorities in Oman and vice versa. In the past, the small number of employees did not allow to do this, while the current number of more than 40 employees is fully qualified to do so. That is the current role of the commission.

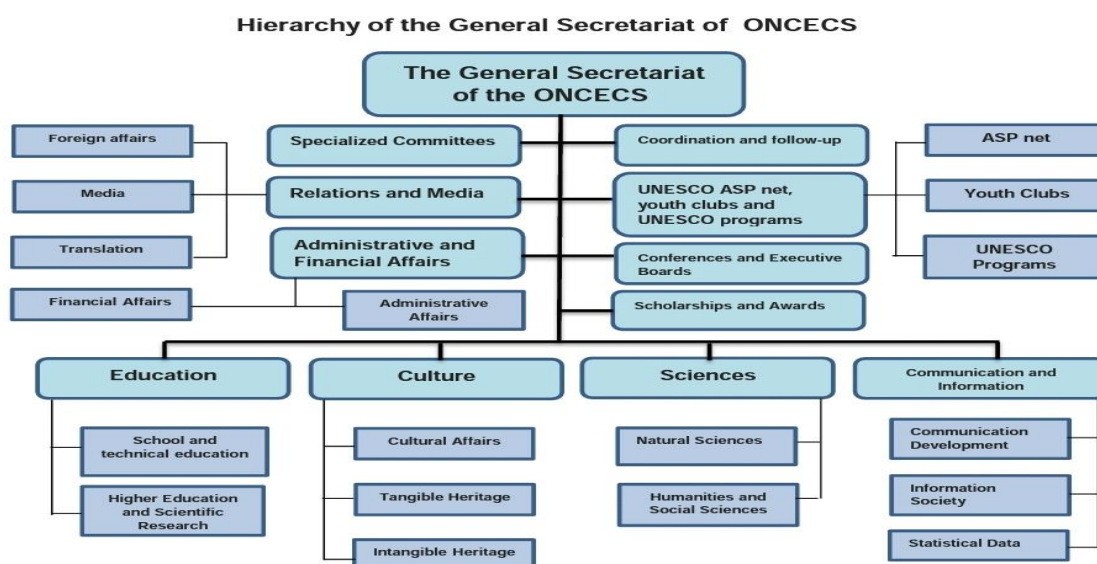
The main role of the ONCECS is therefore, to maintain the best possible relations between the Sultanate of Oman and organizations on Education, Science and Culture, (UNESCO, ISESCO and ALECSO), at various levels and to be proactive, not just passive in the programmes and projects of these organizations which represent repositories of experience.

The ONCECS has implemented many initiatives and programmes of educational, cultural and scientific projects, in collaboration with stakeholders in Oman and in coordination and cooperation with these organizations. Some of these programmes and events carried out by the ONCECS under the umbrella of UNESCO, ISESCO and ALECSO or in cooperation with a number of government institutions which will be revealed in the following sections of this chapter.

#### 4.2.5. The General Secretariat of the ONCECS

The new structure of the General Secretariat (GS) of the Oman National Commission was established by a ministerial decree in 2014, which included all aspects related to the National Commission, creating some new and vital sections that did not exist previously like the Translation and Youth Clubs sections, as shown in Figure 4.1. The light blue colour refers to the departments and sections directly related to the Secretary-General of the ONCECS, while the dark blue colour refers to the sections related to the seven main departments of the ONCECS.

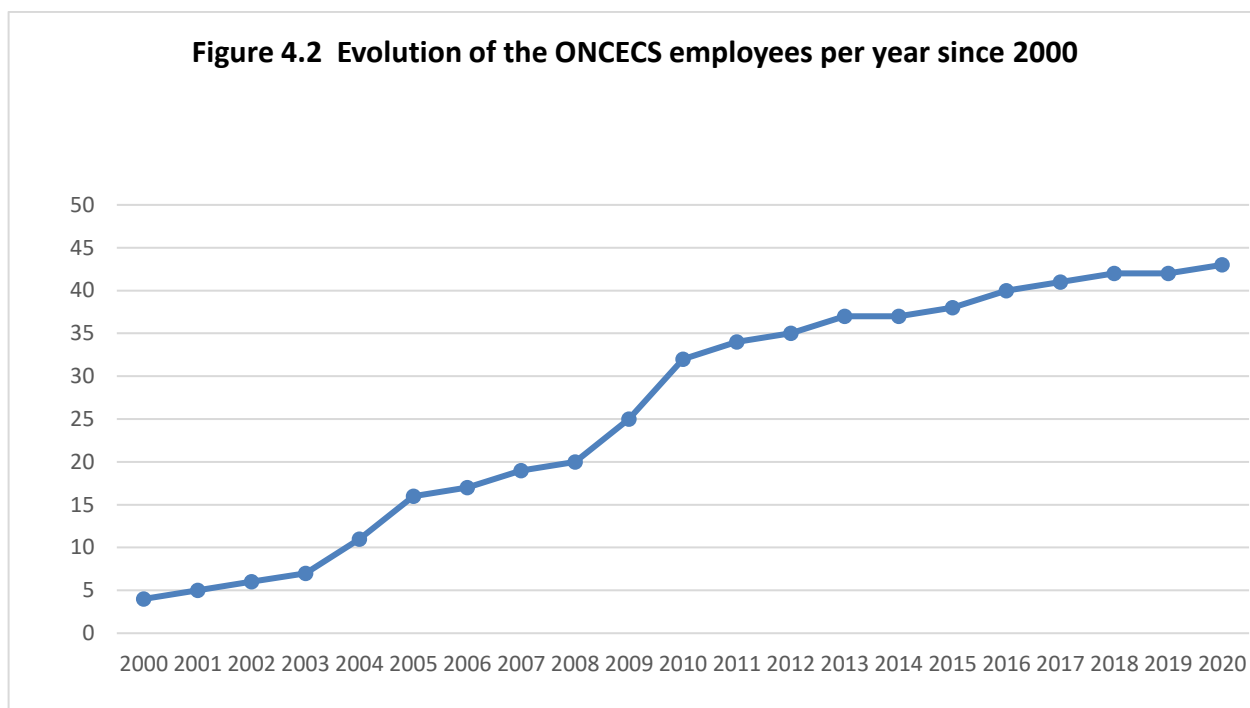
Figure 4.1 Hierarchy of General Secretariat of the ONCECS



Source: The ONCECS website, accessed on 03/10/2019.

#### 4.2.6. The Staff Evolution of the ONCECS's General Secretariat

The GS of the National Commission has witnessed strong growth in terms of the number of the employees working in it in recent years. This development is a natural result of the greater scale of the tasks carried out by the secretariat. The last published statistics on the evolution of staff numbers in the ONCECS was in 2014, which tracks the steady increase between 1990 and 2014. The total number of employees by the end of 2019 reached 42. Figure 4.2 shows how the number of the ONCECS employees increased during the last two decades



Source: Ministry of Education, 2014.

From Figure 4.2, the significant rise in 2008–2010 was from 20 to 32, or 60% in just two years. This was because of the new General Secretary of the National Commission, who engaged in documenting the various initiatives and programmes of the ONCECS, through various printed, audio and visual media, in addition to publishing a periodical magazine in both Arabic and English called *Tawasul*, which continues to be published.

### 4.3. Conventions and Memorandums of Cooperation

After explaining the Sultanate's accession to UNESCO, and the establishment of the National Commission and issues surrounding the Commission's structure and staffing, this section will address the most important aspects of the relationship between the Sultanate

and UNESCO, namely the agreements, treaties and memorandums of cooperation which provide the strategic framework.

#### 4.3.1. Conventions between UNESCO and Oman

Since the beginning of the new era in 1970, Oman has sought to develop its relationship with relevant international organizations in all sectors, most notably the United Nations bodies. The Sultanate was keen to benefit from UNESCO's expertise in the field of preservation of cultural heritage, especially in view of the fact that the Sultanate has a wealth of properties and heritage sites, some of which date back to the third millennium BC. Oman has ratified a number of UNESCO conventions, which govern the operation of the Member States with regard to cultural heritage, and it has accepted to join certain others.

The following table, which is displayed on the UNESCO website, illustrates the UNESCO's conventions ratified or accepted by the Sultanate of Oman so far.

Table 4.3 UNESCO's conventions ratified or accepted by Oman

Convention	Date of deposit	Type of deposit
Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention. The Hague, 14 May 1954.	26/10/1977	Accession
Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, with Annexes A to E and Protocol annexed. Florence, 17 June 1950.	19/12/1977	Accession
Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Paris, 14 November 1970.	02/06/1978	Acceptance
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Paris, 16 November 1972.	06/10/1981	Acceptance
Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States. Paris, 22 December 1978.	10/06/1982	Ratification
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education. Paris, 10 November 1989.	02/04/1991	Acceptance



Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris, 17 October 2003.	04/08/2005	Ratification
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Paris, 20 October 2005	16/03/2007	Ratification
International Convention against Doping in Sport. Paris, 19 October 2005	09/07/2007	Ratification
Convention relating to the Distribution of Programme -Carrying Signals Transmitted by Satellite. Brussels, 21 May 1974.	18/12/2007	Accession
Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague, 26 March 1999.	16/05/2011	Ratification
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Ramsar, 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 1971.	19/04/2013	Accession
UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2001	23/03/2020	Accession

Source: UNESCO website, accessed on 30/12/2019, with update.

The three conventions which are closely related to the themes of this research are: the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. These conventions were described in detail in the previous chapter (see Chapter 3 pages 55-65).

#### *4.3.2. Memoranda of understanding signed with UNESCO*

Many memoranda of understanding between Oman and UNESCO have been completed in the past decades. The lack of references and documentation is a major obstacle facing researchers. In spite of my keen interest to visit the educational and local libraries in the Sultanate of Oman to ask those concerned, I was unable to obtain copies of memoranda of understanding between the Sultanate and UNESCO signed in the last 50 years. This was because of the lack of an official archive in Oman. The Oman National Archives and Records Authority was only established in 2007.

Nevertheless, some ONCECS documents refer to the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding between Oman and UNESCO in the new millennium.

- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education was signed in 2002 on the sidelines of the International Conference for Secondary Education. (Ministry of Education, 2014: 26).
- A Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a project for an early warning system for multiple hazards, signed on 23/10/2009. UNESCO provided the Sultanate during the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission with technical details and consultancy in the process of establishing the infrastructure for the early warning system project. UNESCO also provided, in the first phase of planning and advice, training for qualified nationals to work in the operation of the project by organizing training seminars and workshops to prepare community leaders for natural disasters using the best existing scientific practices in this regard. It was the first of its kind in the region. The focus is on climatic conditions which lead to hurricanes as well as tsunamis and floods in the Sultanate. It may develop the system later to contain other risks such as fires and oil spills. The system contains numerical predictions supported by NASA and numerical models and natural images of hurricanes across the world (Aljahwari, 2015).
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education signed in 2011 on the sidelines of the Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to support cultural and biological diversity (Ministry of Education, 2014: 27).

These examples of memoranda of understanding between UNESCO and Oman show the depth of the relationship between the two sides, along with the continuation of joint cooperation between them, given the good reputation Oman retains with UNESCO. This issue will be discussed in depth in the last chapters of this study.

#### **4.4. Main joint-actions between Oman and UNESCO**

The relationship between Oman and UNESCO has been characterized by rapid development, through which the Sultanate managed to occupy important positions and memberships on UNESCO boards, committees and subsidiary bodies. Joint agreements and memoranda of understanding have been signed between the Sultanate and UNESCO to achieve UNESCO's goals, and to gain the maximum benefit for the Sultanate in various educational, cultural and scientific fields.

It would be impossible to list all the joint-actions that have taken place between the Sultanate and UNESCO over the past 50 years, including a very large number of workshops, meetings, forums and visits. The following sections are limited to some of the highlights.

#### *4.4.1. The Visit of the late Sultan Qaboos to UNESCO*

The profundity of this relationship is best demonstrated by the historic visit of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to UNESCO headquarters on 1 June 1989, while he was on an official visit to France. The suggestion to visit UNESCO came from the Oman Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris. A reception was organised in honour of HM, attended by UNESCO's Director-General (then) Federico Mayor and HE the President of the General Conference and the chairman of the Executive Board. Sultan Qaboos delivered a historic speech in which he announced the establishment of the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation under the auspices of UNESCO. In addition, he announced the allocation of the royal yacht, the *Fulk Al-Salamah* to UNESCO for six months (October 1990 to March 1991) for the implementation of the voyage of the maritime 'Silk Road' project supervised by UNESCO to study cultural interaction between peoples in the past.

An exhibition was held in Paris in honour of the Sultan's visit, which included many aspects of heritage, civilisation and life in Oman. HM the Sultan spoke as follows (translated from Arabic),

"It is with a great pride that we are making such a visit to the headquarters of UNES'CO which gives us an opportunity to emphasize the critical importance of its noble mission in bringing people together, and the development of scientific and cultural ties between them, which contribute to the consolidation of the spirit of understanding and cooperation and the consolidation of world peace and security and to ensure universal respect for justice and the basic freedoms, as well as the importance of the role of UNESCO in the consecration of scientific and cultural progress for the good of all humanity". (The Oman Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, 2012).

Frederico Mayor expressed his gratitude to the Sultan on behalf of UNESCO.

#### *4.4.2. Fulk A' Salama, a symbol of peace and dialogue among peoples*

The "Silk Road" project had almost stopped due to the lack of financial resources to support the project, but it was revitalised by the Sultan's offer. The project aimed to study the cultural interaction between the peoples across the old historic maritime routes known as the "Silk Roads" and the dimensions of this interaction in today's reality. Studying the paths of cultural interaction between people of the ancient world and learning more about aspects of culture and trade which link them, helps to consolidate contemporary international cooperation (Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 1991).

The expedition involved many experts from different disciplines. It began its journey in October 1990 from the port of Venice in Italy, through the countries of the Mediterranean Sea to the cities of Salalah and Muscat, and then on to the South and East Asian countries to end the journey in the port of Osaka, Japan in 1991. A report was published which illustrates the communication between the countries through which the ship visited and a summary of the business and cultural history of each country. In 2014, UNESCO launched a website called *UNESCO Silk Roads Online Platform International Network* intended to open dialogue and communication between the participating states. It includes many of the documents involved in the project.

The Fourth Meeting of the network was held in Muscat in October 2018. About 20 Focal Points (experts; contact points) attended, representing their Member States, as well as some other experts and academics, to exchange good practice in implementing activities related to the project. The report of the 2016-2018 Valencia Action Plan and a new 2019-2020 Action Plan were adopted (UNESCO, n/d).

#### *4.4.3. The UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation*

The Sultanate's role in preserving the environment, has received Arab, regional and international recognition. In support of environmental goals, Sultan Qaboos donated a financial world prize for environment activists. The Prize, the first Arab prize awarded at the global level in the field of environmental protection, was established during the Sultan's visit to UNESCO in 1989 as mentioned above. UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) announced the award details during its 11th general assembly, which was held in 1990. UNESCO, through the MAB programme, granted the first prize in 1991 (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The purpose of the Prize is to afford recognition to outstanding contributions by individuals, groups of individuals, institutes or organizations in the management or preservation of the environment, consistent with the policies and objectives of UNESCO.

Dr Samira Al Moosa, Oman's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO affirmed

"These efforts reflect the strong commitment of the Sultanate to achieving sustainable environmental protection and, as His Majesty pointed out at the Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992, "to work together, regardless of ideologies and selfish national interests to address the environmental and development related issues which face us in a spirit of reconciliation, amity and peace" (ONA, 2015)

She further stated that the Sultanate, which enjoys wide environmental diversity, has been aware of the increasing importance of environmental preservation. It has undertaken great initiatives to protect its environment and to address global environmental issues. By tracking the institutions that received the award since its establishment, we find that there is only one from the Arab region, which indicates that the Arab institutions working in the field of the environment are still very few. See Appendix 5 page 241 for the complete list of the institutions and individuals who have been awarded the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize since the establishment.

#### *4.4.4. UNESCO Medals to Sultan Qaboos*

On 20 November 1993, UNESCO awarded Sultan Qaboos in *AlAlam* Palace in Muscat a medal on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UNESCO medal was in recognition of his services to international peace and justice issues, sponsorship of youth and education, and the protection of environment and cultural heritage. Furthermore, Sultan Qaboos received a Medal of Jawaharlal Nehru International Understanding - in 2004 in recognition of what he achieved in the Sultanate and the prestige enjoyed by the Sultanate among the nations of the world.

#### *4.4.5 Some of the permanent projects with UNESCO*

Numerous programmes and activities have been organized in Oman and Paris since the Sultanate joined UNESCO in 1972. Not all have readily accessible documentation, but Appendix 6 page 242 provides details of the most important programmes obtained and

implemented at UNESCO HQ in Paris (and elsewhere) since 1986 and some activities and programmes implemented between Oman and UNESCO in Muscat in the last decade (2010-2019). The following section lists some of the leading and ongoing initiatives that reflect the growing relationship between UNESCO and Oman.

### *Fulaij Fort Theatre*

Under the patronage of Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said, representative of the Sultan, and in the presence of Federico Mayor, UNESCO former Director-General, the *Fulaij* Fort theatre, which was built with the contribution of UNESCO, was opened in October 1999 in Barka. *Fulaij* Fort was rehabilitated to be the first theatre of its kind in the region. It is equipped with the latest sound systems and optical technologies to organise artistic and cultural events which contribute to the revitalization of tourism in the Sultanate, and to establish activities that promote communication between civilisations and peoples within the concept of cultural diversity. In addition, the target from the theatre was to provide an opportunity for local and international media to prepare and film programmes that serve cultural and artistic activities in the Sultanate.

### *UNESCO – Oman Chairs*

The UNESCO Chairs Project (UNITWIN / UNESCO) was launched in 1992 with the aim of enhancing cooperation, partnership and knowledge exchange between universities in member states in the five fields of UNESCO's work (education, culture, natural sciences, social and human sciences, information and communication). These chairs operate according to their specializations as joint research centres and innovation stations between academic institutions, government and civil society (UNESCO website, accessed on 11/11/2019)

For the Sultanate of Oman, it has so far (as of January 2020) succeeded in acquiring three scientific chairs. Two chairs are under the supervision of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), namely the UNESCO Chair in Seafood Biotechnology (2001) and the UNESCO Chair in Ophiolite Studies - Earth Sciences (2018). The third one is the UNESCO Chair for *Aflaj* Studies, which is supervised by Nizwa University (Private).

Two more chair applications are in progress: the UNESCO Chair in Seismic and Tsunami Risk Studies and the UNESCO Chair on Biomedical Signal Processing. There are also three

new proposals in the field of psychological and cognitive studies, technology and education, and artificial intelligence.

#### *The Omani National Bioethics Committee (NBC)*

National Bioethics Committees, under Social and Human Sciences Programme, are intended to address the ethical dimensions of health sciences and life sciences, according to the policies and standards of each member state.

The Committee aims to enhance communication and exchange of experiences between the National Committees for Bioethics in other countries. The head of the Oman National Bioethics Committee is the President of Sultan Qaboos University and membership includes a number of stakeholders (Sultan Qaboos University website, accessed on 26/3/2019).

#### *The Omani National Committee for the International Hydrological Programme (IHP)*

This UNESCO IHP programme focuses on providing appropriate support to Member States through the policies and regulations relating to the management of various water resources systems, whether local waters or cross-border. Among the Sultanate's initiatives in this area has been the establishment of the National Committee for the International Hydrological Programme that aims to take advantage of IHP programmes in the field of water resources management (UNESCO, 2012). The Omani National Committee was started in 1997 by a Ministerial decision and has been reissued in 2005 by another Ministerial decision from the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources after a merger of the two ministries. The National Committee has representatives from ten different national authorities in Oman.

#### *The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the Omani National Multi Hazard Early Warning System (NMHEWS)*

The Sultanate of Oman has known many devastating tropical cyclones and tsunamis which have caused multiple fatalities and the destruction of city infrastructure. Recent cyclones Gonu (June 2007), Phet (June 2010), and Makuno (May 2018) struck the coasts of Oman and led to serious damage.

The UNESCO programme of DRR provides technical support to member states to take measures to ensure disaster risk reduction, through the establishment of national commissions and early warning centres, and conducts research and studies for the development of water systems in areas prone to natural disaster.

The Omani National Multi Hazard Early Warning System (NMHEWS) was launched in March 2015 to predict and respond to any future national water-related hazards. (UNESCO website, accessed on 18/12/ 2019).

### *UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB)*

Launched in 1971, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) is an Intergovernmental Scientific Programme that creates a scientific foundation for the development of relationships between people and environments. The most important focus of this UNESCO programme is to encourage member states to work in expanding nature reserves in order to preserve the environment and to protect world biodiversity.

Oman obtained membership of the MAB International Council of Government at the 39th session of the FAO General Conference in 2017, for a period of four years. It is noteworthy that there are currently eighteen natural reserves in Oman. Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has recently identified 50 sites to be studied in order to nominate them as natural reserves (Alakzami, n/d).

### *Memory of the World Register*

The Memory of the World Register is a UNESCO programme launched in 1992. It aims to preserve the world documentary heritage, by registering documents that meet the requirements of outstanding universal value (OUV), to make them available electronically to all after their approval by the International Advisory Committee.

It is an extension of the mission to preserve tangible and intangible heritage. The programme attracted Oman's attention and in 2012 a national team was established by a Ministry of Heritage and Culture decree to follow up the Memory of the World Register. The team initially submitted two files to UNESCO, namely "The Omani Quran" for Abdullah bin Bashir, and "Omani Aflaj's Documents". They were not accepted because the two files submitted by the Sultanate did not meet the exact requirements and criteria for registration.



The *Memory of the World Register* is like the other tangible and intangible world heritage programmes. It has a long registration process, and files submitted are subject to a long series of evaluation. The Omani teams were not initially aware of all this. After gaining experience and holding a regional workshop in Muscat with the presence of a UNESCO expert on how to prepare files for this type of heritage in December 2016, they successfully listed a file in 2017 called the *Modon Al Asrar Fi Elm Al Behar Manuscript* as the first file for Oman in this programme (Al-Uraimi, 2018).

#### *The anniversaries celebration programme*

Since 1956, UNESCO has been participating in the celebrations of 'historical events' and in 'memory of the eminent personalities' celebrated by its Member States to offer them global significance. These events or personalities that UNESCO participates in celebrating must be of international dimensions that contribute to the goals of dialogue and peace and the promotion of international coexistence. Hence, there are some criteria for including personalities in the programme (UNESCO website, accessed 6/9/2019). The person must be deceased and creative in one of the areas of intellectual and cultural creativity (politicians and military are excluded). The creativity must exceed the borders of their homeland, and the anniversary must exceed fifty years, a century or their multiples.

For Oman, the Sultanate, represented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, has succeeded in including five Omani personalities so far. They are: Al-Khalil bin Ahmed Al-Farahidi, the linguist and founder of the Arood science (2006); Rashid bin Omairah, the doctor and pharmacist (2013); Nour A'ddine Al-Salmi, encyclopedic and social reformer (2015); Abu Muhammad Al-Azdi (Ibn al-Dhahabi), physician and doctor (2015); Abu Muslim Al-Bahlani, the poet and pioneer of overseas Press (2019). (ONCEC, 2013; ONCECS, 2015a; ONCECS, 2015b)

#### *The Omani Associated Schools Project Network (ASP net)*

Since UNESCO's interest in youth was not mentioned in the previous chapter, it is appropriate to provide a quick overview in this section. UNESCO has a commitment to the youth sector with projects such as: The Associated Schools Project (ASP) Network; the Research Project for Young Scientists; the Young Digital Creators project (an educator's kit to build respect for cultural values and differences; see Leinonen, 2006); the book project 'World heritage in young hands' (2002); the international network for the provision and exchange of information related to youth (Infoyouth), and the UNESCO Youth Forum which is periodically held in conjunction with the UNESCO's GC and brings together young people

from all over the world for days of discussions to formulate recommendations for inclusion in UNESCO's programmes and its future activities (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The ASP net project was established in 1953 and is now a global network of 11,500 educational institutions in 182 countries. All the network institutions, which involved many pre-schools, primary, secondary and vocational schools as well as some teacher training institutions, work to prepare children and youth to live in a global society and promote education for international understanding, by encouraging these schools to carry out activities and experiences aimed at increasing knowledge of global issues and developing international cooperation and understanding through openness to people and other cultures, respecting the principles of human rights and tolerance, and promoting communication and exchange of information and experiences between the network schools. The schools have a slogan: "We live in one world, and learn for one world" and activities leading to the concept of "Think Globally and Act Locally" (ONCECS, 2018).

Oman joined the network of Associated Schools of UNESCO in August 1998, with two secondary schools (boys and girls.) In 2020 there are 29 general and private schools in the network. What is distinctive for the Sultanate of Oman is that it has an independent department that operates under the umbrella of the ONCECS in the name of *UNESCO ASP net, Youth Clubs and UNESCO Programmes*, unlike many national commissions, especially the Arab ones. Three examples of the Omani ASP network schools' activities that target youth are:

#### The *Connecting Cultures* Project

The project is considered to be the most important youth initiatives supported by the National Commission since 2007. The annual short wilderness journeys in the desert of Oman are designed to provide an opportunity for young male and female people from different countries of the world, to meet face to face and interact with each other, thus contributing to the support of cultural diversity among nations, and the acquisition of communication skills and dialogue with others (Connecting Cultures Foundation, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2014).

The project, which was suspended in 2018 for review and evaluation, was chosen twice by the United Nations Forum of the Alliance of Civilisations as one of the most important leadership and civil society initiatives in the world. It has also been included in the national plan for the Alliance of Civilisations. The number of visitors to this project through the means of electronic social communication exceeded one million.

### *Twinning projects*

Twinning projects, which began in 2009, link Omani schools associated with UNESCO with a number of Arab and European schools associated with UNESCO in Germany, Lebanon and Denmark (ONCECS, 2018).

### *Muscat Youth Forum*

With the blessing of UNESCO, the students of the Oman ASP network have been involved since 2009 in the 'Muscat Forum for Youth', which is one of the initiatives launched by the General Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development in cooperation with the competent authorities. More than 100 participants from inside and outside Oman in every annual forum practice how to live together, share ideas as well as learn many new life skills (ONCECS, 2018).

Regrettably, all of these targeted activities carried out by the Omani Associated Schools Network for UNESCO have stopped due to the shortage in funding. The current financial crisis in Oman due to the deterioration of fuel prices has cast a shadow over all programmes and activities related to schools. Attempts are underway by the Minister of Education and the department concerned in the commission to give schools an annual budget to carry out activities that contribute to the achievement of their goals.

## **4.5. Memberships and positions**

The active presence, good standing, and reputation of Oman at the international level in the world of UNESCO means that it has held a variety of positions within the committees and subsidiary bodies of the organization. The UNESCO councils and committees have considerable influence in the construction of international strategies and development, as well as setting priorities and strengthening international cooperation.

The following tables 4.4 and 4.5 illustrate some of the positions that have been occupied by Oman in UNESCO.

Table 4.4 UNESCO Committees with Oman participants

The Position	Time period
Executive Board of UNESCO	1991-1995
	1999-2003
World Heritage Committee	1989-1995
	2001-2005
International Coordinating Council for the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAP)	1989-1993
	2001-2007
UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE)	1985-1987
	1999-2001
	2001-2003
The Intergovernmental Council of the Social Transformation Management Programme (MOST)	2003-2007
International Council for the International Programme for the Development of Communication	1999 - the end of the 30 <sup>th</sup> session
	2003-2007
Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport	1987-1991
	1999-2003
UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2003-2005
Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Program	1995-1999
Information for all (IFAP)	2012-2013
	2012-2015
UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2009-2013
	2013-2017
Institute of Educational Planning	2013-2017

Source: Ministry of Education, 2014.

Table 4.5 Committees chaired by Oman

The Position	Time period
Headquarters Committee	1989-1991
	1999-2003
Nomination Committee	1989-1995
Financial and Administrative Committee of the Executive Board	1994
NGO Committee of the Executive Board	1993-1995
Advisory Committee for the Arab Cultures Development Plan (Arabia)	2002-2004
Group 77	1992-1993
Arab Group	1986-2004
Vice-President of UNESCO General Conference and Representative of the Arab Group	2013
President of the 33 session of the UNESCO General Conference	2005

Source: Ministry of Education, 2014.

Despite the keen interest of the ONCECS and the Permanent Delegate in Paris to activate the role of Oman in the UNESCO committees, in which the relevant authorities represent Oman from each sector, there is resentment about the failure of some members to attend the periodic meetings of these committees and fulfil their responsibilities. In official letters, they request that the Oman permanent delegate to UNESCO attends instead of them, which causes them to miss the opportunity to become familiar with the international dimension of their field of work, and the responsibilities entrusted to them. Perhaps one of the important committees on this list is the World Heritage Committee (Table 4.4), in which Oman is represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The Sultanate won membership twice as shown in the table, and it hopes to win membership again in 2020 for the third time,

drawing on the volume of experiences obtained by the Member State in the field of preparing and nominating heritage files for registration, its mechanisms, voting and so on.

#### **4.6. Visits of UNESCO DGs and Permanent Delegates to Oman**

Due to the close relationship between Oman and UNESCO, Director-Generals of the organization have visited the Sultanate at various times.

HE Dr. Ahmed Mukhtar Ombo, a former Director-General of UNESCO, visited Oman in January 1979 and November 1986. He witnessed the opening ceremony of the Sultan Qaboos University.

HE Dr. Federico Mayor, a former Director-General of UNESCO, made four visits to Oman. The first was in February 1989, when he met Sultan Qaboos in the Royal Camp in Nizwa. The second was in November 1990 on the occasion of the arrival of the Omani ship *Fulkk A'ssalama* to Salalah and Muscat during the maritime Silk Road journey. The third visit was in November 1993, during which he handed over the UNESCO Medal to Sultan Qaboos on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fourth and last visit was on the occasion of the opening of Fulaij Fort Theatre, in October 1999. On the same occasion, Sultan Qaboos granted Federico Mayor the Omani Civil Medal, in recognition of the distinguished relations between the Sultanate and UNESCO.

HE Kiuchiro Matsuura, a former Director-General of UNESCO, visited Oman in March 2001 on the occasion of the International Conference on the University of the Twentieth Century. He visited Oman again in December 2002 on the occasion of the International Conference for secondary education for a better future: trends, challenges and priorities.

HE Irina Bokova, a former Director-General of UNESCO, visited Oman in January 2011 on the occasion of the International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to Support Cultural and Biological Diversity, which was held in Muscat. She also visited the Sultanate in December 2012, when she met Sultan Qaboos at Bait Al Barakah. Bokova made a third visit in May 2014 to participate in the International Meeting on Education for All, in Muscat.

The Permanent Delegation of Oman to UNESCO organised, in coordination with the Oman National Commission and the Ministry of Tourism, four cultural tours during the years 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2013. The participants in these visits were ambassadors, permanent

delegates to UNESCO and senior UNESCO officials. The purpose was to strengthen cooperation and partnership between Oman and UNESCO in the framework of cultural and media cooperation (The Oman Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, 2012).

Despite the small size of Oman compared to other countries, these continuous visits by UNESCO officials and permanent delegates have clear implications. Oman has a good reputation that makes it acceptable to various external parties, due to its balanced policy and good relations with all in the field of peaceful coexistence and dialogue of cultures (see Chapter 1 page 25). The visits from different UN officials have earned Oman and its government access to regional and international influencers.

#### **4.7. Omani world heritage and cultural diversity: UNESCO's role in preservation and promotion**

##### *4.7.1 Omani tangible cultural heritage*

In accordance with the popular saying: 'who does not have a past, has no present, no future', the Sultanate of Oman has focused on safeguarding and highlighting the importance of its cultural and natural heritage. Oman accepted the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) on the sixth of October 1981. Subsequently, the Sultanate started procedures for listing its heritage sites in the WHL, including nomination operations at the national level, and the preparation of an inventory list. Omani properties that have succeeded in the world listing process are described later in this chapter.

According to the World Heritage Centre, the main objectives for establishing the World Heritage List are to encourage countries to nominate sites for protection, to establish management and reporting systems, to provide technical assistance, and to build public awareness and participation. As mentioned in Chapter 3 (page 56) the world heritage list includes 1121 sites as of 2019, and the share of Arab countries of the World List is 85 sites. The number of properties in the Arab countries so far in descending order is: Morocco: 9, Tunisia: 8, Algeria: 7, Egypt: 7, Syria: 6, Iraq: 6, Oman: 5, Saudi Arabia: 5, Lebanon: 5, Libya: 5, Jordan: 5, Yemen: 4, Bahrain: 3, Palestine: 3, Sudan: 3, Mauritania: 2, United Arab Emirates: 1, Qatar: 1 (World Heritage Centre website, accessed on 26/10/2019).

Despite the rich cultural and natural heritage that extends deep into the history of the Sultanate of Oman, the number of sites of the country listed in the WHL is only five, which begs a question as to why only very few sites are listed from Oman. One possible reason is that nominations submitted by the Sultanate to sites listed on the national tentative list have not been accepted because the nomination files do not comply with the World Heritage Committee's standards. This is from the UNESCO side. Another possible reason is that the registration mechanism involves long and complex series of procedures, files to be completed, and meetings to attend, in order to inscribe a site on the WHL. I will explore the real reasons behind this issue.

Gugolz (1996: 297) in his article 'The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Sultanate of Oman' refers to the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in terms of heritage.

"The UN recognises Oman as one of the exemplary countries which implement the conventions and recommendations and proceed to act on them (Popp et al. 2010: 20). The Sultanate of Oman can boast of having more historic buildings per square kilometre than the majority of Arab countries (Walls 1978: 11). The restoration of historic citadels, forts, palaces and similar monuments is a carefully planned activity, well organised and carried out continuously by the Ministry".

The deep-rooted history of Oman and the activity of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture as well as the rest of the authorities in preserving and safeguarding Omani heritage are undeniable. However, the world dimension of Omani sites in the field of tangible heritage is still scarce.

The Omani tangible cultural heritage list includes Bahla Fort (1987); Archeological sites of Bat, Al-Khutm and Al-Ayn (1988); Land of Frankincense (2000); Aflaj Irrigation system (2006) and the most recent site Qalhat, which was listed in 2018 (See Appendix 7 page 244 for detailed descriptions of these sites). The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, which was included in the WHL in 1994, was removed from the world list at the request of the Government of Oman in 2007 (UNESCO, 2007). Although there was no clear official statement about the real reasons behind Oman's request to remove this site from the World Heritage List, all indications are that the reasons were purely economic. Oil fields surrounding the huge area of the Oryx Sanctuary made it difficult for the prospecting companies to exploit the resources. Appendix 8 page 246 shows the decision (31 COM 7B.11) to delist the Omani Oryx Sanctuary. UNESCO was represented by the World



Heritage Committee during the Committee's meetings at its 31<sup>st</sup> session in Christchurch, New Zealand between 23 June and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007.

### *The Omani Properties submitted to the Tentative List*

According to the standards and regulations of the World Heritage Committee, no site can be registered in the list of World Heritage List unless it is registered in the tentative list of that country. This list requires considerable effort and time in order to prepare according to the requirements of UNESCO. Member States are keen to fulfill their tentative lists, indicating in detail the outstanding universal value of all properties, in order to be able to inscribe them later.

UNESCO, defines the Tentative List as

".. an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination. Nominations to the World Heritage List will not be considered unless the nominated property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List. States Parties are requested to submit their Tentative Lists using a Tentative List Submission Format, in English or French, containing the name of the properties, their geographical location, a brief description of the properties, and justification of their outstanding universal value" (UNESCO website, accessed on 29/10/2019).

The Omani Properties which have been submitted to the Tentative List so far (as of December 2019) are:

1. The Cultural Landscape of Bisya & Salut and its Archeological Remains (2014);
2. The forts of Rostaq and al-Hazm (1988);
3. The Al Hallaniyyat Islands Proposed Nature Reserve (2013);
4. The Bar al Hakman Proposed Nature Reserve (2013);
5. Smahan's Mountain Nature Reserve (2013);
6. The Al Dimaniyyat Islands Nature Reserve (2013); and the
7. Ras al Had Turtle Reserve and the Heritage Site of Ras al Jinz (2013)

(World Heritage Centre, Accessed on 22/11/2019).

Currently, the most active file is the 'Cultural Landscape of Bisya & Salut and its Archeological Remains', and Oman hopes to include this site in 2020, during the World Heritage Committee meetings due to be held in Fuzhou, China.

### *The relationship between culture and politics*

Before moving to the intangible cultural heritage, it is appropriate to talk here about the relationship between culture and politics, as evidence of the specificity of Omani cultural diplomacy, which was already discussed in Chapter 2 (page 24).

Oman reflects its cultural diplomacy when it deals with these cultural treaties. For example, it is written under Declarations and Reservations of the 1972 Convention that Oman at the time of acceptance refused to recognise the State of Israel, "The acceptance of the Convention does not imply the recognition of the State of Israel and that no treaty relations will arise between the Sultanate of Oman and Israel". This reservation had an impact on the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO, which announced at the time that this agreement was not the place to make such political statements (UNESCO website, accessed on 12/10/2019).

After Palestine joined UNESCO in November 2011 by a majority vote, the UNESCO Director-General received a communication dated 17 January 2012 from the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO to object to Palestine's accession to the 1972 Convention.

".. Refer to the notification regarding the accession of "Palestine" to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972, the Government of the State of Israel objects to that accession as it contradicts Article II of the Constitution of UNESCO as well as the established norms and practices of International Law. The Government of the State of Israel requests that the Secretariat of UNESCO communicate the aforesaid objection of the State of Israel to all State Members of the Convention and include this declaration in its electronic or other publications" (UNESCO website, accessed on 12/10/2019).

It is obvious that cultural diplomacy cannot be separated from political considerations. While the issues on the negotiating table are purely cultural, it is not possible to neutralize political issues and views related to other aspects. Some people argue that world heritage activities have been obstructed by political maneuvering. This is an important point which will be taken

to further discussion after the practical research of the thesis. It is worth noting that the Sultanate of Oman bore the cost of publishing the Arabic version of the 1972 Convention guidelines in 2005.

#### *4.7.2. Omani Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)*

Until 2003, the concept of cultural heritage around the world was largely limited to tangible heritage. This understanding of cultural heritage was subsequently balanced by the convention on intangible heritage, which includes the beliefs, traditions and cultural practices transmitted from grandparents to grandchildren that continue to represent a community's identity and originality. (See Chapter 3 page 58 for more detail).

There was no existing list of the traditional folk arts and craft industries that are still practiced to this day, which reflect the wealth of a culture and community extending for hundreds or thousands of years. The Sultanate of Oman acceded to the Convention on Intangible Heritage in 2005 in order to safeguard its intangible assets. This involved making a tentative list of this kind of heritage first, in parallel with the 1972 Convention for the Safeguarding of Cultural and Natural Heritage, and then listing the Omani symbols on the UNESCO intangible heritage list. The importance of ICH does not lie in the type of art or craft, but in the historical depth in which it has been passed on over the years from parents to children, which contributes to the vitality of cultural diversity through acceptance of another's culture and their different ways of life.

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, or the 2003 Convention, was described in Chapter 3 (page 58). In accordance with article 11 of the Convention, each State shall take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the ICH on its territory and to involve relevant communities, groups and non-governmental organizations in the identification and definition of elements of such heritage (UNESCO, 2012).

Accordingly, Oman began to establish national inventories of ICH in 2010 with the participation of various governmental institutions related to this field such as the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the General Authority for Craft Industries, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Sports Affairs and Sultan Qaboos University, in addition to the involvement of civil society organizations such as the Omani Women's Association, the

Cultural Club and many practitioners. The list included several sections: folk arts, traditional crafts, customs, traditions, folk food, folk games, musical instruments, and other items of Omani cultural heritage material, collected in the field of Omani society (Tawasul, 2013). The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, in cooperation with the ONCECS and UNESCO, organised a workshop to prepare inventories of intangible heritage. In 2011, two books of national inventories of intangible cultural heritage for musical instruments and musical styles were published in cooperation with the Oman Centre for Traditional Music.

The Omani National List for ICH aims to list and categorize all of the intangible cultural heritage of Oman in order to safeguard this heritage, develop appropriate protection mechanisms for each element, document all the data and information related to the ICH, and review everything that has been published or written about it, and then develop an electronic database, in preparation for entry of all these elements on the Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (page 59), the List includes 549 elements by the end of 2019. Comparing it with TCH list, the share of Arab countries in the ICH list is 71 elements. The statistics of the elements in the Arab countries so far in descending order are: Oman: 9, United Arab Emirates: 9, Morocco: 9, Saudi Arabia: 7, Algeria: 7, Iraq: 5, Egypt: 4, Qatar: 3, Jordan: 3, Syria: 3, Palestine: 2, Yemen: 2, Tunisia: 2, Mauritania: 2, Sudan: 1, Lebanon: 1, Bahrain: 1, Kuwait: 1. (UNESCO website, accessed on 22/12/2019). Therefore, although the 2003 Convention and the establishment of the ICH list started late compared to TCH and the 1972 Convention, the number of Omani elements listed is the largest in the Arab region alongside UAE and Morocco. It shows that real efforts are being made in this field.

The local community had a role in implementing the Omani inventories by participating in the preparation of the forms for the registration of elements. A group of researchers, stakeholders and practitioners from different governmental and private bodies collected information and data related to the national inventories and held meetings with practitioners of the elements of intangible cultural heritage. Data was collected and reviewed about every element before it was added into the final record. Direct interviews were conducted with community practitioners about the elements of ICH they wished to add to the list. These lists have been updated more than once, with the participation of students from Sultan Qaboos University, academics and researchers as well as members of the community.

In 2016, a special department was established under the name of the *Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in order to safeguard and promote Oman ICH at the local and global levels, following the issuance of the Royal Decree No. 40/2016 defining the competences of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and adopting its organizational structure. On the registration of these elements in UNESCO, a joint committee was formed between the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science to set standards and priorities for registration, and other necessary requirements in coordination with the Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO in Paris. In addition, a joint committee was established between the Sultanate and the United Arab Emirates to identify the common elements to register them as joint files between the two countries.

These efforts have culminated in the listing of nine elements so far, either alone or with other Arab and Gulf countries. These elements are in listing order: Al-Bar'ah, music and dance of Oman Dhofari valleys (2010); Al 'azi, elegy, processional march and poetry (2012); Al-Taghrooda, traditional Bedouin chanted poetry in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman (2012); Al-Ayyala, a traditional performing art of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (2014); Al-Razfa, a traditional performing art of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (2015); Arabic coffee, a symbol of generosity in the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (2015); Majlis, a cultural and social space in the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (2015); Horse and camel Ardham (2018); Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices in 14 Arab countries (2019). See Appendix 9 page 248 for more details (ONCECS, 2020).

Undoubtedly, Member States are racing to provide elements of ICH to be included in the World List, as it is an asset for tourism. But the registration goes through complex stages, standards and conditions set by UNESCO. For example: one condition states that the element must ensure the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and increase awareness of its importance and encourage dialogue to reflect world cultural diversity and human creativity.

The registration of these Omani elements of ICH is an achievement not only for the Sultanate but also for the practitioners and the participants in the preparation of the files. It confirms to the world that it values customs and traditions and contributes to the cultural social enrichment conveyed by the features of Omani cultural identity. More, it reflects the global

dimension of Omani heritage as a human heritage representing human creativity worldwide, and a success for Omani efforts to preserve this legacy and the role of practitioners, stakeholders and all members of society in adhering to their national heritage and identity. It is worth noting that the Sultanate a a member of the Governmental Committee for the 2003 Convention from 2008 to 2012. Also, a member of the Omani team for ICH (Mr. Saeed bin Sultan Al Busaidi) became an expert arbitrator with UNESCO in this field, and then in February 2020 he became the head of the arbitration team.

#### *4.7.3 Oman and cultural diversity*

UNESCO has stressed the need for Member States to encourage individuals and social groups to pay more attention to their forms of cultural expression and encourage them to recognize the importance of protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions through educational programme in order to increase public awareness. Indeed, UNESCO went further when it called on Member States to achieve sustainable development by taking action to encourage the establishment of industries and cultural projects to build and strengthen productive capacity. It also called for cooperation and integration through partnerships based on the exchange of experiences and cultural activities, as well as goods and services, to access the available best practices in this area (Throsby, 2008).

As discussed in Chapter 3 (page 63), UNESCO launched a Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which was adopted on October 2005 by the General Conference of UNESCO and entered into force on 18 March 2007. A total of 148 States joined the Convention by December 2019. The Convention is linked to a fund called the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) that aims to support Member States projects designed to promote cultural diversity locally, regionally and internationally.

Oman ratified the UNESCO 2005 Convention on 16/03/2007. It is among the most active Arab countries in the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), where it participated in the Commission experts of the Fund for two consecutive times since 2010 and provided financial support to the IFCD.

The Sultanate of Oman has a wealth of cultural heritage (see Chapter 2 page 28) and it has given top priority to enhancing cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence. It realises that cultural diversity is something which cannot be ignored, and that human values and

principles must be respected if communities are to accept each other. In this sense, the policy pursued by the Sultanate to support tolerance and cultural dialogue with various countries and peoples, has an important effect leading to positive relations between the Sultanate and other countries, as well as intellectual and cultural interaction leading to positive coexistence between different civilisations and cultures.

Based on this positive stance, some cultural centres have been established which contribute to this aim of humanitarian dialogue. In addition to UNESCO-Oman chairs (see above page 87) the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs in several prestigious universities are good examples of this trend. In addition, the Royal Opera House (Muscat) which hosts many international cultural events throughout the year since the establishment in 2011, includes the celebration of the World Jazz Day under the umbrella of UNESCO, is another example of the keen interest of the Sultanate to support cultural diversity and forms of artistic and literary expressions. As Sultan Qaboos said, On the occasion of opening the Royal Opera House Muscat in 2011

"In all our international endeavours, we enact Oman's wider mission in playing a constructive role in the dialogue among civilisations, enriching cultural exchange and fostering ties of friendship and collaboration" ([www.SultanQaboos.net](http://www.SultanQaboos.net), accessed on 19/10/2019).

This Royal House was one of the first operas in the region, and it attracts dozens of artists every year which contribute to supporting global cultural diversity.

#### *4.7.4. A proposal for establishing a UNESCO Centre - Category II in Muscat for Craft Industry*

The craft industries of all kinds are considered to be intangible heritage, and the products are also tangible heritage afterwards, and therefore, the craft industries combine the beauty of workmanship and the splendour of the products. The Sultanate of Oman is a pioneer at the level of the countries of the region in the field of handicrafts and the only one that has established a public body (chaired by a minister) for handicrafts in the region in 2003.

Over the past 17 years since its establishment, the Oman Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) has played many roles that serve the craft sector in Oman, most notably

in creating policies for the sector, inventories, conducting research, providing training and guidance, and marketing centre (Public Authority for Craft Industries, 2009).

In spite of its roles and the successes achieved at the local level in transferring skills and knowledge related to these industries to new generations, the Authority faces great challenges at the same time. Among the most prominent of these challenges is that expatriate control most of these industries, including palm fronds, jewelry and silverware. In addition, there is obvious competition from imported products that are less expensive and more abundant. All this requires those in charge of these industries to search for innovative solutions in order to overcome these difficulties.

In terms of the development of areas of cooperation with various organizations and countries in relation to craft industries, the PACI presented a project to establish a UNESCO category II centre in Muscat, which is concerned with everything related to the development of the craft industries sector and interest in craftsmen (ONCECS, 2019).

#### *4.7.5. UNESCO impact on Omani official rhetoric as a model for world's linguistic and cultural diversity*

This section addresses the issue of the diffuse effects of UNESCO-Oman relations. A useful indicator is the phenomenon of linguistic change and the use of international terms from the UNESCO context. This signifies the diffusion of a global understanding of diversity. How do they appear in Omani rhetoric? Here are some terms taken from Omani official speeches on the 36, 37 and 38th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO (2011, 2013 and 2015 respectively) as models and evidence of the new Omani cultural diversity perspective.

##### *36<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO, 2011*

Culture of peace and non-violence, dialogue between cultures, world tangible and intangible heritage, education for sustainable development, cultural diversity, biodiversity, global warming, environmental pollution, natural disasters, water scarcity, climate change, the digital divide.



### *37<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO, 2013*

Education for sustainable development, education quality, education for all, open educational resources, intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, biodiversity, culture of peace and sustainable development, respect for human rights, the rapprochement between cultures, human and biosphere, climate change, natural disaster risk reduction, fresh water crisis, ethics of science and technology, unsustainable use of natural resources, reducing the digital divide, building knowledge societies, the Arab-European dialogue

### *38<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO, 2015*

Cultural heritage of humanity, diversity of cultural expressions, natural disaster risk reduction, the culture of peace, tolerance and citizenship values, the principles of human rights, cultures dialogue, convergence and human harmony, education for all, the global frame for Education 2015-2030, biodiversity, climate change, Bioethics.

(UNESCO website, accessed on 07/11/2018).

These expressions from Oman's speeches on three consecutive occasions were chosen with great care to indicate that the Omani discourse changed to suit the uses of the organization itself. It is difficult to write each of these words in Arabic and English, because the Arabic language will be incomprehensible. Instead, these international concepts and terminology have become popular locally; they are used regularly by many decision makers. A number of these concepts are selected to appear in the questions in the empirical part of this study, to provide evidence for the diffusion of key ideas.

## **4.8. Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed many aspects of Oman's relationship with UNESCO, starting with the Sultanate's joining of the organization in 1972 and the establishment of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science in 1974 including its roles, competencies and hierarchy. After that, it focused on the elements of existing cooperation between the two sides such as agreements, memoranda of understanding, permanent projects, visits and memberships of the committees and councils of the organization. Oman's world heritage, both tangible and intangible, also formed part of the discussion, along with Omani cultural diversity and the role of UNESCO in preserving and promoting it. After reviewing the theoretical background of this study in the literature review (Chapters 2 - 4), several themes emerged that can be used in the empirical research of the thesis. The

most prominent of these are: cultural diversity; world heritage (tangible, intangible, documentary); the interrelationship between politics, culture, and religions; Education vs. Culture, the international role of UNESCO, UNESCO's financial crisis, The Oman National Commission and Oman-UNESCO relations.

The review of Oman-UNESCO relations has pointed to a research gap. This is the first research study of the relationship between UNESCO and the Sultanate of Oman, or even its relationship with one of the Arab countries, according to my investigation. Therefore, I have attempted to expand the discussion to include Oman in general in the first chapter, then UNESCO in the second and then both sides in the third and final chapter of the literature review.

In general, UNESCO-Oman relations since 1972 can be characterized as active and engaged, and even well consolidated. There are several reasons for this closeness in the relationship between Oman and UNESCO, the most important being that Oman's leadership from the very top has been consistent and enthusiastic. It was the thought of the late Sultan Qaboos, who passed away in January 2020, who called for harnessing cultural diplomacy to support world peace and coexistence between cultures, and his support for the principles and policies of UNESCO, that made the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO walk together in parallel to serve their common interests. Oman is more than an 'ordinary member' of UNESCO and the UN agencies. Indeed, it is known as an 'intermediary' that can be used regionally to resolve disputes diplomatically.

Despite the economic crisis experienced by UNESCO since 2011 when the US and Israel stopped their annual contribution to the organization, the literature reveals that the Sultanate of Oman continued to strengthen its relationship with UNESCO, and to provide many initiatives that serve the objectives of the organization, hosting a significant international events, as well as providing voluntary support to the organization.

After reviewing the methodology related to the study in the next chapter, the thesis will move to the empirical side to answer the stated research questions. The results received from the study tools will be discussed in three chapters (Chapter 6 to 8). I will then summarize the critical findings derived from employing various methods, and offer some recommendations in order to strengthen the bonds of cooperation between Oman and UNESCO and confront the challenges revealed by the thesis.

## **Chapter 5. Research Design and Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the design of the empirical research, the data collection techniques and data analysis. It explains the background, purposes, and design of the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The chapter begins by revisiting the main aims of the research before discussing in depth the research methods, sampling, the pilot study, issues of validity and reliability, ethical considerations, and finally the data analysis methods.

### **5.2 Research questions**

This study aims to assess and evaluate UNESCO's role in supporting and sustaining cultural diversity in Oman during the last 50 years of the renaissance of the new Oman under the leadership of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the study seeks to answer the following two questions:

1. In what respects has UNESCO played a role in sustaining cultural diversity in Oman during the last fifty years, 1970-2020?
2. What is the relationship between the aims and outcomes of UNESCO's activities within the Sultanate of Oman?

The research is shaped by these two pivotal questions, each of which is about the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO regarding the support of cultural diversity in the period of the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. 'Culture' here is used in the sense of the UNESCO definition.<sup>13</sup> Aspects of the culture sector include tangible heritage, intangible heritage, documentary heritage, languages, architecture, clothing, social practices and expressive forms such as art, traditional music, folk dances, customary rituals, and others.

The first question assumes that the role of UNESCO with regard to the research issue is positive and benign. It is an international organization that seeks to benefit all Member

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<sup>13</sup> UNESCO has defined culture as the "set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs." (UNESCO, 2011b).

States on various issues relating to its work in education, culture, science and communication. The question, however, focuses on the range and depth of UNESCO's role, and the contributions it has made specifically to the success of sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate during the last five decades of the *New Renaissance*. It leaves open the possibility that the relationship has involved secondary effects or even unforeseen consequences.

Detailed and accurate knowledge of the range and depth of UNESCO-related activities will provide the foundation to make practical and logical recommendations to identify strengths and overcome weaknesses in the future of the relationship between UNESCO and Oman.

The second question examines the relationship between the goals and objectives of UNESCO and what has been achieved on the ground in the Sultanate of Oman in the past and up to the present time. The focus will be to identify the most significant aspects of cooperation between Oman and UNESCO in terms of programmes, activities, plans, cultural agreements, memoranda of cooperation, and to evaluate what has been achieved so far.

The research also provides an opportunity to use the example of Oman to assess the worldwide role of UNESCO in Member States and the relationship between the aspirations of the Organization and their implementation in the cultural sphere in general. The final period of data collection provided an opportunity to assess the role of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and to understand participants' impressions of the work of the National Commission in this field.

To answer the two questions, I chose a mixed-method design involving qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (survey questionnaire) research. The reason for applying this type of approach is to offer a better understanding of the study problem than either method could give on its own. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data, extends the range and depth of the investigation.

This argument is supported by Creswell and Creswell (2017),

“Both quantitative and qualitative methods emphasize the development of arguments and the reasonable solutions to real issues in society, as well as the construction of appropriate theories. The emergence of mixed methods bridges the dialectics between these two research approaches. As social phenomena are becoming increasingly complex, the use of any single method may have its limit. The application

of mixed methods is more likely to show the whole picture” (Creswell and Creswell, 2017:23).

Mixed methods research should be seen as a normal and, perhaps, necessary part of knowledge generation rather than as a special type (Blaikie, 2009). In this research, the strategy was to analyse the two sets of data both independently and comparatively. Therefore, the terms 'Parallel' and 'Multiple' are more appropriate to describe the method used here even though it qualifies as a mixed-method study, as mentioned previously (see Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). The logic used in the current research is discussed below under Research Design.

### **5.3 Research aims**

Aims are broad statements of the general intentions of a research work. To recap, the main intention of this project is to shed light on the relationship between Oman and UNESCO in terms of culture, to assess the role of the organization in sustaining cultural diversity in Oman. Hopefully, this will contribute to strengthening their relationship, and to identifying any challenges that could limit their interaction, in order to reduce or eliminate them.

To investigate these challenges, the interview questions and the questionnaire included some key direct questions designed to address issues between Oman and UNESCO related to culture and heritage, so as to identify the most prominent strengths that underpin the relationship between UNESCO and Oman under the concept of 'International cultural diplomacy' (see Appendices 10 and 11 pages 253, 257).

Finally, the study provides an appropriate opportunity for decision-makers in both UNESCO and Oman to identify the role of UNESCO in providing support to member states, and the volume of this support. This can be done by quantitatively and qualitatively evaluating programmes, activities and events in the Sultanate of Oman in which implementation was sponsored or contributed to by UNESCO. Many questions in both the interviews and the survey questionnaires were designed to illuminate this.

### **5.4 Research design**

Research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a clear and logical way to ensure that the research aims are realised. Miller and Salkind (2002) see research design as a strategy that justifies the logic, structure and the principles of the research methodology and methods and how these

relate to the research questions or propositions. According to mixed methods writers and authors, there are basically four variants of research design using mixed methods. Creswell and Clark (2011) and Halcomb and Hickman (2015) identified four types of research design which are the convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and embedded or nested.

According to Creswell and Clark (2011), convergent parallel design is the most prominent approach which happens when collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data through the same stage of the research process. The two sets of results are then merging into an aggregate interpretation. Explanatory sequential, or so-called follow-up approach, is a mixed methods design in which the researcher begins by conducting a quantitative phase and follows up on specific results with a second phase in order to explain the original results in detail (Morgan, 1998). The third type of research design of mixed methods called the exploratory sequential, or the quantitative follow-up (Morgan, 1998) or the instrument development design (Creswell, Fetters, & Ivankova, 2004). It is also a consecutive design with two phases; it begins by exploring a topic qualitatively and then building to a quantitative phase. Embedded or nested research design is another approach when a supplemental data set is embedded within a larger design to treat different questions. The most common one is the embedded-experiment variant, which takes place when qualitative data is embedded within an experimental trial.

With all these types, and undoubtedly there are more complicated classifications than that, it is not that easy to say that one or other design is appropriate for this study, as research and studies always require in their extended stages solutions and innovative keys to the problems facing them. Gorard (2013: 13) says,

“No one design is always applicable or best suited for an entire programme of study. Designs can be classified in a number of ways, such as whether they involve a pre-specified comparison or not, whether there is a sequence of data collection episodes, and whether they involve a deliberate intervention or not”.

In addition, Blaikie (2009:256) says that

“Good research designs are creative and professionally acceptable solutions to the problems and limitations that are encountered at the beginning and during the course of the research”.

Research design is important because according to Gorard (2013: 197) “design is the chance to get things right from the start. It makes everything easier from then on”. To suit

the study, I divided the literature review into three chapters: Oman, UNESCO, and Oman and UNESCO. In fact, the division of literature review into three chapters sharpens the focus of each chapter, making it easier *vice versa* to understand the issues which are highlighted in the (third chapter), which are the basis of this study. It was necessary to first explain the history and culture of the Sultanate of Oman, and then move on to talk about UNESCO in general terms and principles, especially with regard to the culture sector, before presenting Oman's relationship with the organization since its accession.

Then, as previously mentioned, a mixed methods strategy was applied in this research in order to generate a broad spectrum of data. It is a kind of '*convergent parallel*' research as the researcher conducts the qualitative and quantitative components in the same stage of the research process with equal-weight methods and independent analysis to figure out and explain the results together (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

The uniqueness in this research design is that these concepts are spelled out in the interviews with UNESCO officials who plan strategies and prepare guidelines for member states. This supply side (UNESCO) view is then compared with the understanding of the demand side (member states, Oman in this case). An articulate and consistent understanding of these concepts between these two interacting parties is prerequisite for policy formulation and implementation. Only then we can expect to observe a pragmatic relation between society and culture and appreciate the role of heritage for attaining mutual respect and peace.

The study collected two types of data by applying two different methods and perspectives to capture and explore the role of UNESCO in Oman. Further reflections on the experience of using this methodology will follow later in Chapter 9.

It was also planned to compare the data from other Arab countries. Official invitation letters were sent via the Oman National Commission to all of them. However, there was no interaction or response apart from three exceptions, namely: Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This lack of response can be taken as an indicator of the relative neglect of qualitative evaluation studies, and the inclination to deal only with activities and programmes coming from UNESCO. It was decided to abandon this comparative dimension of the design in order to concentrate on the UNESCO-Oman relationship and the view 'from both sides'.

## 5.5 Study population

There is no doubt that precise identification of the study population is one of the fundamentals of the scientific research methodology in order to establish the parameters for representativeness in a study sample. It is known that a study population is the whole set of people with characteristics relevant to the research, and a sample is a subset of the population. In other words, the population is the group of people that the researcher wants to draw a conclusion about once the study is finished.

In selecting a population for a study, the question (s) and purpose (s) of the study should lead to a suitable definition of the population. The defined population will help the researcher to establish the exact framework for the study. The issues to be included and excluded should also be spelt out clearly (inclusion and exclusion conditions).

Since the objective of this study is to assess the role of UNESCO in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in Oman, it is clear that the study population relates to two sites: UNESCO and Oman. But should all UNESCO and Oman employees be included in the target population? For this study, the population is defined as all experts and functionaries working in the culture sectors in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, as well as all policy makers, functionaries and stakeholders working in the Omani ministries, governmental bodies and civil society that are responsible for UNESCO's work, especially in the cultural field.

It is therefore possible to say that study population of this study includes everyone involved in UNESCO's work in cultural affairs, whether in Paris or Muscat. This includes all employees on both sides in safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage and supporting cultural diversity.

With regard to civil society and NGOs, a civil society institution in Oman concerned with the culture sector (Omani Society for Writers and Literati) was invited to participate in the survey, but it did not respond to the researcher at all, despite the continuous follow-up to encourage a response. This suggests that there is a lot of work to be done to encourage civil society institutions and organizations to participate and to increase their effectiveness in Omani society.

Having stated the inclusion side, it is easy now to explain the excluded individuals that this study does not cover. This list consists of all employees working in the other four departments in UNESCO and Oman (education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, communication/information), except the Omanis who have membership in some UNESCO



committees or the Omani ministries and governmental bodies which have departments that have issues related to UNESCO. In addition, the technical specialists working in the Omani world heritage sites were excluded, because this evaluation study includes UNESCO as a whole in its various aspects, while they are specialized only in relation to the sites, they have responsibility for.

## **5.6 Research instruments**

A research instrument or tool is anything that is a means of collecting information (data) for a study. The first research tool (interview) was supported by another tool (survey questionnaire), which was distributed to members of the target population in the cultural field in the Sultanate of Oman. When social researchers set out to answer research questions, they are faced with the task of choosing the best research strategy or strategies to answer them. The inductive and deductive strategies are available to answer 'what' questions and are useful for exploration and description, although they each achieve these purposes in different ways and with different outcomes (Blaikie, 2009: 79).

First, interviews in Paris and Oman were conducted to collect useful data related to the issue of this study. This instrument was semi-or loosely structured and used dialogue and open discussion in order to allow the participants to freely express their ideas and beliefs. Secondly, a survey questionnaire was designed with 34 questions to measure the Omani participants' opinions about the role of UNESCO in enhancing Omani culture and heritage, and to help interpret the results of the interviews (see Appendix 10 page 253).

It was intentional that the themes in the interview would cover similar ground to the questionnaire questions, except for modifying the formulation in some cases to be more fluent during the interviews. The building of the interview and questionnaire questions went through several stages. First, the aspects to be covered in the study were listed and discussed with the supervisor. Then, the questions that are appropriate for the study were drawn up. Choosing the appropriate scale to answer the questionnaire after referring to the references, and preparing sub questions to follow up for the interview questions, was the next step. A table of interview questions was prepared to include: Proposed Questions, Purposes, Category, Expected Answers and Notes (Appendix 11 Page 257).

Unlike the interviews, the targeted sample of the questionnaire included those who are not in a high position of the institution but still in touch with UNESCO's work. An observer

might ask: Why was the questionnaire distributed only in Oman and not distributed in UNESCO?

The reason is simply that the standing appointments and schedules of UNESCO staff reduced the number of interviews from twelve to six. In addition, from the perspective of the researcher, public opinion in Oman is more credible for assessing Oman's relationship with UNESCO, while the staff of UNESCO or any other governmental and international organization will undoubtedly incline to use the institutional voice and try to profess the importance of the organization and its prominent global role in Oman or elsewhere. Therefore, they may share the same perspective and fail to reflect the real situation and actual role of their institution, unlike the situation in Oman where the sample was distributed more widely and included many institutions that differ in their views regarding its relationship with UNESCO.

#### *5.6.1. Survey questionnaire*

According to Cohen et al. (2002), a questionnaire is a type of tool that, importantly, does not require a researcher's presence when answering. The questionnaire part of this study was a hard copy, self-completion exercise designed for quantitative analysis of the responses. It was distributed to 11 main institutions that deal with culture and heritage in Oman, namely: the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the National Documents and Archives Authority, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, the Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Advisor for Cultural Affairs, Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the General Authority for Craft Industries, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, the Omani Association for Writers and Literati and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

This group of 11 Omani governmental and civilian institutions was selected using the researcher's personal knowledge and experience of working for 12 years in the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. These institutions are all concerned with UNESCO's cultural areas. Only the Ministry of Tourism was excluded because it overlaps with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The latter was sent the largest number of questionnaires, because it is the main body in the Sultanate of Oman concerned with heritage and culture. Therefore, the number of participants in the questionnaire was purposely chosen to correspond to the size of the institutions in the study population.

While it is true that the institutions to which the questionnaire was distributed were selected by their names due to the researcher's knowledge of them and their relevance to the subject of the study, they were approached through an official letter from the ONCECS without requesting to write the names of participants, in order to minimize any possible personal bias (see Appendices 12 - 15 pages 264-269 for the Invitation Letters and the Information Sheets of the Questionnaire). The participants were given information sheets besides the questionnaires and they were asked only to write their institution' name, gender, age, nationality and qualification. For the interviews, selection was also non-random, based on a choice of persons able to talk about aspects of the whole topic at length. In creating this list, I relied on my experience in dealing with various cultural institutions over more than ten years. The Secretary-General of the ONCECS also assisted me greatly after my consultation with him. Beside the signed consent forms, the participant was reminded before the start of each interview that their interviewer was a researcher and a PhD student at Bangor University, acting in a professional not personal capacity, even if he was known previously to the interviewee.

A total of 116 copies of the survey questionnaire were sent, of which 82 were returned completed (a response rate of about 71%). The main non-response (34 questionnaires) was from the Omani Association for Writers and Literati, which did not send back any questionnaires at all (0 out of 5). Three other large institutions accounted for the remainder: the Ministry of Heritage and Culture (18 out of 30), Sultan Qaboos University (10 out of 20) and the ONCECS (8 out of 15),

The respectable percentage of returned questionnaires (71%) is due to the fact that the researcher followed up the ONCECS sent letters, and an official reminder letters were sent to those who were late in submitting the questionnaire by the deadline stipulated in the first letter. The detailed implementation of the data collection will be fully discussed later in this chapter.

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect data on the role of UNESCO, the relationship with Oman and many issues regarding culture, heritage and cultural diplomacy. It has 34 questions. In designing the questions, careful account was taken of experience and recommendations of the pilot study in question phrasing, sequence, layout and other features (Oppenheim, 2000 and Ohira et al., 2017). Firstly, it includes a question that invites the respondent to judge how much they are engaged with UNESCO activities and programmes. It is a scale question with possible responses ranging between 0 (never) and 5 or more. The next (yes or no) questions are about five concepts related to natural and

cultural heritage, tangible and intangible heritage, and cultural diversity. They ask the participant if he or she has heard about each concept. Cultural diversity questions are addressed in more general concepts. In addition, there are some direct questions about heritage in tangible and intangible as well as documentary heritage. The degree of success in relations between Oman and UNESCO is itemised in the following questions, since this is the main point of the study.

The questions from 7 to 34 were measured on a 5 point scale, from 'Strongly disagree (1)' to 'Strongly agree (5)'. The main angles covered by the survey questionnaire are:

1. Cultural diversity (Questions: 6, 9, 16, 29) asking about the meaning of cultural diversity, relation between religions and cultural diversity, the success UNESCO has achieved in enhancing cultural diversity in member states, the relationship between UNESCO's principles and its actual activities, and whether or not the Sultanate of Oman has succeeded in supporting its rich cultural diversity.
2. Tangible heritage (Questions: 4, 19, 23, 25, 26) asking about the meaning of tangible cultural heritage, OUV of the World Heritage List, role of UNESCO and Sultan Qaboos in preserving Omani tangible heritage and if the five Omani world heritage sites reflect the richness of Omani heritage.
3. Intangible heritage (Questions: 5, 20, 23, 25, 27, 28) asking about the meaning of intangible cultural heritage, difficulties in listing intangible cultural heritage (Inventory), the role of UNESCO in preserving Omani intangible heritage, the positive role of intangible heritage between member states, and whether the nine Omani world intangible heritage elements reflect the richness of Omani heritage.

There are also some questions about: cultural and natural heritage concepts (Questions: 2 and 3), the relationship between politics and culture (Questions: 13, 14, 15), the international role of UNESCO (Questions: 10, 17, 18, 21), the relationship between culture and religions (Questions: 7 and 8), UNESCO's financial crises (Questions: 11 and 12), the Oman National Commission (Questions: 1, 32 and 33) and the Oman-UNESCO relationship (Question: 24, 30, 31, 34).

Despite these clear divisions and the sections included in the questionnaire, the questions were mixed and did not appear according to category. Also, the technique of placing the question sometimes in the affirmative form and sometimes not was also used. All of this was aimed at increasing the reliability of responses.

Before the questionnaire was distributed to the sample, it was pre-tested by several experts. It was revised carefully by five specialists, and a number of questions were deleted and some others added to the questionnaire at the time. These five experts were: the PhD supervisor, technical Office for Studies and Development - Ministry of Education, Dr. Mohammed Dulal - Assistant Professor at Nizwa University, Ibrahim Al-Wahaibi - Statistical expert and the owner of Muscat Office for Statistics and Studies Services and Dr. Saud Al-Shuaile - Head of the Admission and Registration Centre at Nizwa College of Applied Sciences.

### *5.6.2. Interviews*

According to Morse & Corbin (2003), research interviews can be classified into three types: structured; semi-structured; and unstructured interviews. The major variation between these three types is firstly the degree to which participants have control over the process, and secondly the content of the interview itself. Morse & Corbin (2003) discuss this issue in detail. The interviews for this research were designed as face-to face, semi-structured sessions conducted by the researcher, usually in the work context.

Qualitative interviews are sometimes referred to as dialogues, a concept that has become common not only in political, managerial but also the educational context. They attempt to describe and elicit the meanings of central themes in the real-life setting of the subjects, although this may be more or less difficult according to the degree of similarity between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2006). In the research for this thesis, the respondents and the interviewer generally shared a range of experiences and language in the culture and heritage domain, so inhabited similar worlds of meaning.

The semi-structured interviews involved 23 questions of both the open and closed question type. The interview main questions resemble those in the survey questionnaire as both aim to elicit data on the same topic. All interviews were conducted face to face and individually. They were recorded to allow re-listening and were transcribed after receiving the informed consent of the participants. The 19 interviews were transcribed by the researcher. As for the interviews in Paris, two of them were conducted in Arabic and four in English, while all 13 interviews in Muscat were in Arabic. The transcripts were made in the same language as the original, in order to facilitate analysis later, in agreement with the supervisor (15 transcripts in Arabic and four in English). This translation from the original (Arabic) to English language for the 15 interviews conducted in Muscat and Paris created a

challenge in searching for terms that were entirely appropriate for the mother language. Therefore, transcripts are not without slight differences in this regard.

Since the research topic includes two main parts, each from a different perspective, namely UNESCO and Oman, it was necessary to include both parties (UNESCO and Oman) concerned with cultural affairs in the sample. Interviews took place with a total of 19 participants from both UNESCO and Oman. The first interviews were conducted at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris with a total of six interviewees. Subsequently, another 13 interviews took place in Oman.

The Paris list consisted of various sections of UNESCO in the field of culture and various functional levels from Assistant Director-General, Head of Department and Staff. The list also included a number of staff in the Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO at the present time.

The list was drawn up in coordination with the Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO in Paris. A complete list of names and functions was given to choose from. The final list included 12 employees who have the closest relation with the purposes of my study. After sending emails to the list's experts, with the required attachments, (an invitation letter, an information sheet and a consent form, see Appendices 16 - 18 pages 270-273) only six of them confirmed and accepted to conduct an interview due to the unavailability of some of them and the standing appointments and schedules of others.

The Muscat interview list consisted of 13 persons working at different cultural institutions. The method of selection for institutions here has been explained (see page 115 above) in the context of selecting the questionnaire sample. However, the sample of interviews did not include all of the institutions mentioned in the questionnaire. The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Planning and Human Resources Development was also added to the Oman interviewee list because he is the Vice-Chairman of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (the coordinator between UNESCO and Oman in Oman), as well as the head of the International Bureau of Education (IBE).

Regarding the UNESCO interviews, I tried to conduct the six interviews outside of work to encourage more openness when answering questions, and to talk more personally than from the institutional perspective. I succeeded in only two cases (I conducted one at home and another one in a coffee shop), while the other four preferred to meet in their offices.

Nevertheless, everyone (except one female respondent) seemed to speak freely and often away from the institutional discourse, which enriched the dialogue and achieved positive results. The Muscat interviews had no logistic difficulties. The selected sample was contacted by phone to determine the suitable date of each interview. An invitation letter, an information sheet and a consent form were sent by email to them, and there was no need to translate the attachments into the Arabic language, as they were fluent in reading in English.

While the Paris consent forms were signed and returned, the majority of the interviewees in Muscat preferred verbal approval, after confirming that they read all the items contained therein, given their prior acquaintance with the researcher. Overall, the interviews succeeded in obtaining the amount of information required and answering all questions, and the dialogue with the interviewees greatly enriched the study from the researcher's point of view.

## **5.7 Pilot study**

A pilot study according to Porta and Keating (2008) is a small test of the approaches and procedures to be used on a larger scale. It is important in order to assess time, cost, feasibility and so on to improve upon the design of a study prior to performance of a full-scale research project. It is also vital to test how questions are received and understood, to bring as close a rapprochement as possible between the worlds of meaning of the researcher and the respondents.

For this project, I conducted a pilot study with two respondents for both the interview and the questionnaire. For the interview, as I started in Paris, the pilot study consisted of two colleagues working at the Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO in Paris. They were chosen because they are familiar with questions related to Oman, UNESCO and the relationship between Oman and UNESCO. Regarding the questionnaire, the pilot study consisted of the Secretary-General of the ONCECS and the Director of the Culture Sector of the ONCECS. The aims of the two pilot studies were to refine the questions, practice time management, and to adapt to the research atmosphere. Some useful feedback was received by the pilot studies participants in terms of question format, order, and feasibility of asking the question. It led to some adjustments to the wording and order of the questions.

## **5.8 Data-collection time-line**

The study was conducted in accordance with a time plan agreed, with the supervisor, the Bangor University Ethics Committee and the Ministry of Education in Oman. The data-collection period lasted nine weeks for interviews, one week in Paris and eight weeks in Muscat, with an average duration of one hour for each interview. They were conducted after written (or verbal) consent was received from the participants.

For the questionnaire survey, the period lasted three months in Muscat after having the approval of the Ministry of Education. It included: sending the official letters to the institutions via the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, distributing the questionnaire and receiving it (see Appendix 19 page 274 for more detail).

## **5.9 Validity and Reliability**

In any understanding of the research process, reliability and validity are two concepts that are important to be observed (see, for example, Cohen et al. (2002); Golafshani, (2003); Ali and Yusof (2011); Platt and Skowron (2013)). Undoubtedly, the reliability and validity of any research tool is one of the most important foundations of data collection in research, because weak reliability and validity leads to poor credibility of the results and which devalues the research.

There are two aspects of validity in research, namely internal and the external validity. Validity and reliability are the two concepts that are important in defining and measuring bias and distortion in research. While validity refers to the credibility of a piece of research, reliability on the other hand refers to the repeatability of findings of a research work. On validity, Gorard (2013: 159) states 'the 'validity' of any findings refers to their real-life applicability and to their robustness when examined sceptically'. McDermott also deals with this issue and the causes of bias which to lead to wrong conclusions. She says,

"One of the areas in which biases inflict misunderstanding surrounds issues related to internal and external validity. In political science, concerns with external validity often border on the monomaniacal, leading to the neglect, if not the complete dismissal, of attention to the important issues involved in internal validity. In psychology, the reverse emphasis predominates. Because both internal and external validity remain important in assessing the quality, accuracy, and utility of any given



experimental design, it facilitates optimal experimental design to concentrate on attempting to maximize both" (McDermott, 2011: 27).

So, there is near unanimity that studies related to psychology have a greater focus on internal validity than external. As I used a mixed-method study, it has been mentioned previously that this kind of methodology has the benefit of maximising validity and reliability through the use of 'triangulation'.

For the interviews, the target population was those persons with specific knowledge and experience of UNESCO's relationship with Oman in the cultural field. Therefore, I can assume that internal validity was strong for the interviews. For practical reasons, the achieved sample was a sub-set of this population but there is no reason to believe that this was a source of systematic bias. The external validity is also robust, from the researcher's perspective. Where conditions are comparable, the results may be generalised to other research populations and similar results will apply (to a Member State and their relationship with UNESCO).

For the survey questionnaire, cultural institutions related to the work of UNESCO were identified through the researcher's long experience in this field, which contributed greatly to the precise identification of these institutions. The distribution of the questionnaires was carried out through the ONCECS, to notify the institutions to take the subject of the questionnaire very seriously and to ensure the greatest response. My role in the process was just to confirm the receipt of letters and questionnaires and to collect the questionnaires afterwards. The good response rate (71%) indicates that this procedure was successful, which contributes to increasing the tool's reliability in relation to the main cultural institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

The official procedure of sending the questionnaire helped to guarantee the strength of the response (which enhances external validity), but has no implications for the types of answer to the questionnaire. It did not incline the respondents to give an 'official' type of response. Furthermore, ensuring that the name of the participant is not recorded and that personal information is not requested (anonymity) contributed to strengthening the credibility of the research and minimising bias in the data collection process.

## 5.10 Ethical Considerations

In any research involving humans the researcher is responsible for adhering to ethical standards such as the Guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA). According to Jupp (2006), ethics is an arena of moral philosophy that deals with the values by which behaviour should be controlled. Based on this, Jupp further detailed that many learned societies and skilled bodies publish codes of ethics which set down standards, rules and guidance on what is acceptable practice and what is not. The present research was designed to conform to appropriate ethical guidelines and procedures for research (Bangor University Research Ethics Committee CBLESS) involving the collection of data through interaction with human subjects. Participants were all over 18 years of age, and the research does not target any vulnerable individuals or groups.

Gorard (2013: 187) concludes on ethics that "much of the writing about ethical issues in research, and the legislation and oversight that goes with it, concerns the principle of not harming the research participants. The quality of the research conclusions, as aided by a robust design, is paramount. It is therefore unethical to conduct poor research, and make unwarranted research claims".

Creswell (2007), for example, explains that a qualitative researcher will face many ethical issues that surface during fieldwork and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. He also mentions three fundamental aspects to consider. They are: 'handling the participant's personal information, maintaining the integrity of the research, and being clear about the researchers' accountability and responsibilities' (Creswell, 2014: 112).

In agreement with Bangor University's ethics and the BSA, which is committed to sustaining high ethical standards in all aspects of research (Appendix 20 page 275), I allowed all participants to individually choose their own suitable time for the interviews, and invitation letters were sent very early so that participants would not have to cancel their scheduled appointments. Before proceeding to the interviews and survey questionnaires, an official letter (approval letter) from Bangor University was obtained for data collection, which ensures the rights of both parties (Appendix 21 page 277). Another approval letter was received from the Ministry of Education in Muscat, Technical Office for Studies and Development, to allow data collection for interviews and questionnaires. (Appendix 22 page 278).

In more detail,

- Invitation letters for both interviews and survey were sent to the participants to introduce the study and procedures in depth.
- The participants were given information sheets describing the research aspects.
- The selected interviewees were informed in advance of the date and time of the interviews and they had the opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the research.
- Times for interviews were chosen carefully at the request of the researcher, after the confirmation through e-mail that the interview could be conducted anytime and anywhere.
- Written consent forms were received from all Paris interviewees, while some Omani participants in Muscat preferred to give verbal consent instead of written consent due to their other commitments and their desire to provide more time to interview questions, according to the researcher's belief. The consent forms included a point concerning the approval for recording the interview so it can be referred to later by the researcher only.

For data storage, I ensured that:

- All paper based data (consent forms, interview notes, all questionnaires) were kept in a locked cupboard at my workplace;
- All electronic data was transferred to the University's drive and deleted from any mobile device (e.g. laptop, digital recorder, video camera, CD) immediately.
- The data will be kept for a period of no less than five years or at least two years post-publication according to Bangor University's data storage regulations.

To achieve participants' anonymity in the questionnaire, I ensured that the real names of participants do not appear on any file names presented as data. While it was agreed with the interviewers, whether in Paris or Muscat, that their names and positions could be used during the stage of writing the findings to conduct comparisons and analyses, while keeping the records away from anyone in a safe place (see Appendix 18 page 273).

## **5.11 Procedure and challenges**

The interviews were conducted first, followed by the distribution of the questionnaire. UNESCO headquarters in Paris was the first stop. Five face-to-face interviews were conducted after coordinating with the participants through the office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO. Three of these interviews were conducted

at the participant's offices, one at a coffee shop and another at the participant's home. The reason for this was that the participants were invited to choose the place that suited them best. Another Skype interview was held two weeks after returning to Bangor because the interviewee was not available during the visit, and it was he who suggested that the interview could be made on Skype.

No research is devoid of challenges and difficulties, especially during fieldwork. For me, the main challenge was the complexity of conducting interview with participants in two different countries, France and Oman.

The other challenge I confronted was in the language of the participants themselves in France. Some of the UNESCO participants were not fluent in English, which created some problems of comprehension. Some of the participants could not easily express and answer questions because their native language is French or Spanish, unlike those from Oman who spoke Arabic, which made it easier for both parties to conduct a fluent dialogue.

## **5.12 Analytical procedures**

Data analysis refers to the means of making sense out of information (data) acquired from respondents using research tools. Given that the data collected via the qualitative interviews was not extensive, it was decided not to use any software programme - except Microsoft Word - to assist with the analysis. All interviews and open questions on the survey were firstly transcribed for thematic and further analysis. As the collected data was in two languages, Arabic and English, it was transcribed in the original language in order to focus on analysing the data instead of translating it.

When certain Arabic terms were translated into English, or vice versa, for the interviews in Muscat or Paris, it was necessary to modify some incomprehensible words to be consistent with the context. For example, during one interview in Muscat, a participant was unaware of the term 'multiculturalism', so I explained it in terms of 'cultural diversity'. 'Cultural diversity' is the real or perceived differences in culture between humans. Though 'multiculturalism' is similar to the previous term, it involves the perception of 'how power in society can be unequal due to race, gender, sexual orientation, power, and privilege' (Dias, 2012: 14). Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the survey questionnaire data as it is one of the most suitable and widely used programmes for quantitative data analysis. SPSS facilitated a variety of statistical procedures, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

In accordance with the comparative logic of the design, the analysis will focus on the similarities and differences in the findings from both sets of data, in order to integrate them into a broader framework later in the final chapter. This chapter has described the methodology used in this research, in terms of its questions, its purposes, design, data collection procedures, and data analysis plan. Since the original data consists of the survey questionnaire and the interviews, the findings will be analysed separately in the following chapters: the questionnaire analysis (Chapter 6), the analysis of interviews from UNESCO (Chapter 7) and the analysis of interviews from Oman (Chapter 8). The results will be brought together in the discussion and recommendations in the final chapter (Chapter 9).

### **5.13 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the theoretical aspect of this study, starting with the study's questions, objectives, the study design used, along with the aspects related to the community and sampling, the tools, all the way to the analysis methods that were used.

The clarity of the methodology of any study and its inclusion of all the important aspects is the basis for the success of any research. So, this chapter sheds light on the various aspects that the researcher sees as important for this study. Perhaps the greatest focus has been on the tools of the study since its construction, distribution and analysis of its results, taking into consideration the ethical aspects of all these stages.

The way is paved now to move to analysis, which will be covered during the next three chapters (from Chapter 6 to 8) and culminating in the most significant results that were reached in the last chapter of this research (Chapter 9).

## **Chapter 6. Questionnaire analysis results**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The questionnaire part of this study was designed to identify the most prominent factors that contribute to the relationship between UNESCO and Oman under the concept of 'international cultural diplomacy' (see Chapter 5 page 116 for a description of the questionnaire design and sample; and Appendix 10 page 253 for a copy of the questions). The 34 questions elicited responses on numerous aspects of Oman-UNESCO relations pertaining to culture and heritage.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the target population for the questions of the study included all experts, functionaries and stakeholders working in the Omani ministries, governmental bodies and civil society that are responsible for UNESCO's work, in the culture field. This involves all Omani employees in relation to safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage and supporting cultural diversity.

The questionnaire data was analyzed using SPSS software by studying all the variables and analyzing their relations, using statistical methods including descriptive analysis and correlation analysis.

### **6.2 Data preparation**

The questionnaire data were saved in Excel format, before converting them into the Statistical Package (SPSS) for analysis. Data screening and cleaning was performed. Since there were no missing values at all, there was no need for further treatment. Apart from the first six questions, the responses were measured on 5-point-Likert-type scales.

The first question is about the number of participations in activities organized by UNESCO or the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, and uses a scale of four points: 0, 1-2, 3-5 and more than 5. The following five questions (from 2 to 6) were Yes/ No questions, asking about the main concepts related to the research, namely: natural heritage, culture heritage, tangible heritage, intangible heritage and cultural diversity.

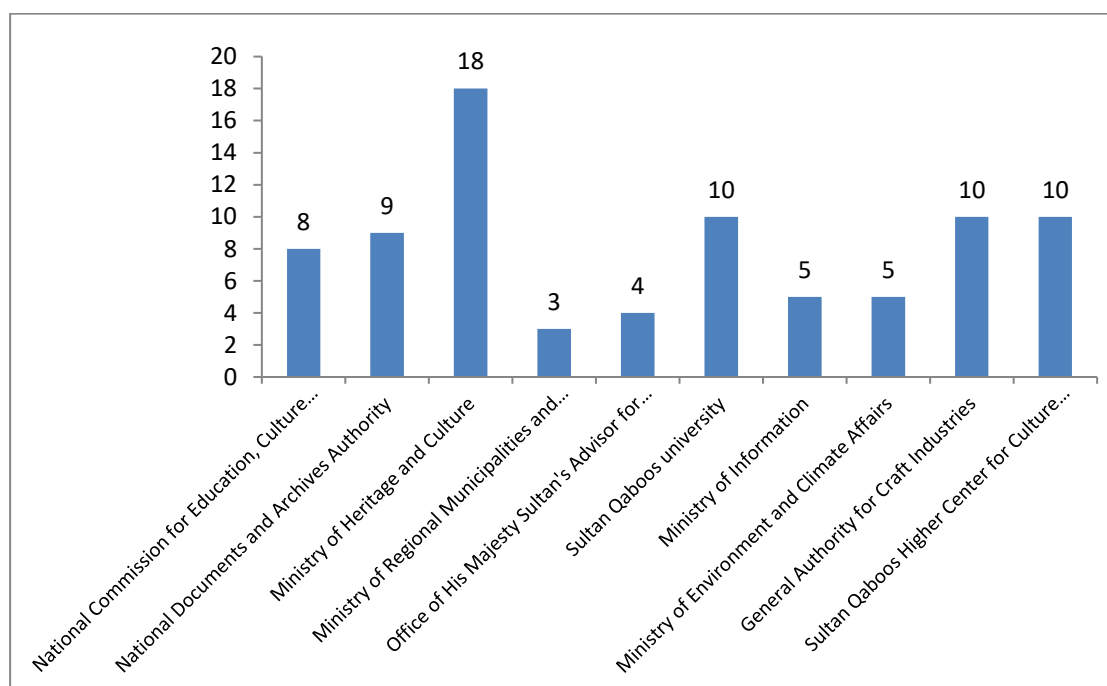
The questionnaire included five demographic variables at the beginning, which are: institution, nationality, gender, age and qualification. The purpose of including these

characteristics of the participants is to examine how they relate to each variable, to see whether they may account for variations in the responses or not. The next section will shed light on the results of comparison between these variables.

### *Descriptive statistics for the main variables*

A total of 10 institutions participated in the survey. The frequency of responses from these institutions is shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Frequency of institutions



(N=82)

As discussed previously, the number of participants in the questionnaire was purposely chosen to correspond to the size of the institutions in the study population. Thus, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture holds the largest share (n=18, 22%) as it is the institution responsible for heritage in Oman, followed directly by Sultan Qaboos University, Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, and General Authority for Craft Industries with ten participants from each one (12.2 %). While the National Documents and Archives Authority and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science followed by nine (11%) and eight (9.8%) participants respectively. Ministries of Information and Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs followed with five participants (6.1%) as the cultural affairs work related to UNESCO from each of these two institutions is relatively less important. The

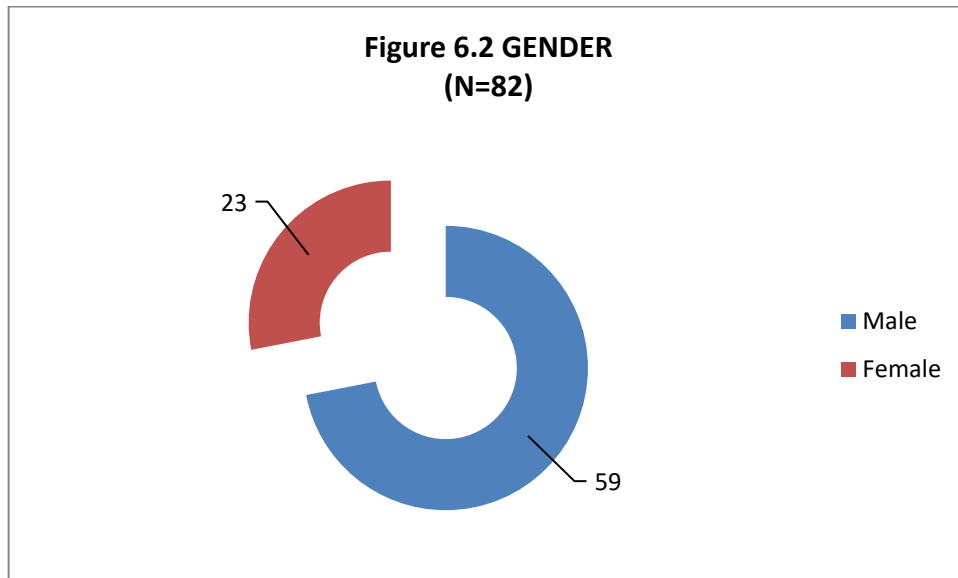
lowest number of participants in this research came from the Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Advisor for Cultural Affairs and Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources (n=4, 4.9%, and n=3, 3.7% respectively), because the former institution is small and the later has a small department that deals with UNESCO sites in Oman.

Participants' demographic data showed that the number of Omani participants is much higher than non-Omanis (95.1 % to 4.9%), which gives an indicator that the level of Omanization in cultural institutions is very high.

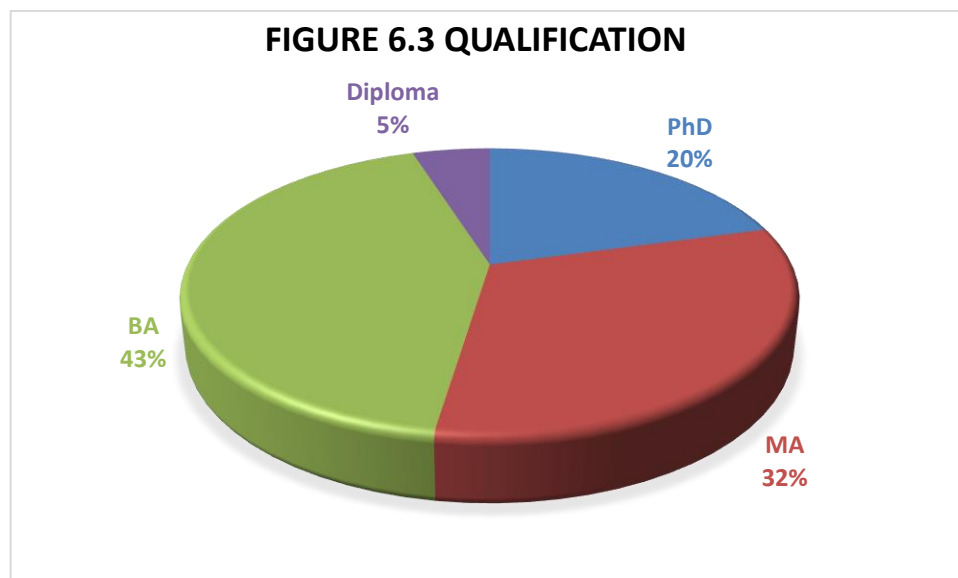
In terms of the relationship between nationality and institution, non-Omani (n = 4, 4.9%) respondents are all academics from Sultan Qaboos University (three males and one female), indicating that cultural institutions in Oman are characterized by the scarcity of non-Omanis, except for academic institutions that are known to require external expertise in all countries of the world.

Regarding gender, male participants (n=59, 72 %) outnumbered female participants (n=23, 28%) (See Figure 6.2). This two thirds ratio might be because the cultural and heritage field does not attract as many women compared with other fields and departments in which women work. Even though this point is counter-intuitive, as it might be expected that more women would be involved because 'culture' is often seen as softer and more feminine than engineering, politics and so on, there is a logical explanation for what is happening in Oman. Females were previously excluded from these 'hard' disciplines in universities, unlike other disciplines such as journalism, culture, arts and others. However, since the opening of the door to all specialties, females are racing to break into these disciplines further, reducing their presence in other softer disciplines. It is worth mentioning here that the number of Omani employees in the public sector is 154,512 (48% female and 52% male) according to the latest statistics in 2017, which confirms that men and women have a nearly equal share of employment in the public sector (<http://alwatan.com/details/203706>).





The third variable is qualification, defined according to four levels of educational qualification: diploma, BA, MA and Ph.D. As described in Figure 6.3, the highest number of participants had a BA as their highest level of qualification (n=35, 42.7%), followed by MA (n=26, 31.7%), and PhD (n=17, 20.7%). The lowest number was for diploma (n=4, 4.9%). Diploma here means two years of college following secondary school. This applied in the past, but now most Omani colleges and universities no longer grant the degree of diploma, but only bachelor's and postgraduate degrees.



This high proportion of qualified employees in the culture sector (n= 43, 52.4%) indicates that there is great awareness of the need to recruit trained and qualified employees, and to work on their continued capacity building and involvement in many programmes and courses inside and outside Oman. Only four participants out of 82 (4.9%) had only a diploma, whereas 35 (42.7 %), the largest group in the sample, possessed a bachelor's degree.

### **6.3 Descriptive analysis of responses**

The questionnaire was designed to collect data on the role of UNESCO, the relationship with Oman and many issues regarding culture, heritage and cultural diplomacy. The first question judged how much the respondent was engaged with UNESCO activities and programmes. It is a 4-point scale question ranging between 0 (never) and 5 or more. The next five questions were Yes/No questions about concepts related to natural and cultural heritage, tangible and intangible heritage, and cultural diversity. All of the questions from 7 to 34 were measured on a 5-point scale, from 'Strongly disagree': 1 to 'Strongly Agree': 5. I chose this type of Likert scale instead of 7 (or more) scales as it is widely used in social research and many researchers recommend it because it is clearly understandable to participants, allowing them to easily express their points of view. It minimizes participants' *'frustration level'* when using a large set of questions (Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Marton-Williams, 1986). In addition, as Alan Mead concludes in answer to the question: "Should we use a 5 or 7 point Likert scale? What's better?", there is no 'big difference' between different Likert scales and so this 5–point scale is suitable (Casado, 2015).

The questionnaire is initially conceptualized to measure a number of cultural concepts highlighted by UNESCO. The questions are then distributed to measure some of the attitudes and values of the respondents.

In the following section, the results will be presented as a descriptive analysis of all responses by sub-topic, including other relevant questions, so the analysis does not strictly follow the numerical sequence of the questions.

### **6.4 Cultural diversity**

6. I have heard about the concept of cultural diversity.

9. UNESCO has succeeded in enhancing cultural diversity in member states, including the Sultanate of Oman.

16. Most of the documents and periodicals issued by UNESCO are in English and French only, which is contrary to the principles of UNESCO in terms of supporting cultural diversity and multilingualism.

29. The Sultanate of Oman is internationally recognized for its cultural and biological diversity, but national efforts to protect, support and develop this diversity are still inadequate.

As shown above, there were four statements that set out views related to the theme of 'cultural diversity'. It is important to mention here that there is no connection between one question and another; every question attempted to highlight an aspect which had emerged from the literature and current debates about cultural diversity, and this approach is the same for subsequent sections. Regarding Q6 'the meaning of cultural diversity', all participants except one (n=81, 98.8%) said that they recognized the concept and knew its meaning. Only one participant said they had not heard of the concept before. The results show that cultural diversity is generally recognised as a concept but that is not the same as having a clear definition or a consensus on what it means. The respondents know that the concept comes from UNESCO perspective and so they assume that it is the same as the official UNESCO definition. This assumption is true, I surmise, for all five conceptual questions.

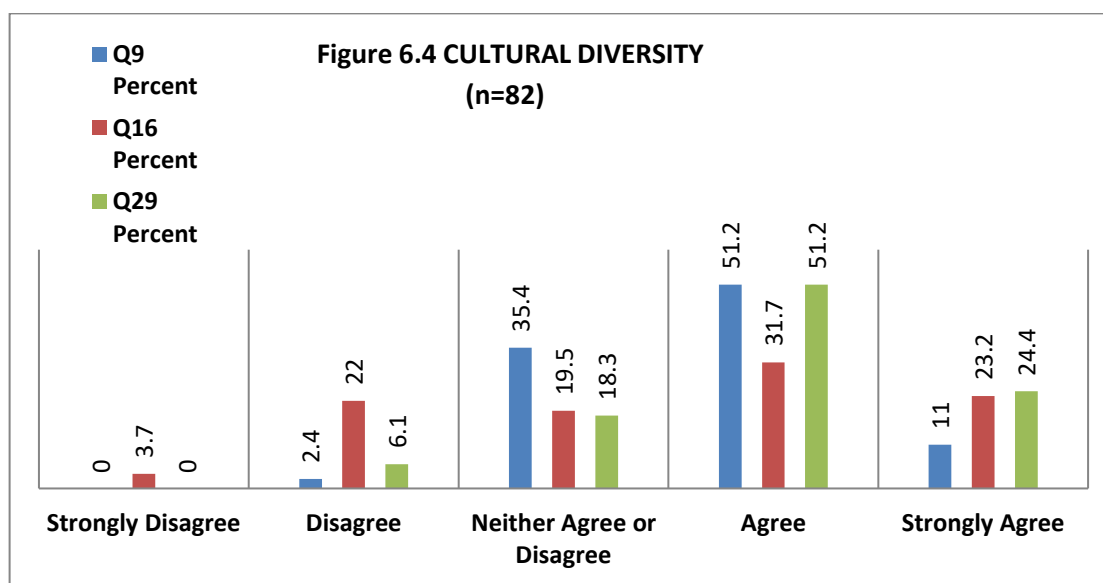
Questions 9, 16 & 29 were measured by asking the sample members to decide their agreement or disagreement according to a 5 point Likert scale. The results are shown in Figure 6.4.

Q9, '*UNESCO has succeeded in enhancing cultural diversity in member states, including the Sultanate of Oman*', (n=51, 62.2%) confirmed the success of UNESCO (either 'strongly agree' 11% or 'agree' 51.2%). Only two (2.4%) disagreed with the statement, while 29 (35.4%) were not sure. As it can be simply seen here, there is a low negative response but a significant proportion of undecided responses. This is possibly because the question extends beyond Oman.

On the other hand, the finding of Q16, which was about *the contradiction between the principles of UNESCO in terms of supporting cultural diversity and multilingualism*, showed that more than half of the sample (n=45, 54.9%) agreed with the idea of the gap

existing between the principles and the reality in enhancing cultural diversity. A total of 21 participants did not agree with the thesis and 16 were not sure.

Regarding the last question of this section (Q29: *the inadequacy between Oman's international acknowledgment in the field of cultural and biological diversity, and national efforts in this field*), about 3/4 accepted the statement with (1/4, n=20, 24.4% 'Strongly agree' and 2/4, n=42, 51.2% 'Agree'). Only 5 participants did not accept the idea and 15 were undecided.



## 6.5 Tangible Heritage

4. Regarding kinds of heritage, I have heard about the concept of 'tangible heritage'.

19. I am familiar with the universal criteria established in the UNESCO 1972 Convention (OUV), that have to be met by any heritage site, to qualify for the World Heritage List.

23. The main reason for Oman's success in safeguarding the heritage and environment is the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

25. Much remains to be done in the preservation of Omani tangible and intangible heritage.

26. The Sultanate has four heritage sites listed on the World Heritage List to date. In my view, this situation does not reflect the wealth of the Omani heritage, as we must have more World Heritage sites.

The survey questionnaire included five statements about different things related to tangible heritage. To be specific, three out of five questions (4, 19 & 26) are directly related to tangible heritage, but the other two (23 & 25) are for both kinds of heritage. Again, the questions started with the concept of 'Tangible heritage' in Q4. The results showed that (n=76, 92.7%) claimed to recognize and understand the meaning of 'tangible heritage', which is a slightly less than for the 'cultural diversity' concept. Only six participants out of 82 had not heard of it before.

The findings also indicate that there is a positive relationship between the ordinal variable (Qualification) and this question (Q4): (0.223), and a negative relationship between the ordinal variable (Department) and the same question: (- 0.293) using Spearman Correlation Coefficient. This result is logical. It emphasizes that the higher the scientific qualification, the more familiar the sample with the concepts under study, which is here the concept of tangible heritage. The other aspect of the same question is its relationship to the Department variable. This finding confirms that the most familiar with this concept is the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and the least is the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science. It is reasonable for this result to happen. The sample members of the National Commission are more likely than others to hear concepts of UNESCO as it is the nature of their work with UNESCO.

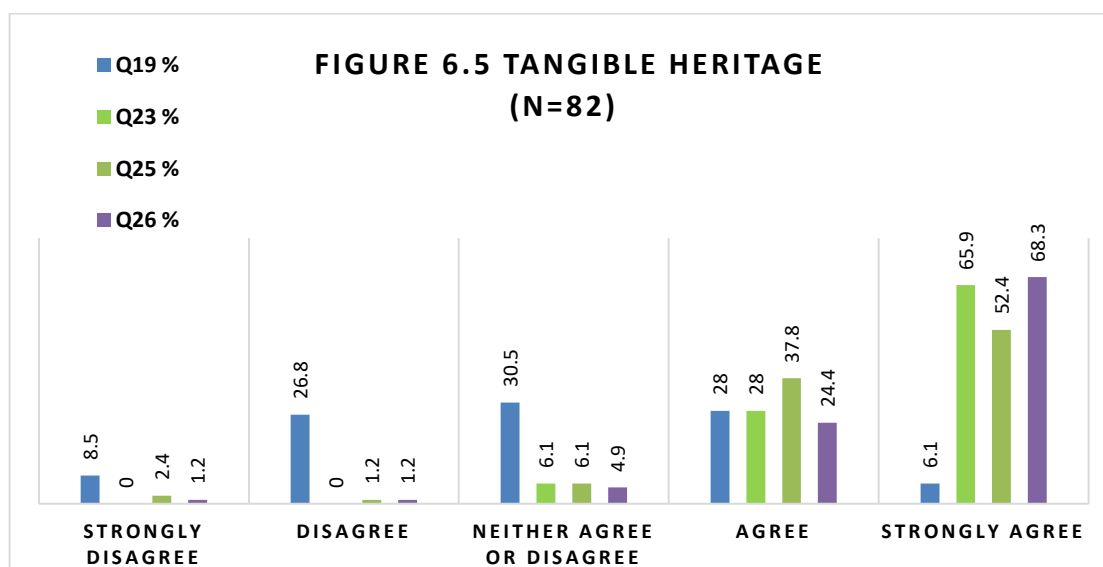
As summarized in Figure 6.5, the results of the five other questions regarding tangible heritage generally noted a higher acceptance rate and a lower rejection, which is sometimes as low as one or zero. Regarding Q19: familiarity with *the universal criteria established in the UNESCO 1972 Convention (OUV), that have to be met by any heritage site, to qualify for the World Heritage List*, it had the lowest number of agreements (n=28, 34.2%). The rate of disagreements (n=29, 35.3%) and 30.5% for the rest was similar. These responses show the most divergence of any of the questions in the questionnaire. The lowest number of agreements for this sentence probably comes from the lack of awareness of those world standards involved in the issues of tangible heritage by the concerns themselves. These outstanding universal values are complex, and only need to be discussed when preparing a new file to list in the WHC, to take into consideration when preparing this file (see chapter 3 page 57).

Questions 23 and 25 refer to heritage in general, which includes tangible and intangible together. Therefore, both sets of responses will be discussed here, and there is no need for repetition when moving to the intangible heritage section. The findings of Q23, which is about whether the success of the Sultanate in preserving its heritage reflects the

wise leadership of the Sultan or there was no relation, indicated that only five participants were not sure against (n=77, 93.9%) who accepted this hypothesis. There were no disagreements for this question at all. The finding agrees with the literature review (See chapter 2 page 12) that the modern renaissance of Oman under the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos has the greatest credit for the Sultanate's successes in all fields. We have some non-Omanis on the sample who may have chosen the undecided answers due to their short period living in Oman to witness this new renaissance.

The next question, Q25, was designed to measure respondents' satisfaction with the efforts made to preserve Omani tangible and intangible heritage so far. About 90% of the sample said that much remains to be done in this field (between 52.4% 'strongly agree' and 37.8% 'agree'). Only three participants (3.6%) did not accept the statement and (6.2% showed undecided answers). This may indicate that they are satisfied with the work done so far or that they are at the top of their institutions' pyramid, and they hesitate to criticize themselves.

The last question in this group was Q26, which was, to some extent, an extension of the previous issue about the national effort made so far in safeguarding heritage. It asks about the extent to which the participant is satisfied with the Sultanate's international position in the field of listing tangible heritage sites in the World Heritage List (WHL). There was some increase in the number of agreements (n=76, 92.7%) compared with the previous question. They concurred that it is not enough for Oman to have only four sites at WHL at the time when the questionnaire was administered. (Now the Omani tangible sites are five after the *Qalhat* site was listed in August 2018). Only two participants showed disagreement whereas four others were undecided.



## 6.6 Intangible heritage

5. Regarding kinds of heritage, I have heard about the concept of 'intangible heritage'.

20. It is difficult to identify intangible cultural heritage with a single country.

23. The main reason for Oman's success in safeguarding the heritage and environment is the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

25. Much remains to be done in the preservation of Omani tangible and intangible heritage.

27. With regard to the intangible cultural heritage, the Sultanate of Oman has seven symbols on the list of intangible cultural heritage of mankind so far. Given the short period of inclusion of these sites (about 10 years), I believe that Oman is fortunate in listing this number.

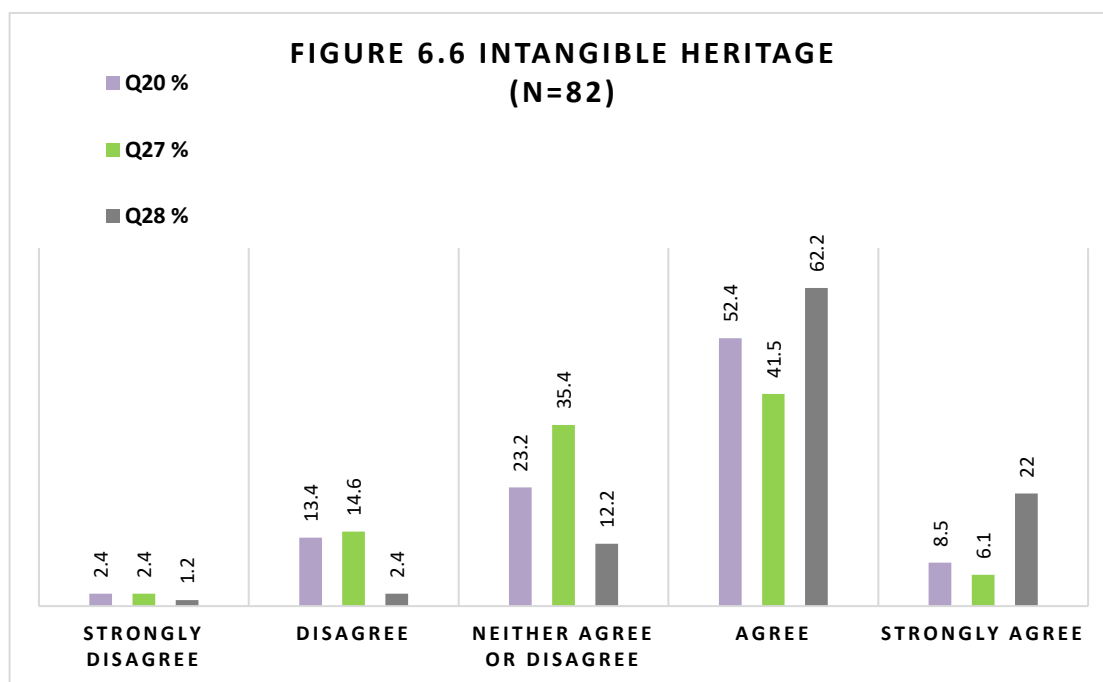
28. One of the positive aspects of intangible cultural heritage is that it explores the symbols of common heritage among nations, which helps to discover the long past that brings these nations together and establishes new common links and relationships.

The third group of questions includes six questions under the 'intangible heritage' section (two of them, namely 23 & 25, are shared with the last section 'tangible heritage' and have already been discussed).

As usual, questions in this section began with one about the concept of 'intangible heritage' in Q5. Almost all of the participants, except three, ( $n = 79$ , 96.3%) recognized the meaning of this kind of heritage, which is slightly higher (with three more participants) than tangible heritage. The findings also propose a positive relationship between the ordinal variable (Department) and Q5 using ORDINAL Biserial correlation coefficient: -0.235. Since Biserial correlation coefficient cannot be found using SPSS, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used. The same discussion that applied to the previous question (Q4) concerning the concept of tangible heritage and its relationship with the Department can be applied to this question as well.

Figure 6.6 presents the findings of questions: 20, 27 and 28 respectively. Question 20 attempted to assess the extent to which the participant is aware of the issue of states

sharing some intangible heritage's symbols and the difficulty of identifying the origin in some cases, '*It is difficult to identify intangible cultural heritage with a single country*'. More than half (n=50, 60.9%) of the participants believed in the truth of the statement, while 13 (15.8%) did not believe and 19 were not sure. The majority of believers of this assumption may have known or heard about the common ICH files between Oman and some neighbor countries (four so far), or, as we have mentioned before, they think from the UNESO perspective. But this is not a particular issue for Oman; rather is true for all countries with common cultures (See Appendix 9 page 248).



Q27 is similar to Q26 on tangible heritage, about a participant's satisfaction with the Sultanate's international position in the field of listing Omani intangible cultural heritage elements in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. There were 39 agreements (47.6%), 14 disagreements (17.0%) and 29 undecided responses (35.4%) to the statement. The formulation of the phrase was based on the success of the Sultanate so far in listing its intangible elements with UNESCO: 'Oman is fortunate in listing seven symbols of intangible cultural heritage in the world list'. Therefore, the results are as expected, and consistent with the results of question 26, that the Sultanate should increase its efforts to list its cultural symbols globally, as it is famous for its wealth of heritage sites, both tangible and intangible.

Question 28 tried to explore the same issue as in Q20, which is the universal nature of intangible heritage compared with tangible heritage. Q28 asks about the benefits of ICH in exploring common heritage among nations. The findings of this question reveal that the majority (69 participants out of 82, 84.2%) gave a positive response (62.2% 'Agree' and



22.0% 'strongly agree'). On the other hand, only three (n=3, 3.6%) participants argued and 12.2% others were not sure.

## 6.7 Cultural and natural heritage

2. Regarding kinds of heritage, I have heard about the concept of 'cultural heritage'.

3. Regarding kinds of heritage, I have heard about the concept of 'natural heritage'.

Two further concepts in the culture sector were explored: how familiar participants are with '*cultural heritage*' and '*natural heritage*'. As it is obvious from the questions, these are conceptual questions of Yes or No answers. Thus, they measure knowledge and have nothing to do with attitudes. This is measured by the following questions from both the questionnaire and the interviews. The previous two concepts of heritage (tangible and intangible) are under cultural heritage, whereas natural heritage is about environment. By comparing all of the above five concepts, it is evident that the majority of participants have heard about these world concepts, but the lowest number of participants are those who heard about the concepts of 'natural heritage'. Almost all participants except one heard about 'cultural heritage' (98.8%), while only (n=71, 86.6 %) heard about 'natural heritage'. This finding appears to be somewhat logical, since the targeted sample of the questionnaire were employees in sectors related to culture rather than environment, except one ministry, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs.

In the study of the correlation coefficients between these two questions and the variables of the study (Age, Gender, Nationality, Department), the results did not show any relation with Q2. Whereas for Q3, there is a small positive relationship between the ordinal variable (Gender) and Q3 using Biserial Correlation Coefficient: (0.232). Moreover, there is a negative significant relationship between the ordinal variable (Age) and Q3 using Spearman Correlation Coefficient: (-.319). This means that females are more aware of the concept of natural heritage than males, even though only 6 of them out of 23 (26%) answered 'yes'. Moreover, the younger sample members are more aware of this concept than the older ones.

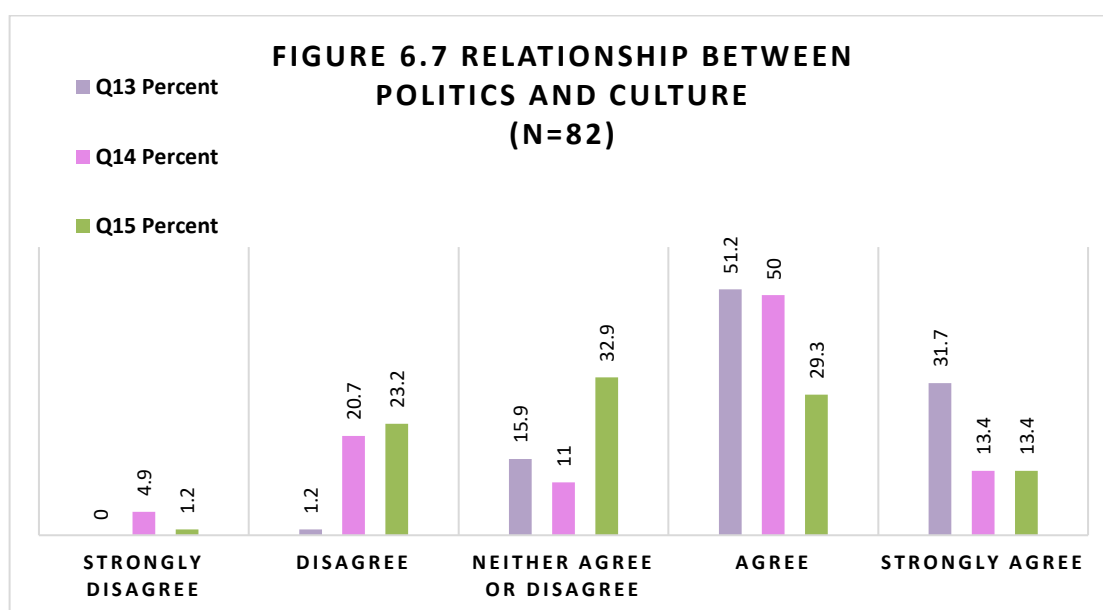
## 6.8 Relationship between politics and culture

13. Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in the success of relations between countries.

14. Culture cannot be separated from politics and therefore cultural issues may overlap with political issues.

15. UNESCO is similar to the rest of the United Nations organizations in that it is run by the world's great powers.

This section 'relationship between politics and culture' involves 3 questions that attempted to measure how politics is linked to cultural issues within UNESCO. The results are shown in Figure 6.7. Q13 is about the role of cultural diplomacy: Does *Cultural diplomacy play an important role in the success of relations between countries?* The findings showed that there was a wide belief (n= 68, 82.9%) that the answer of the question is 'yes' with 51.2 percent saying 'Agree' and 31.7 percent 'Strongly agree'. Only one participant did not believe in that and (n=13, 15.9%) were undecided. Regarding Q14, about the inevitability of overlapping cultural issues with politics, the results reveal that about 2/3 of the study sample (n=52, 63.4%) agreed with the statement, while (n=21, 25.6%) disagreed and (n=9, 11.0%) were not sure. The last question in this section, Q15, was about the world's great powers (politics) influence in UNESCO (culture). It revealed that participants' agreement to this sentence is just 42.7 percent, which is considered to be somewhat convincing due to the sensitivity of the question. About a quarter of the sample disagreed (n=20, 24.4%) and a 1/3 of the participants (n=27, 32.9%) were undecided.



## 6.9 International role of UNESCO

10. UNESCO is instrumental in involving civil society institutions of Member States in its various activities and programs.

17. UNESCO has largely succeeded in reducing the digital divide among Member States.

18. UNESCO is making great efforts to preserve cultural heritage of all kinds and is successful in this work.

21. I believe that UNESCO is successful in its areas of education, culture, science and communication

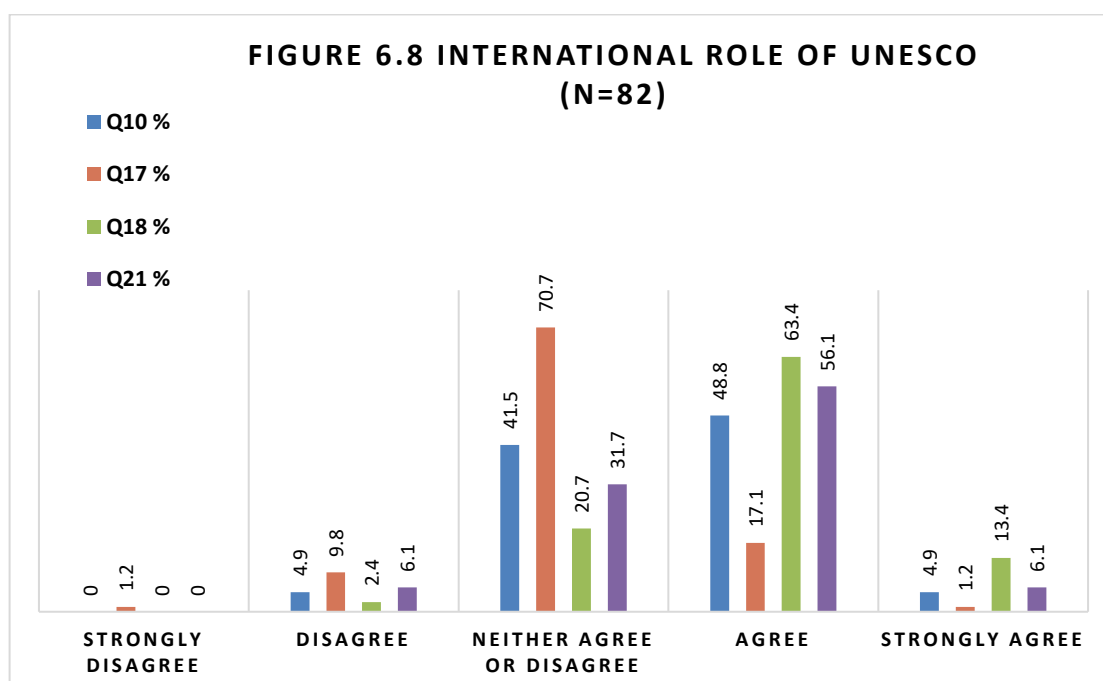
The sixth sub-section questions refer to the international role of UNESCO. As shown in Figure 6.8, there were four questions in this area which tried to evaluate how successful UNESCO is in its fields of work. Q10 was about the involvement of civil society in Member States in UNESCO's programs and activities. Just four members of the sample (4.9%) thought that UNESCO is not effective in involving civil society, compared to more than the half (n=44, 53.7%) who agreed that UNESCO is effective in this aspect. Much more than one third of the sample (n=34, 41.5%) were not sure.

On the other hand, Q17 was about UNESCO's role in reducing the digital divide among Member States. It is known that the huge and growing inequalities between poor and rich States in access to information technologies (ICTs) creates a gap which threatens whole regions. Therefore, "Mindful both of the potentials of ICTs and of the dangers of marginalization of those without access to it, UNESCO has developed a long-term strategy to mend and bridge the worldwide digital divide" (UNESCO website, accessed on 26/9/2018). The findings reveal only 15 participants (18.3%) who believe that UNESCO has succeeded and nine others (11.0%) who believe that it has not. The high percentage of undecided (70.7) was unexpected. It seems that the concept of 'digital divide' might be not understood by participants, or because it is far from the culture field of the targeted study. The figure probably suggests a lack of knowledge or understanding of the digital divide issue or an appreciation that it is very complex to understand the role of UNESCO in that way.

The next question, Q18, was about preserving cultural heritage in general. Slightly more than 3/4 of the sample (76.8%) trust in UNESCO' role to preserve world heritage, while 2.4% disagree and slightly more than 1/5 (20.7%) stand in the middle.

Q21 was put to evaluate the role of UNESCO in general and how successful UNESCO is in its fields of work, namely: Education, Culture, Science and Communication. The findings of this core question revealed that well over half (n=51, 62.2%) said that the organization has succeeded. Only five participants (6.1%) disagreed with that belief and 26 (31.7%) were undecided.

By examining the relationship between these questions together under a group called (UNESCO-Positive) and the variables of the study, it was found that there is a positive significant relationship between the ordinal variable (Age) and UNESCO-Positive using Spearman Correlation Coefficient: (0.260). Older participants have a more positive view of the roles played by the organization than younger participants. This may be due to the accumulated experience of these respondents and the linking of the roles of UNESCO to the financial and technical constraints and limitations that affected the Organization during this period.



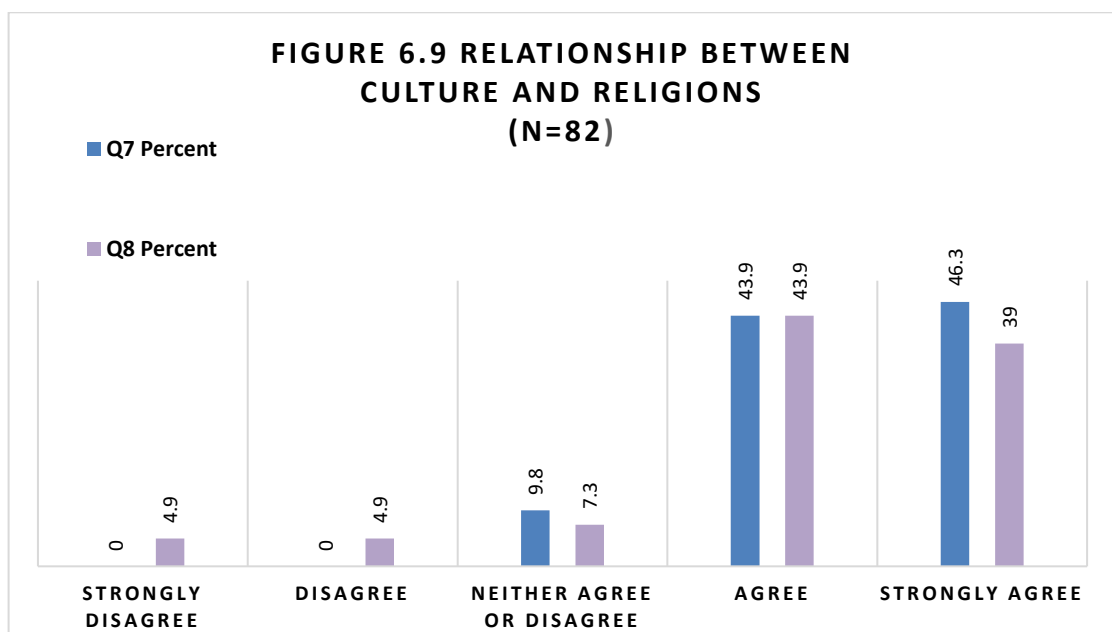
## 6.10 Relationship between culture and religions

7. The major world religions, including Islam, promote 'cultural diversity' and they are not in conflict with it.

8. "Religion" is an integral part of the "culture" of society and not the opposite.

In the literature review stage, the issue of the relationship between culture and religions emerged because Omani society is still a conservative (religious) society on the one hand, and because much debate exists over the relationship between religion and culture and the conflict of religions with the issue of cultural diversity, which is the focus of this study.. So, this sub-section includes two questions, both about this sort of relationship. Q7 was about the relationship between religions and 'cultural diversity' in particular. Do *the major world religions, including Islam*, promote 'cultural diversity'? As shown in Figure 6.9, the results show no negative responses at all, and the percent of participants who confirmed this statement was 90.2% (36 participants 'Agree' and 38 'strongly Agree'). Only 9.8% of the participants were not sure. As has been discussed in chapter 2 this result and these responses can be understood in the context of Ibadhi traditions of tolerance and giving priority to public interest over private interests (See chapter 2 page 31).

On the other hand, Q8 was a rather philosophical question about the relationship between religion and culture in terms of how they are related. *"Religion" is an integral part of the "culture" of society and not the opposite*'. The findings were closely similar to the previous question. The same number (n=36, 43.9%) agreed and a slightly lower number (32, 39.0%) strongly agreed, whereas there were 8 (9.8%) who disagreed and 7.3% were undecided. It suggests an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards religion which is consistent with the previous outcome in terms of the Omani perception of the concept of religion, as a pure national-level understanding. There will be more discussion about this relational issue in chapter 7 and 8.



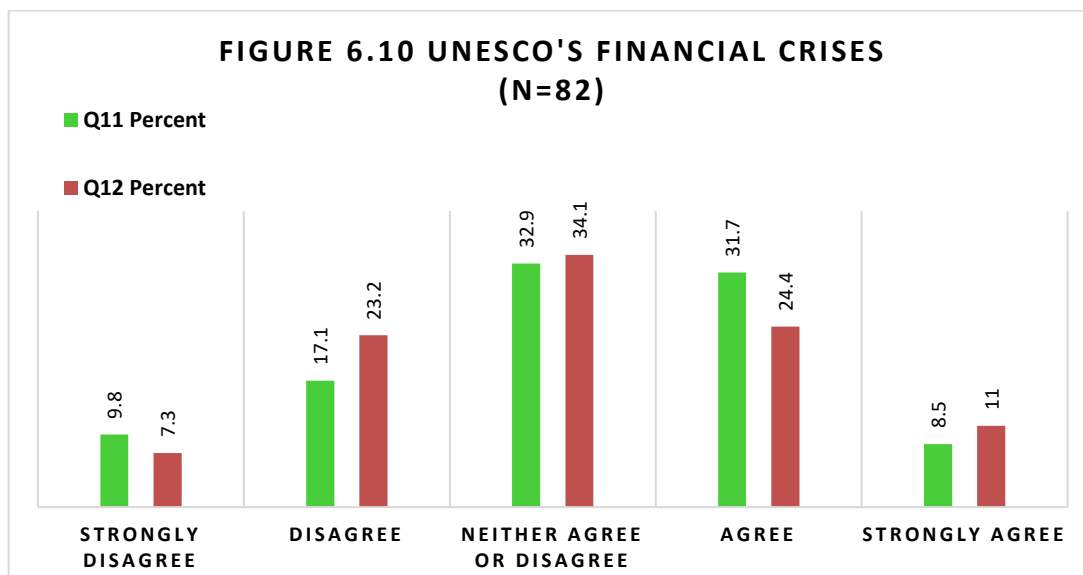
## 6.11 UNESCO's financial crisis

11. I have heard of the financial crisis of UNESCO that started in 2011.

12. I felt the negative effects of the financial crisis of UNESCO within the framework of my work in the current institution.

As shown in the literature review (see for example pp71-72), UNESCO's financial crisis is determined to be one of the critical conditions that is affecting the work of UNESCO to this day. Two questions were asked about this special financial crisis of UNESCO: Q11 was about to what extent the participant has heard of it, and Q12 was about the degree of feeling it at work. As described in Figure 6.12, Q11's findings show that 33 out of 82 (40.2%) participants had heard about the financial crisis in UNESCO, while 22 (26.9%) were not aware of it, and the rest (32.9%) were not sure.

For Q12, the responses are similar to the previous question. Just above the third (n=29, 35.4%) had felt the negative effects of UNESCO's financial crisis at work. On the other hand, 25 participants (30.5%) said they had not experienced it, while more than one-third of the sample (n=28, 34.1%) were uncommitted. By studying if there is any correlation between these questions and the study variables, the results show a negative relationship between the ordinal variable (Department) and Q12 using ORDINAL Biserial correlation coefficient : (-0.261). This means that the most affected by UNESCO's financial crisis is the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and the least affected by this financial crisis is the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, as it is a supporter and not waiting for the funding of UNESCO to implement its programs, as clearly stated by its representative in the research interview, which will be described in the next chapter. The ONCECS is more affected probably because of the suspension of the UNESCO's contribution program that serves the programs of the institutions deal with it (Chapter 4, p73).



## 6.12 The Oman National Commission (ONCECS)

1. How many times have you participated in activities organized by UNESCO or the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture & Science?

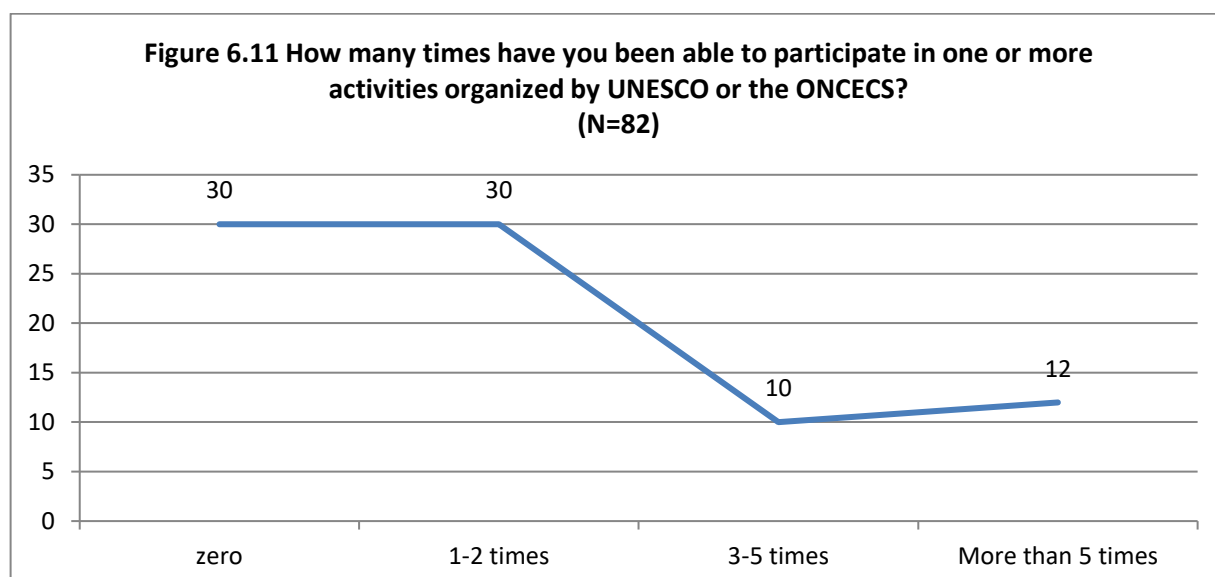
32. I have heard about the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

33. I believe that the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science is doing its best to help the various institutions in Oman to benefit from the expertise of UNESCO and other Arab and Islamic organizations.

As shown in Figure 6.11, Q1, which is about the number of participations in activities organized by UNESCO or the ONCECS, measures four levels participation: 0, 1-2, 3-5 and >5 times. The number of participants who claimed low participation ( $\leq 2$ ) with UNESCO and the ONCECS is large ( $n=60$ , 73.2%), about 3/4 of the sample. Half of them responded with no single participation at all. Only slightly above 1/4 ( $n=22$ , 26.8%) said they have participated more than or equal to three times in activities and programs organized by UNESCO or the ONCECS.

This is might be because the organized events are not attractive or inclusive enough to attract participants, assuming that participation is voluntary. Another possible reason is that the civil servants are rotated quickly between different posts, responsibilities or ministries which results in the emergence of new staff constantly.

After studying the relationship between this question and other study variables statistically, it is found that there is a relatively negative significant relationship (-.296-) between the ordinal variable (department) and Q1 using ORDINAL Biserial correlation coefficient. The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to find the approximate value of the Biserial correlation coefficient since Biserial correlation coefficient cannot be found using SPSS. This finding is consistent with the findings from previous questions in that National Commission for Education, Culture and Science participants are more likely to participate in UNESCO's activities and programmes than others. This makes sense as the Commission is the official representative of the organization in the Sultanate of Oman. However, there is no relation between the age of participants and this question. This finding confirms that probably the activities of the National Commission and UNESCO are targeted at all ages and there is no bias in favour of one age group over another.

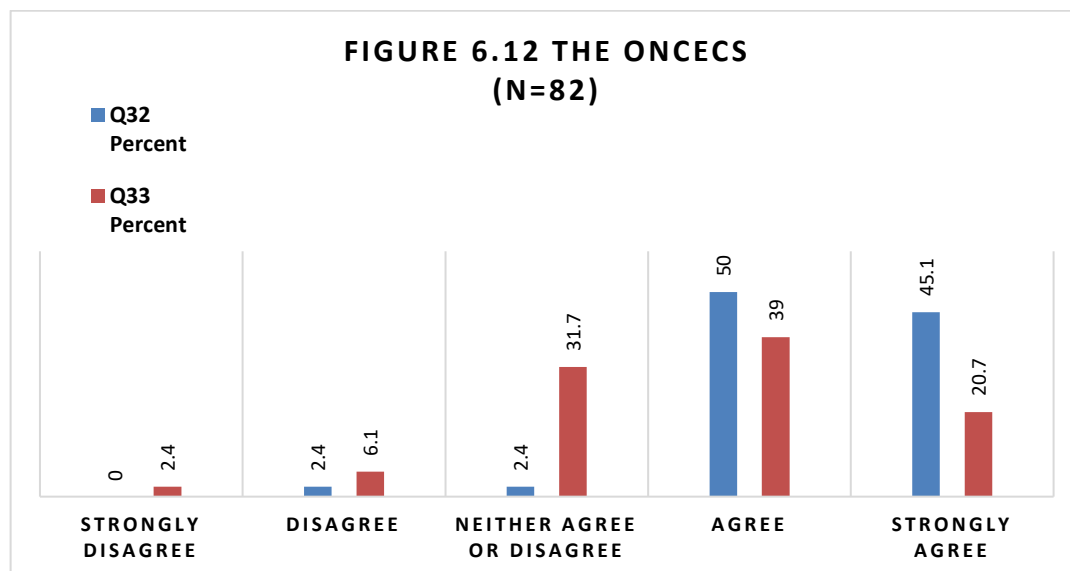


For Q32 and Q33, the five degrees scale of agreement is used. Q32 was about whether the participant had heard about the ONCECS or not. Only two participants (2.4%) said that they had not heard about it, and two more were undecided. A total of 78 out of 82 (95.1%) had heard about the ONCECS, which means that it is known locally even though the participants in its activities were relatively few.

On the other hand, Q33 is about measuring the level of participants' satisfaction with the work carried out by the ONCECS in its fields of work. Approximately 60% (n=49) of the sample believed that it is doing its best while only 8.5% (n=7) had the opposite feeling and a large group of 26 participants (31.7%) stayed in the middle. There is likely to be a relation between this question and Question 1 on the number of participants, since those who have



not participated in the activities of the ONCECS and UNESCO are expected to be unable to assess the level of their satisfaction with the work carried out by the ONCECS in its fields of work. The results are presented in Figure 6.12.



### 6.13 Oman and UNESCO relationship

24. The Sultanate of Oman could have achieved the same success in heritage preservation without the help of UNESCO.

30. The cultural scene in Oman has developed significantly over the past 47 years.

31. One of the most important reasons for the development of the cultural scene in Oman is the international experience and international organizations to which the Sultanate has joined, including UNESCO

34. In general, I think that the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO is excellent.

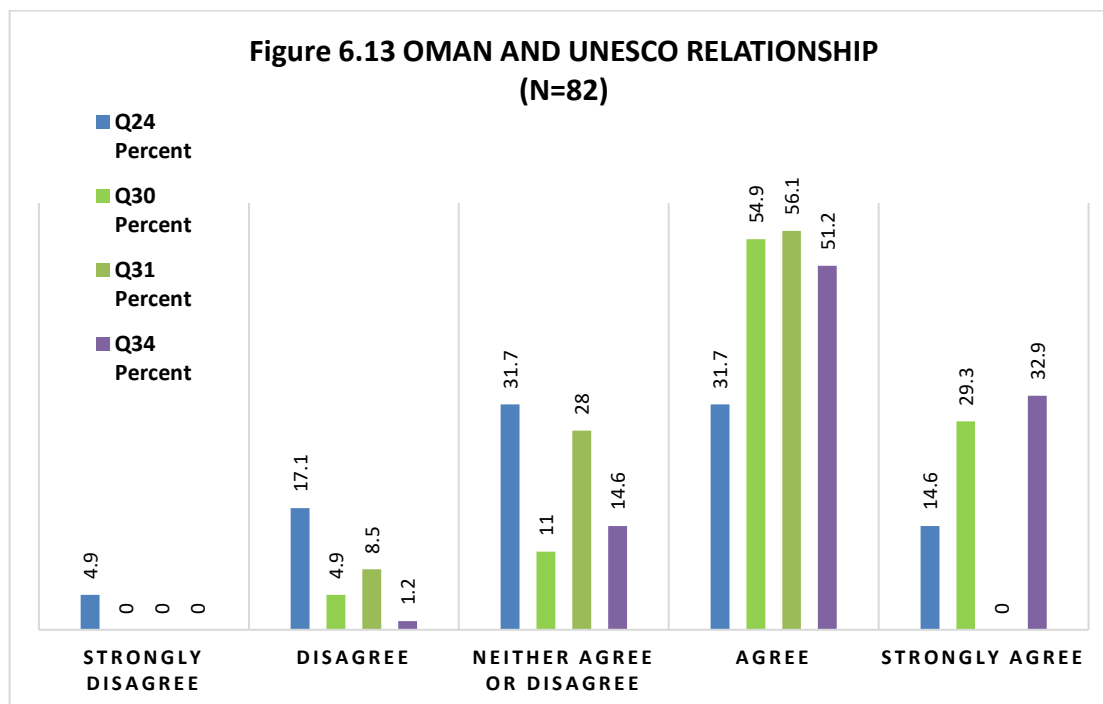
In fact, all of the previous questions are related to this sub-section because the study of the relationship between Oman and UNESCO (especially in the cultural field) is the goal of the study as a whole. However, these four questions in this sub-section were chosen as they have a direct relation to each other. Q24 attempted to access participants' extent of feeling towards Oman's work in heritage preservation by linking it to the work of UNESCO within

the Sultanate. Could Oman have the same success in heritage preservation without the help of UNESCO?

From Figure 6.16, the results show that just below half of the participants (n=38, 46.3% (31.7% agree & 14.6% strongly agree) confirmed the statement. On the other hand, (n=18, 22.0%) did not agree and another sizeable proportion (n=26, 31.7%) were undecided. For Q30, which is about the development of the cultural scene in Oman since 1970, the findings show a strong agreement (n=69, 84.2%) with the statement. Whereas, only four participants (4.9%) disagreed and nine others (11.0%) were undecided.

Q31 stays with the same issue as the previous question, 'the development of cultural scene in Oman' but shifts to the role of international organizations (including UNESCO). The results show that 63.4% (n=52) said that the success regarding that issue in Oman is related to UNESCO. The remainder of 36.5 disagreed (n=7, 8.5%), with (n=23, 28.0%) undecided.

The last question in this section and in the questionnaire was Q34, which was put to evaluate respondents' satisfaction with the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO in general, 'I think that the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO is excellent'. Only one participant disagreed with the statement while another 12 people (14.6%) were undecided. The highest proportion of the sample (n=68, 84.1%) accepted that the relationship is excellent (51.2% 'agree' & 32.9% 'strongly agree'). This finding supports the literature review (see Chapter 4 page 107 ) which generally points to the success of the Oman-UNESCO relationship in the cultural field.



## 6.14 Summary

This chapter has presented the descriptive results from all questions, together with correlations between selected variables. It highlighted the main results of the questionnaire according to the 34 questions classified into different sub-sections, and demographic variables (five variables). Several findings have emerged in this chapter, which need to be further explained and analysed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

One of the main results of the study is the willingness to accept key UNESCO terminologies like 'cultural diversity', 'tangible heritage' and 'intangible heritage'. The respondents know that the concept comes from the UNESCO perspective and so they assume that it is the same as the official UNESCO definition.

In general, there are positive views of UNESCO among the respondents. They are satisfied with the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO and describe it as 'excellent'. It is not a coincidence for the Omanis to have a good attitude towards UNESCO. As it has been discussed in Chapter 4, even though Oman is a small country with a small population, its relations with all organisations are effective. The Sultanate often exploits opportunities to strengthen ties with these organisations, especially UNESCO, for the principles of these international organisations calling for peace, non-violence, support for cultural diversity, preservation of heritage and other global issues are the same principles that Oman has always advocated and worked on in all regional and international forums.

In addition, there is a strong consensus over the positive role of the late Sultan Qaboos. The findings confirm that the greatest credit for of Oman's successes in all fields is given to the modern renaissance of Oman under the reign of the late Sultan. The majority of the study sample also claim that some of the success in Oman is due to UNESCO. It means that without the assistance of UNESCO, the Sultanate would lose a lot of its efforts to preserve its rich heritage as well as many works related to the different fields in which the Sultanate is working in cooperation with the Organization. However, the respondents say that Oman should increase its efforts to list its cultural symbols globally, as it is famous for its wealth of tangible heritage sites and intangible heritage elements.

Another core finding of the survey, which goes counter to this researcher's expectations, is the large percentage (three quarters) of respondents who claim low participation (sometimes none at all) with UNESCO and the ONCECS. As discussed above, this might be because the targeted population for the questionnaire is people who are not among decision-makers or leaders, whereas most programmes are aimed at these kinds of employees. In addition, the process of building a network of local experts in various fields makes it essential for the leaders to delegate the same persons each time requiring participation in UNESCO's various activities, thereby reducing the participating opportunities for the rest.

The findings showed that the ONCECS could not be placed in the dock in respect of the non-participation of respondents in the activities and programs of UNESCO. A result showed that (95.1%) of the study sample had heard about the ONCECS, and (60%) of them believed that it is doing its best.

There was another aspect in the survey investigating the relation between the major world religions, including Islam, and promoting 'cultural diversity' as a very important concept in the study. The importance of this issue emerged through the study of literature, some of which said that UNESCO attempts to marginalize religions in its work (see Chapter 3 page 61). The results will be discussed in depth in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 as the interviews give a fuller account of these kinds of sensitive points. However, a majority of Omani respondents claimed that religions do promote cultural diversity. The result can be understood in the context of Ibadhi traditions of tolerance and giving priority to public interest over private interests.

Finally, regarding the involvement of civil society of Member States in UNESCO's programs and activities, more than the half (n=44, 53.7%) agreed that UNESCO is effective in involving it in its activities. This means that despite the extensive literature review on UNESCO's

neglect in involving civil society institutions in its plans and programmes, as an organization dealing with governments rather than individuals, participants have seen the activation of civil institutions by the organization recently. This may be due to UNESCO's effort to contain and overcome the financial crisis since 2011 and to seek extra-budgetary contributions by involving civil society organizations.

After discussing the results of the questionnaire, a further analysis will take place during the next two chapters on the results of the interviews. The next chapter (Chapter 7) will focus on Paris interviews while chapter 8 will present the results of the Muscat interviews, so that a kind of a comprehensive analysis will be done during the last chapter of this study.

## **Chapter 7. Institutional Voices I: UNESCO**

### **7.1. Introduction**

UNESCO, as a major multilateral actor, facilitates collective cultural diplomacy. One of its top priorities is to preserve cultural heritage in various parts of the world. The focus of this chapter is the perspectives found among UNESCO officials and representatives on a number of key questions relating to culture, as revealed in the research interviews. The chapter consists of two main parts. The first part clarifies some basic terms in the UNESCO lexicon through the comments of officials. The concepts include cultural diplomacy, cultural diversity, similarities and differences between culture and religion, tangible and intangible and underwater cultural heritages, and civil society. It also analyses the roles that UNESCO plays in relation to member states concerning the above-mentioned issues. The presentation includes comments on the effectiveness of UNESCO in carrying out its role. The second part of the chapter attempts to identify the basic weaknesses or obstacles UNESCO faces in discharging its responsibilities. Since it would not be feasible to scrutinize all the relevant obstacles UNESCO encounters in its day to day activities, only those which are explicitly identified by our respondents and critical for UNESCO's proper functioning are emphasized.

### **7.2. UNESCO's view on some conceptual issues**

#### *7.2.1 Cultural diplomacy*

Diplomacy is defined as an instrument or tool that a state or government uses to manage international relations and cement the ties with other countries through such means as broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth (Nye, 2008). Cultural diplomacy on the other hand, is referred to as "... the processes occurring when diplomats serving national governments took recourse to cultural exchanges and flows or sought to channel them for the advancement of their perceived national interests" (Ang, Isar, and Mar, 2015: 366).

At UNESCO, cultural soft power and cultural diplomacy are used interchangeably to define "... a form of soft power that strives to foster the exchange of views and ideas, promote knowledge of other cultures, and build bridges between communities. Ultimately, it

seeks to promote a positive vision of cultural diversity, highlighting it as a source of innovation, dialogue and peace” (UNESCO)<sup>14</sup>. The key to establishing peace is tolerance and respect.

In addition,

“Analysts made a distinction between such governmentally driven cultural practice and the far less instrumental processes of international cultural relations, which are still based on flows of cultural exchange that take place naturally and organically, without government intervention. While ever increasing numbers of political scientists and cultural analysts are researching cultural diplomacy, their attention is directed mainly at phenomena and processes taking place at the governmental level, between and among nation-states. This form of ‘methodological nationalism’ has led to two major lacunae, both of which merit further debate and further research. The first of these is that there is very little direct analysis of the motivations, values and efforts of civil society actors in the field. The second is the relative absence of research on ... the agency of civil society actors” (UNESCO)<sup>15</sup>.

Sama Mustafa (henceforth, Mustafa), Assistant Project Manager, Capacity Building and Heritage Policy Unit - UNESCO, spells out the positive meaning:

“Diplomacy can be referred to as a case of respect. Tolerance and respecting are different from each other especially with UNESCO. Someone can be tolerant to something he/she does not respect merely for the sake of avoiding chaos. In contrast, if a person shows respect to something, he/she does not simply keep distance to harm it but put an effort to improve it”.

Musa Jafar (henceforth, Jafar), Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Delegator of the Sultanate to UNESCO previously - Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Paris, says:

“There are bilateral relations, or bilateral diplomatic work, and there are multilateral relations. Thus, the first type is important for your relationship with UNESCO and its

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/11\\_Info%20Sheet\\_Soft%20Power.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/11_Info%20Sheet_Soft%20Power.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/news/541>

staff, and the second type is also important for your relationship with the Member States through delegates and others”.

Also, it is to be noted that the word ‘diplomacy’ is something abstract and subjective which falls into the domain of social science. So, multiple interpretation is possible. Moreover, one cannot have the same standard for everybody across the globe. Thus, the word ‘respect’ comprehends the broader aspect of ‘diplomacy’ (Isar, 2010), which includes the respect for the individual in the context of their social groups.

### *7.2.2 Cultural diversity*

The terms ‘culture’ and ‘cultural diversity’ are central to UNESCO discourse. Preservation of cultural diversity is one of the core principles of the organization. Diversity in relation to culture can be framed as accepting (respecting) different perspectives, different identities, different approaches, and different belief systems. Cultural diversity is not confined merely to the difference between one person and another but between social groups (see Chapter 3 page 54) Human beings in their social settings are very complicated. So cultural diversity, as articulated by Mustafa (UNESCO),

“... is supposed to represent every facet of differences between and among people. These differences, when one acknowledges and sees each other fully, that is a celebrated cultural diversity.”

This way of thinking, the ability to accept the culture of others which does not conform to one’s preoccupied perception or feeling, seems to imply a progression from tolerance to encounter, to understanding, and to respect. More specifically, cultural diversity is something that everyone embodies, with the capacity to interact with others. Ulrike Guerin (henceforth, Guerin), Programme Specialist, Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section, explains that the existing generation is the progeny of its ancestors and the latter carries the culture of the former. In this sense, human beings are all very diverse although they share a common humanity: “at UNESCO, colleagues see each other first as human beings without recognizing much differences.” However, this does not mean that cultural diversity is not valued. Cultural diversity is extensively practiced at UNESCO and is seen as a positive good. She adds: “it would be extremely boring if the workplace is not diversified culturally”.

It would be very easy to respect others if everyone were the same. The deeper the exchange with people, the more we will know them. This requires interpersonal interaction.



Sitting in the same place provides us with only the limited opportunity to know others who are over there. "If we go out and meet people around, they become our friends. This is one of the building blocks of cultural diversity at UNESCO" (Guerin, UNESCO).

Said Al-Busaidi (henceforth, Al-Busaidi), Director-General of Arts at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, focuses on the institutional distinction between the concept of "cultural diversity" itself and "cultural expressions", which was highlighted in the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. He says:

"[The concept of] cultural expressions is intended for different cultural expressions performed by artists, playwrights, writers, musicians or plastic artists, whereas cultural diversity is intended for groups connected to specific ideas, orientations, religions and environmental conditions, thereby reinforcing these frameworks as a state (of cultural diversity) through the preservation of cultural concepts, lifestyles, etc."

This draws attention to the unending proliferation of styles, genres and performances on the one hand and their social organization on the other. Cultural diversity is about both and there is some potential for uncertainty. Al-Shamakhi Khamis (henceforth, Khamis), Deputy Director-General of Literature at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture supports the same view of Al-Busaidi that there is "confusion among countries, communities, governments or non-governmental organizations regarding the concept of cultural diversity". According to Appignanesi (2010:5),

"The notion of cultural diversity in its current administrative form does not rightly acknowledge that culture within itself is already an assemblage of differences, diverse tendencies and unresolved tensions, but is instead focused primarily on the strains of separation between cultures. I should emphasize that in this view of cultural diversity the strains of disquieting difference come from the 'ethnic minority' cultures, those unsettled and problematic guests in the midst of the host mainstream culture. Mainstream, of course, meaning Western, European and predominantly white; and mainstream also implicitly presuming itself wholly unified and homogeneous. Diversity from this viewpoint is disruptive, an upset of status quo normality, which must somehow be governed so that the mainstream culture can function undisturbed by any threat of 'difference' from the inside".

Cultural diversity is not only about the relationship between people. Mohammed Al-Yaqoubi (henceforth, Al-Yaqoubi), Secretary of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science explains that it is also about 'multiculturalism, norms and affiliations and how to coexist with the environment and the others'; UNESCO distinguishes between the use of the term in 'demographic-descriptive' usage, 'programmatic-political' usage and 'ideological-normative' usage. But it agrees that,

“Acknowledging the existence of ethnic diversity and ensuring the rights of individuals to retain their culture should go hand in hand with enjoying full access to, participation in, and adherence to, constitutional principles and commonly shared values prevailing in the society by acknowledging the rights of individuals and groups and ensuring their equitable access to society” (Georgiadou et al., 2019).

All the above definitions are purely cultural and social perspectives. With the word "cultural" before "diversity" they could hardly suggest anything else. Al-Noufali Humaid (henceforth, Al-Noufali ), Director of the Culture Sector at the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, looks at this concept from an economic point of view: "Diversity [specifically: biodiversity] means wealth, it is an engine of the economy and a foundation of sustainable development". The argument that biodiversity is a source of wealth leads to a discussion of the relation between biodiversity and cultural diversity. They are analogous, as the latter emerged from the former, which suggests similar ways of looking at the word 'diversity'. In the past, it has been common to differentiate between nature and culture, in response to the human desire to control nature. Then thinking and living patterns and ways of dealing and coexistence with nature have developed to include beliefs, languages and other cultural vessels beyond the concept of “natural” diversity.

There was a consensus among the UNESCO interviewees that "cultural diversity" is a relatively new concept for UNESCO. Al-Noufali, for example, pointed out that he did not hear this concept until he joined the Oman National Commission. But Khamis, sees it differently. He explains that "cultural diversity" had existed for many years within UNESCO and only the legal basis is a recent development. Since the 2005 Convention and the diligence of countries, a normative document has existed, and a clear concept and projects for cultural diversity has been established. Khamis adds,

"It is not a concept produced by UNESCO, but UNESCO has helped to give it clear features and a legislative document to which it refers during litigation".

### **7.2.3 Tangible and intangible cultural heritage**

As defined in Chapter 3, page 52, heritage in general is something that is worth preserving, has historic or cultural value, and can be passed from one generation to another. It can be natural or cultural or mixed. According to Harrison (2010:9), “heritage might be understood to be a physical ‘object’: a piece of property, a building or a place that is able to be ‘owned’ and ‘passed on’ to someone else.”. Cultural heritage is composed of tangible artefacts and intangible attributes which have been inherited by a particular society from their ancestors. These types of heritage should be maintained by the current generation to be available to future generations. Cultural heritage can be tangible (TCH) which includes physical establishments such as historic places and constructs, monuments, and artefacts. They are considered worth preserving for their social value, aesthetic worth and economic benefits. On the other hand, intangible culture heritage (ICH) is a particular kind of attribute that includes traditions or living expressions such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices.

Although tangible heritage is visible and hence relatively easy to distinguish, intangible heritage is difficult to identify owing to the lack of physical presence of the attributes. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is a relatively new theme in UNESCO. The first official mention of it was in *World Heritage in Young Hands*, 1998 published by UNESCO as a joint project between ASP and the WHC. A distinctive feature is that it is strictly linked to the life of communities. Francesco Bandarin (henceforth, Bandarin), Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Culture, clarifies the relationship between ICH and community:

“If you have a community, you can always find culture specialists who represent the intangible heritage. The relation between intangible heritage and community cannot be separated. If you don’t have a community, cultural heritage does not exist anymore. It is really linked to the life of communities. It is different from the tangible heritage. You can have tangible heritage but no communities anymore. So, intangible heritage is linked with the community and it is a way that the community expresses itself, the expressions, the rituals and life. We make it very clear that it has to be linked to the life of the community”.

Mustafa (UNESCO) echoes this theme:

“They (communities) are the ones who define it (intangible heritage), they are the ones who identify it, they are the ones who transmit it. They are the ones who

maintain it. It is living heritage. Without the communities there is no heritage.

Hana Qawas (henceforth, Qawas), Culture Sector at the Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO, explains how this affects the registration process:

“Community consent is required as a prerequisite for registration. It is difficult to manipulate such files. The local community is one of the foundations of registration, they must agree to register, and there must be a practice to date for this file”.

It is therefore necessary for the community to agree through the practitioners themselves to complete the forms prepared by UNESCO for this purpose. There is no doubt that the element required to be registered must have a large number of practitioners who demonstrate the history of art or folklore under registration and that it is still practiced by the local community.

Before the 2003 convention, most of the ICH elements were on the masterpiece list. 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' is a proclamation made by UNESCO in 2001 to spread knowledge of the importance of ICH and to encourage people and communities to protect it. When the convention was framed, masterpieces were moved to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity which includes 508 elements corresponding to 122 countries as of December 2018. However, the sensitivity of ICH is that it is sometimes difficult to determine which country a particular ICH element originally belongs to. Several countries may share the same element. In such a case, UNESCO puts it on the nomination file for the country which files for the nomination. For example, Arabic Coffee has a specific nomination file that was nominated to the UNESCO list in 2015 by Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE. Although it may be a misnomer, the title Arabic Coffee does not mean that the coffee originated in Arabia. It means that a particular way of presenting and serving the coffee is practiced only by Arabs. The way of socializing, sitting down and serving a small special cup of coffee are the practices of the Arabic coffee culture which are reflected in the file. UNESCO encourages state parties to share their heritage. Mustafa (UNESCO) illustrates the potential, recalling the famous phrase in the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO:

“Because the main purpose for UNESCO is to build peace in human minds, ICH is a very good tool compared with tangible heritage, which is one site with one country. ICH can be shared. UNESCO says: hey look we have much in common to share. We can share all this rich heritage together”.

The concept of safeguarding between TCH and ICH is different. Countries are responsible or obligated to try and safeguard all TCH in their territory, but not ICH from that country. A state party might declare that it is going to issue a nomination file for a specific ICH. Other state parties, if they believe that they could do so on the national file, can approach the state party that is filing. It means that they can work together as one state party submitting the file on behalf of others, like the Arabic Coffee example mentioned above.

Another issue regarding ICH is ‘manipulating and reinventing heritage’. It occurs when countries or communities attempt to manipulate or cheat by saying that they have a particular kind of ICH (music or folklore or dance, for example) and they apply to list it to the world ICH by simply reinventing or documenting it. Although many people claim that certain countries (particularly with the same land boundaries) have manipulated the evidence to list some ICH elements in the UNESCO list, experts argue that it is difficult to do so. Mustafa (UNESCO) argues that

“The evaluations body consists of NGOs representing the world from different regions, and state party representatives, individuals from different countries. It ensures that the evaluation body has the world perspective in evaluating one file. So, it is very difficult to slip something by someone from all over the world”.

Al-Busaidi adds:

“The rules prevent any possible manipulation, because if the practitioners themselves do not have any real relationship with that art, they will not continue practicing even if you try to reinvent it. They may practice it a day or two or a month or two, but cannot be creative if they do not have it. Nevertheless, States should create national laws to preserve their folklore and intangible cultural heritage”.

To recapitulate this section, both TCH and ICH are testimony to the cultural identity of a country, community, or individual groups. Although TCH is comparatively easier to identify and maintain, doing so for ICH is difficult due to the absence of physical existence of this heritage. It is also reflected in the interviews that ICH may be sometime subject to manipulation particularly, when more than one country practices a particular culture, but a single country applies to the UNESCO for nomination.

#### *7.2.4 Underwater heritage*

One of the special kinds of tangible heritage is underwater heritage which is protected and maintained by a separate convention of UNESCO (The 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage). The 2001 Convention is a blanket to protect all kinds of underwater heritage. Guerin (UNESCO) contends that everything that is a trace of human existence in the water, not necessarily in the ocean but also in rivers or lakes, is underwater culture heritage.

Obviously, UNESCO has limited capacity compared to the scale of world underwater heritage which is estimated to include more than 3 million shipwrecks spread across ocean floors around the planet. Guerin (UNESCO) is realistic in stating how UNESCO tackles this mammoth task: “.... we are very much supported by the professionals working in this area. So, what we have done is to work better with our partners. That is our solution to the problem.” Moreover, UNESCO undertakes various capacity building initiatives including training programmes for ecologists. It has invested about US\$2 million in training and capacity building. Despite this, Guerin (UNESCO) continues:

“We cannot arrange a training in full for all underwater ecologists, but we can do two weeks introduction, more on management and protection and these kinds of things. If you want to be an underwater ecologist, you have to go to university. So, we have built a university network with about 20 universities. Basically, not so many universities have underwater ecology in their offer. But those who have this programme on offer are cooperating with us officially in the unit network”.

Regarding Oman, Al-Busaidi clarifies that

“Oman is not yet a member of the 2001 Convention, but it is on the way to ratify it. We have a quite big progress in this regard, although we are not yet a member of this convention. We have an underwater archeology programme. We have succeeded in discovering the remnants of the ship of Vasco di Gama in our territorial waters, a common heritage between us and Portugal”.

The importance of underwater archeology is immense due to the fact that it connects the existing communities to the past. However, locating and preserving underwater heritage are relatively difficult tasks. UNESCO has some initiatives to increase the awareness of underwater heritage but they seem not to be enough. This intergovernmental organization has attempted to maintain liaison with universities but very few higher education institutions offer programmes on maritime archeology, which limits the capacity of UNESCO to preserve

underwater archeology. Although Oman has huge potential for underwater heritage owing to its ancient sea route, the country has yet to ratify the 2001 convention. It would definitely benefit Oman if it can link its national maritime heritage programme to that of UNESCO. This possibility will be revisited in Chapter 9.

#### *7.2.5 Culture and religion*

When we talk about culture, in many countries, religion comes as an essential and integral part of it. It is not surprising that religion sometimes shapes the culture of countries, groups, and individuals. For example, the culture of drinking, eating, worshipping, and even dress code is different between countries. Yet, at the macro level, there is a difference between religion and culture. According to Roy (2014:2) secularization and globalization have compelled religion to break away from culture. Religion is more autonomous in secularized space. Two individuals with the same religious belief can relate to culture in very different ways. For instance, a believer in Christianity living in France is likely to experience their belief very differently from a Christian believer living in Turkey. Conversely, cultures can subsume religious beliefs and practices in many different ways. Thus, UNESCO's definition (referring to E. B. Tylor, 1871:1) of culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society" does not explicitly mention religion, although the spirit of religion can be encompassed by the elements of culture such as beliefs, laws and customs.

However, when religion is absorbed into the notion of culture, there is no objection on UNESCO's part to promote it, provided that it is branded as culture, not religion. Religion can definitely promote cultural diversity. Religion conflicts with culture only if certain groups think their ways are the only right ways, and should exclude and do away with other's ways or beliefs. Obviously, such an ideology will not promote cultural diversity. But there are certain things which can be considered religious, which promote culture as well. Mustafa (UNESCO) cites an example how the presentation of a religious artefact turns into a great cultural construct:

"Saudi Arabia had an exhibition with UNESCO where religious books and Quranic manuscripts were displayed. Alongside, there was a desk where a person was inscribing different words, name of visitors for example, using Arabic calligraphy. Many foreign visitors came to see this beautiful, fascinating, fantastic way of Arabic writing. It is an art. Most visitors asked the person to write their names in Arabic or

Arabic words or sentences (Bismillahi Rahmanir Rahim, for example, which can be translated as 'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful') even without knowing their meaning. Most importantly, the way visitors approached the person and requested him to write something for them is the art work”.

For Mustafa (UNESCO), the essence is that religion and cultural diversity share the faith and their beauty is universal. Such circumstances eliminate boundaries between religion and culture. If people believe in something bigger than themselves then there is no conflict between culture and religion. Such an approach is transcendental, and beauty is recognised regardless of religion, age, ethnic background, nationalities, or gender.

More importantly, UNESCO usually seeks to avoid mixing religion with culture. Guerin (UNESCO) clearly demarcates religion from culture:

“The primary concern of UNESCO is to protect cultures and respect human beings, not to protect religion because, in the end one can be Christian, Muslim, Buddhist but he or she is still a human”.

Looking at the issue from an intangible cultural heritage perspective helps to clarify it further. Elements of ICH include practices, expressions and rituals. Within Islam, for example, there are some specific rituals. Under the umbrella of ICH, these rituals are considered cultural not religious. UNESCO never deals with culture as religion. But if any specific rituals fall into the domain of culture, UNESCO will appreciate it. Mustafa (UNESCO) says: “UNESCO does not focus on religion because if it does so, it opens the door of culture values and hierarchy which is not the spirit of UNESCO”. UNESCO promotes and upholds universal values; it does not want to open the door to debate over which values are more important than the other. Whatever cultural aspect it recognises has to be universal and this is the core paradox of UNESCO policy. Diversity is cherished (differences are valued and respected); at the same time, valuation must be from a universal human perspective.

The confusion between religion and culture, and the notion that religion is incompatible with a particular culture or with the support of cultural diversity as a whole, is mainly due to the misuse of religion for personal interests, according to Jafar. All religions can preach tolerance. Jafar illustrates the point:

“During my presidency of the General Conference of UNESCO, I gave a speech on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's birth. Everyone here knows my openness and my different outlook. There were a large number of monks, they were impressed and came to salute me. I do not think there is a religion that stands against



dialogue and tolerance for a religious reason, but unfortunately, some countries or people have their own interests, and exploit religion to serve their own interest”.

Al-Yaqoubi supports this idea. He emphasizes that "all religions encourage cultural diversity, perhaps the problem lies in the absence of constructive dialogue to reach common solutions, not dialogue to impose their views".

Cultural diversity is integral to religious diversity and vice versa. For Oman, Al-Noufali describes the situation clearly when he says:

“The reality is that Oman has been, and still is, a tolerant country, for a long time, and we found in some of the ruins in Suhar that the Jewish presence is old, and in Muscat there was a presence of Hindus as well. We have not heard of any dispute based on religion, sectarianism or even doctrine in Oman, while in neighbouring areas there were, and still are, conflicts and wars based on religions”.

The above discussion postulates that the relation between religion and culture is very intricate and complex. Instances are plenty that show that religion has shaped the culture and politics in many countries. Chinese politics and culture, for example, are seriously influenced by Confucian ideology (Ng, 2000) whereas Protestant ethics were the moral ground for the culture of wealth accumulation in the West, particularly among the Calvinists (Weber, 2013), and it is true about Islam and politics of Arabs (Ayubi, 2003). Thus, it is difficult to draw the boundaries between them. However, delegates at UNESCO are clear about the stance of this intergovernmental body. It does not talk about religion but culture. However, when some elements of culture collide with the elements of religion, it does not have any problem promoting it in the name of culture, not religion.

### **7.3. The role of UNESCO and its effectiveness in promoting cultural diplomacy and diversity**

UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organization, aims at promoting cultural diplomacy and diversity. It advocates cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power that strives to foster the exchange of views and ideas, promote knowledge of other cultures, and build bridges between communities. This section examines various initiatives that UNESCO has undertaken which aim at enhancing cultural diversity and help establish peace and amity among countries and communities.

#### ***7.3.1 Cultural diplomacy - a tool to promote peace and respect***

The constitution of UNESCO says that it exists to construct the defences of peace in the minds of people. This is in the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO. It attempts to prevent war and build peace in the minds of men and women through inculcating and promoting knowledge. Giovanni Boccardi (henceforth, Boccardi), Chief of Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, Culture sector, clarifies the stance of UNESCO when it advocates cultural diplomacy.

“If one knows and values other’s culture, and appreciates what others’ culture has done, it becomes increasingly difficult to go to war against that culture. Learning about the beauty and significance of other’s culture and the history embedded with it makes a person sympathetic to this culture and become part of it. With this state of mind, it is tough to hurt others and inflict harms on others. A mutual response of this sort will resolve many issues and disagreements among people. In this sense, culture works as defence for peace”.

The purpose of UNESCO is to spread knowledge about culture, so as to establish the conditions for dialogue concerning mutual recognitions and peace. Thus, it makes sense to associate the word diplomacy with UNESCO. As Bandarin (UNESCO) says, “cultural diversity is made in UNESCO and is a part of its mission, a fundamental one”.

To nurture cultural diversity, UNESCO has created some tools, institutional and political, through the means of international declarations and conventions. These declarations aim to respect, protect, and promote cultural diversity as part of UNESCO’s mission. Bandarin (UNESCO) articulates the logic.

“It is important to stress on this mission because we are in a world where isolation is very much pushed by the big systems including the internet, markets, behaviours, the media and so on. So, the promotion of cultural diversity is a way to, somehow, respect and protect, the richness of the human experience”.

Moreover, unlike NGOs, UNESCO itself as an intergovernmental organization advocates peace through cultural diversity. “Whatever works it (UNESCO) does should embody the spirit of sovereign rights each country possesses” says Mustafa (UNESCO). Putting a great deal of attention on national culture and sovereignty, UNESCO speaks to governments merely for the sake of providing consultancy and advice. It does not tell other people what they must do.

Diplomacy itself is official, between states, with UNESCO in an enabling role. As such, Bandarin (UNESCO) emphasizes “we at UNESCO are not diplomats but rather technocrats and specialists”.

He continues, “we have to emphasize the fact that diplomacy is the ‘art’ of living together in the world”. To paraphrase Bandarin (UNESCO), diplomacy is made up of certain number of rules which are meant to achieve some specific purposes. Sometimes, it loses sight of the purposes and ends. So, diplomacy as a tool to achieve some purposes is widely nurtured at UNESCO. Human beings who believe in cooperation can unite around certain activities. Diplomacy is a way to overcome human weaknesses.

Although Bandarin preferred to use the term "technocrats" over "diplomates", the diplomatic nature of UNESCO's work cannot be hidden, since the Organization is an intergovernmental organization of the United Nations. As Al-Balushi Amna (henceforth, Amna)- Assistant Secretary of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science for Education and Science says:

“Diplomacy is strongly present at UNESCO. We are talking about an international organization with member states of more than 193 countries. Sometime when you deal with your colleagues you need a little bit of diplomacy. Each country has its own agenda and objectives. Diplomacy in general is good but if it is exploited for purposes that are not benign and behind the scenes, here the danger lies”.

UNESCO attempts to promote peace and respect between communities through highlighting culture as an important construct. In doing so, it offers resources of cultural diplomacy and soft power to help parties understand each other through exchanging their culture. In pursuit of this attempt, UNESCO has formulated various conventions and international declarations. Despite the fact that it positively advocates cultural diplomacy, the official view is that it is an intermediary which attempts to bridge the gap between communities and countries. It proposes policies and guidelines. However, ultimately it is up to the member states to accept them. In this sense, UNESCO lacks power that might be essential for peace-building in some circumstances.

### 7.3.2 *Engaging civil society*

UNESCO aspires to work with civil society in the member states. Global Civil Society Yearbooks, published by London School of Economics (Gready and Robins, 2017:958) define civil society as

“All public spheres, separate from the apparatus of the state and the economic market, which serve as locations of political participation and discursive interaction. It is a site of political and social action and contestation, characterized by a diverse range of actors with different, sometimes competing, agendas and repertoires of action”.

In this view, civil society is composed of a set of organizations and institutions and ‘spaces’ of social relations which mediate between the individual and the state (Gready and Robins, 2017). UNESCO has means to involve civil society, to strengthen its efforts to advocate cultural diversity across countries and societies. However, it seems that UNESCO, as an organization of member states, sees civil society as secondary. This subsection attempts to highlight the initiatives of UNESCO to engage civil society.

In a number of recent policy documents, for example in the context of world heritage, there are specific references to local community, civil society, and indigenous people. UNESCO has many publications on how to engage civil society in managing and conserving heritage. Bacardi refers to the 2003 ICH convention, which is based on the assumption that “...only the communities can recognise and maintain their own intangible cultural heritage. It is all about civil society”. This emphasis on the importance of civil society here gives us an indication of the success of UNESCO in this task in relation to the listing of intangible cultural heritage elements. The consent of practitioners (civil society) is required and all the required forms and conditions are met by them initially. But this success cannot be generalized to all efforts of the Organization in other areas of work. Nevertheless, engaging civil society to maintain cultural diversity and preserve cultural heritage is a significant issue at UNESCO. Civil society’s engagement is required to make a difference to ordinary people. Bacardi continues,

“The working principle of UNESCO is that it is not enough to make a difference to the delegates, but it is important to make a difference to the person on the street, which is actually the civil society”.

Commensurate with this expectation, UNESCO has entered into many partnerships with civil society organizations. For instance, ICOMOS (The International Council on Monuments

and Sites), ICCROM (The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) and ICOM (The International Council of Museums) are nongovernmental professional bodies from which UNESCO frequently seeks assistance. Moreover, UNESCO works with many other NGOs in the conservation field. There is an opportunity for specific NGOs to become partners with UNESCO. At present, there are many NGOs that support UNESCO. Mustafa (UNESCO) elaborates on the process:

“In regard to intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO possesses the ability to accredit NGOs who are eligible to render some services upon request. For example, the evaluation bodies that deal with evaluation files every cycle, have accredited NGOs. Others have the representative of the state parties. An accredited NGO can provide services to the committee in the form of evaluation body to the nomination file. Of course, it is also beneficial for NGOs themselves to support UNESCO. For instance, they need good cooperation with UNESCO to access governments”.

This point of view suggests that there may be some issues of competition and power differentials between Member States. The same is true for tangible heritage as well. "In the World Heritage Committee, to protect a global site, the community should be the first line of defence of your site" says Hasan Al-Lawati (henceforth, Al-Lawati), the Advisor to the Minister of Heritage and Culture for Heritage Affairs. From the perspective of UNESCO, the local community must interact to ensure the sustainability of the heritage site and ensure that the site achieves additional value for the livelihood of the community through career opportunities, craft industries, and so on.

However, it cannot be said with certainty that UNESCO has successfully involved civil society at the expected level. This may be attributable to certain limitations of the organization. For example, UNESCO is a relatively small organization in terms of its workforce size. In addition, UNESCO is an international organization which sets standards, prepares guidelines, and convenes meetings of the member states. Its fundamental job is to set standards and promote knowledge as a laboratory of ideas. It is not so much an implementing agency overseeing operations on the ground. Boccardi (UNESCO) explains this limitation:

“UNESCO is not a humanitarian agency working in difficult situations. This means that the opportunity to engage with civil society on the ground has been reduced from the start. Moreover, there is a limitation from these NGOs’ side. Currently, NGOs are providing services as an evaluation body to the committee. But it is yet to figure out

exactly how to get these accredited NGOs, which embody huge potential but still untapped, to facilitate capacity building at the national level”.

Boccardi (UNESCO) further emphasizes that NGOs do not necessarily know how to deal with evaluation for a nomination file at the national level. They mostly act as intermediaries between the states and communities at grassroots level; but they cannot always be active at UNESCO level. As such, the opportunity to involve civil society through NGO participation is limited, even in member states that have UN Associations (United Nations Associations are recognised in 92 UN member-States according to World Federation of United Nations Associations). Al-Yaqoubi underlines this point: "UNESCO has not yet succeeded in attracting civil society". He justifies this claim in two ways. First, "UNESCO has started late in this regard". Second, "because it is represented in Member States and therefore policies and decisions emanate from Governments".

Civil society facilitates relations between the individual and the state. Thus, UNESCO can deliver benefits by engaging civil society. It is clear from the above discussion that UNESCO attempts to do this as much as possible. However, certain constraints limit its capacity to engage. For example, how to select civil society is a question to be resolved. UNESCO's attempts to promote culture and heritage are context-specific which means that special skills and knowledge are required to understand culture and heritage that belong to certain groups or tribes. Civil society mostly comes short in this particular regard. (There will be further discussion of this point in Chapter 8 and 9).

### *7.3.3 Effectiveness of UNESCO's role in culture*

Although UNESCO's philosophy is to uphold the spirit of cultural diversity, it is important to examine to what extent this institution can meet this expectation in reality. It is apparent that the world of hope and expectation is really vast whereas individual and institutional capacities are more limited. UNESCO tries its best to achieve the realistic targets that it sets. Di-Giovine (2017:83) argues "UNESCO's flagship preservation programme has transformed itself from an initiative valorizing primarily national parks and Western-style monuments to the keystone of a robust World Heritage Programme." It can be said that UNESCO has delivered very important achievements, the most crucial being the establishment of UNESCO's principles. In particular, UNESCO has been able to establish itself as a model to be followed by others. Sometimes it is true that a single institution cannot change the

world comprehensively, but UNESCO can set itself as a model for others to follow through identifying and listing sites, heritage to be preserved, and raising awareness.

UNESCO actively promotes culture and cultural diversity in order to see them at the top of the international policy agenda. This is illustrated by Vision 2030, the major initiative around world sustainability goals. UNESCO is pushing culture as a fundamental tool for sustainable development. Examples of UNESCO's activities in promoting cultural diversity are: the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development 21 May, the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2010 and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013-2022. These activities have attracted attention from all parts of the world.

The interview responses show that officials believe that UNESCO is gaining recognised status. But there is also some ambivalence towards its achievements. Caust and Vecco (2017:8) explain the impact of UNESCO's recognition of a site on tourism:

"UNESCO began a conversation of 'protection' through its acknowledgement conventions of international tangible and intangible cultural heritage and cultural expression. However, the outcome of this has meant that UNESCO status has given sites/practices a much greater profile, which then attracts increased visitation. Thus, UNESCO status could be seen as a marketing device more than a protection approach".

Despite this marketing feature of the sites if they are recognised by UNESCO, as UNESCO badge guarantees many more visitors to a site, "increasing numbers of visitors can negatively impact on a site/practice as well as affect the local culture and integrity of a region, particularly in developing countries" (Cellini, 2011).

UNESCO as an intergovernmental organization, promotes cultural diversity and encourages state parties to promote cultural diversity between themselves. The secretariat of UNESCO attempts to facilitate the actions that the state parties want. Thus, most of the responsibility lies with the state parties. If a state party is not willing to promote and enhance cultural diversity, there is nothing UNESCO can do about it. It comes from the states and UNESCO just figures out implementable, practical ways of developing programmes and projects. UNESCO as promoter can definitely claim that it has made laudable progress working with states. In fact, as many interviewees confirm, when the word *culture* is pronounced internationally, it is synonymous with UNESCO.

The interviewees were asked to rate UNESCO for its international role in Education, Culture, Science and Communication on a scale from 0 (completely unsuccessful) to 10 (very successful). Perhaps it would be better if the question had been limited to the role of UNESCO in the culture sector only because the participants are only from the cultural sector, or if the sample had been extended to other sectors to answer this question. It is reasonable to assume that the selected group is able to assess UNESCO's work overall, as they participate widely- especially in the high-level plans, programs and forums implemented in Paris - in other sectors of UNESCO in one way or another. Bandarin (UNESCO) was categorical in regard to the success of this international organization. In his opinion, UNESCO is known by the international community for its greater role in culture than in any other sector. He affirms:

“In the culture field, we are certainly well known globally. Sometimes it was surprising that when I go around the world, people, even in remote places, recognise us because they have heard about UNESCO and its association with culture. We certainly have represented a very big role of culture around the world. So, I would say that for culture UNESCO's impact is quite high, maybe you will not have the same ranking for the other parts of UNESCO or the other fields. But for culture it is very high”.

Guerin (UNESCO) also echoes the same tone when she was asked to rate UNESCO. She is emphatic in saying “I think it is very different according to the sectors”. She continues,

“I would give culture a higher score than the other sectors. Because, you know, if you talk to the people on the street, just go out and ask them, what do you know about UNESCO? They will answer to you: culture. So, we have certainly very good impact on culture. I would say, if I would have to say for the culture sector to give a score, I would say of course 10, right. For the rest I cannot. I would say, for me, the culture sector is like the flagship of UNESCO”.

Mustafa (UNESCO) is straightforward and happy to give a score of 7 out of 10. She explains the logic:

“what we do is providing support to state parties to safeguard their heritage. We support all the communities to safeguard their heritage. We're not safeguarding, we show them how to safeguard, and there is a difference. I think we're doing a good job”.

This implies that the success of UNESCO's efforts depends a great deal on the willingness of the member states to take initiatives and the ability to put these initiatives into action.



Boccardi (UNESCO) was a bit cautious and mildly critical of scoring UNESCO. He thinks that scoring UNESCO is a sort of self-evaluation for those who are working for it directly. Thus, he confessed that self-evaluation is difficult. Boccardi (UNESCO) admits- “actually, I am biased, I am a part of UNESCO so maybe you should ask someone else.” He continues,

“Look, there are lights and shadows, you know, of UNESCO has many weaknesses, the political dimension sometime involves a lot of waiting and makes things difficult, but many times in my career, I have asked myself: is it still working? And I have always concluded that yes, it does. I think it goes towards the positive than towards the negative. If UNESCO had not existed, I think things would be worse”.

The interviewees in Oman have the same point of view. In general, they appreciate UNESCO for its pioneering and vital international role in education, culture, science and communication. They also agree that the larger role lies with the member states and not with UNESCO (including Al-Balushi, Al-Lawati, Al-Yaqoubi, Said Al-Salmi - Director-General of the Office of His Majesty's Advisor for Cultural Affairs and Sultan Al-Bakri - Director of Antiquities at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture). Jafar gave a diplomatic response, affirming that "It is difficult to say that the organization (UNESCO) has been successful in its work, but it is making an extraordinary effort to make an impact".

Only one person among the interviewees had a different view. Khamis believes that

“UNESCO is a dilapidated and old organization, and there is an urgent need to 'update' UNESCO and its experts and secretaries. You can easily notice that UNESCO's work is not commensurate with modern times. Moreover, the use of social media is not much. The UNESCO Secretariat often has a major role in making official decisions on various issues, since most of the diplomats who head the committees are the permanent delegates or the ambassadors”.

It is likely that Khamis takes this view because of his experience working with UNESCO as an expert on issues related to the Fund for Cultural Diversity. He also attended several meetings related to this convention (the 2005 Convention). But the negative view may have come from his dealings with some of the staff of the UNESCO secretariat. In addition, the permanent delegates or the ambassadors in Paris commonly participate in UNESCO meetings and committees in which others should be involved, simply in order to reduce the costs of expert participation by member states. Of course, this happens at the request of the concerned authorities themselves, which weakens the Sultanate's strong presence, as it

does not contribute to building new local experiences, as will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

Bearing in mind that some participants hesitated to give an explicit answer to the ranking question; the mean score from the valid responses was 7.5 out of 10, which is clearly consistent with the discussion presented above.

#### *7.3.4 Perceived obstacles in UNESCO towards promoting cultural heritage*

UNESCO has been always striving to advocate that education, science and culture are paths towards peace. In this pursuit, it has undertaken various initiatives to accelerate education among under-privileged segments of the society, and to discover and preserve cultural heritage. However, many of its initiatives are bound by constraints. This subsection aims to highlight some of the obstacles identified by the research respondents.

##### *Some issues regarding cultural heritage conservation at the state level*

One of the critical obstacles towards preserving and sustaining cultural heritage as well as diversity emerges from lack of peoples' awareness and understanding about the importance of culture and cultural heritage. It is hard to find an official saying that culture is not important. But when it comes to investment and finance, it turns into a different story. For instance, Oman is one of only two countries that lost a world heritage site (the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary) due to economic factors. The other country (so far) is Germany (World Heritage Centre, 2009).

However, it can be observed that awareness is on the rise. For instance, the 2005 Convention on Cultural Industries and Creativity, which is mostly about trade and creative industries, has been ratified by most countries with just few exceptions. A similar number of member states (more than 150) have ratified the 2003 Convention so far, although they have concerns. Boccardi (UNESCO) explains the reason:

“Some countries have issues with the parts of their communities that do not completely identify with national discourse. So, they are afraid that they by ratifying this convention might lead to controversy within their country between mainstream culture and minorities culture. In some countries, where there are indigenous people whose culture is not structured, codified, and written, they consider it difficult to

institutionalize this culture and put it in writing into a nomination file or into a document to fix it in time because it is so subject to evolving. So, there are number of issues”.

This interpretation is relevant to Oman’s case as well, from a different angle. For instance, Oman has been successful in registering seven ICH elements so far. However, there are many more elements that Oman is ready to register on the UNESCO list. The problem is that a number of these intangible cultural elements (like *Almaled*) will be disputed by some of the community as being inauthentic or not representative of Omani heritage. Thus, there may be a kind of reluctance to list these arts that are likely to generate such controversy, although the local tentative list has included these elements. Al-Salmi explains clearly, the “Oman Centre for Traditional Music has registered all authentic Omani arts for years. So, why haven't we succeeded in listing all of them?” Despite all this, Oman is one of the leading Arab countries to register its ICH symbols (6 shared) and (3 single).

It is sometime possible for a shared intangible cultural heritage to be registered twice. Al-Salmi cites the example of Al-Azi, registered recently by the UAE, although Oman registered it five years ago. He notes the initiative from the Oman side:

“If the UAE wants to list an art as a shared heritage then there is no problem, but they should not register it separately, as what happened with the file of Al-Azi which was listed in the endangered list. We know that this heritage is Omani. The Oman national commission should have worked on it at the right time”.

This discussion directs attention to the 2003 Convention inventories, where there are three lists: Urgent Safeguarding, Best Practices, and the Standard Inventory List. The same element (art or folklore) can appear in two different lists.

The above discussion postulates that public awareness is still a key determinant for successful implementation of UNESCO’s effort to conserve world heritage. Moreover, there is a concern that listing any communal heritage may aggravate state-society relations. For instance, emphasizing culture that belongs to some specific communities may dilute the national identity (see for example, McManus, 2005). Despite UNESCO’s continuing attempts to increase public awareness of the economic and aesthetic value of cultural and natural heritage, it has failed to fully protect its World Heritage Sites from governmental policies in Germany and Oman. There is also another site that has not attracted the attention it deserves, even it was the second Omani site inscribed in the list (the Batt, Al-Khatm and Al-Ain site in Ibri city). This is probably because it represents burials (cemeteries) and does not have the high profile of Bahla Fort (the first site). However, its antiquity, which goes back

to the civilisation of Umm Al Nar (third millennium BC, 5000 years ago), makes it extremely important and deserving of more interest and care.

### *Limited financial capacity*

UNESCO's financial strength is limited, a problem which has been further exacerbated by withdrawals of membership by some countries. Since the US stopped contributing to UNESCO in 2011, it became an even bigger issue because it led to a budget decline of more than 20%. Boccardi (UNESCO) comments that "this has created a severe impact on UNESCO's capacity to deliver, considering the fact that most of its money is spent on staff. UNESCO is an organization that has a lot of staff compared to other similar organizations". The nature of the work is to require institutional coordination, meetings, documentation, and technical advice which are all human-resource-intensive works. So, the staff ratio has always been important for UNESCO. When UNESCO had to reduce its budget by more than 20%, inevitably this affected its activities. (UNESCO)<sup>16</sup> reported,

"The U.S withheld its contributions following the admission of Palestine to UNESCO on 31 October. They were required to do so by U.S. laws dating from the 1990s. This leaves UNESCO with an immediate shortfall of US\$65m to the end of 2011, and a further gap of 22 percent in its US\$653m budget for 2012-2013. Israel has now followed suit and withheld its contribution of US\$1.5m (0.3 percent of UNESCO's budget) for 2012-2013".

Financial constraints have forced UNESCO to cut many projects and staff. It has been already eight years since the financial difficulties escalated. It has very limited resources to monitor and execute programmes for example, at the field office level. Also, there are very limited resources to maintain human capacity in headquarters as well as in the field offices. According to Mustafa (UNESCO), staffing levels have been reduced by almost a quarter due to the financial crisis. Mustafa (UNESCO) further outlines how the financial constraints affect UNESCO:

"Most people working with UNESCO ... are not permanent staff. So, their contract is renewed yearly. Every year employees have to go and see the funding and where they can pay for this person's salary from. The situation is not improving at all. UNESCO needs a lot of financial support, and it is not getting as much as it wants.

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_director\\_general\\_launches\\_emergency\\_fund\\_at\\_close\\_of-1/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_director_general_launches_emergency_fund_at_close_of-1/)

Most of the projects that it accomplishes are through extra-budgetary allocation, funding or support from state parties. UNESCO is also trying to seek external support from various parts of the world especially from the Arab and Islamic world”.

The former UNESCO Director-General, through her visits and letters to several Member States, succeeded in attracting extra-budgetary funds, particularly from Arab and Islamic countries. However, this has not fully covered the deficit. UNESCO's policy of reducing and cutting budgets has not changed so far.

UNESCO is fully dependent on the contributions of member States, and therefore, in cases of defaults in payment or withdrawals of membership, trouble ensues for UNESCO. Al-Salmi is disposed to take an optimistic view "This financial crisis is an opportunity for it to rephrase its financial policy and look for new sources of income. America's withdrawal is difficult but not catastrophic".

Al-Harthi Hamoud (henceforth, Hamoud), Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Curriculum, Vice-Chairman of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and the Head of UNESCO's Bureau of International Education (2016-2017) supports Al-Salmi's point of view. He emphatically states that

“UNESCO funding mechanism and policy are inappropriate. Relying on contributions from Member States that have begun to shrink in one way or another limits the work of UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education (IBE). Also, the administrative process in the organization and the large numbers of centres and employees may not be necessary. The philosophy and financial policy of the Organization are now unfit and need renewal”.

In one sentence, Hamoud attempts to convince that it is not an issue of a member state's withdrawal, but it is the issue of financial policy in general, because contributions and donations are built on interests, and interests are not always present, and therefore "a partnership with the private sector must be established". Hence, **everyone** acknowledges the existence of the financial crisis of UNESCO when the US stopped paying its share, in addition to the global financial crisis. At the same time, all Omani interviewees agreed that the crisis has not affected their "institutional" work, as Oman is "supportive" rather than "needing support". This issue will be discussed in the following chapter.

Khamis gives an example of the impact of the financial crisis on his work when he served as an expert arbitrator of some of the work of the Fund for Cultural Diversity of UNESCO.

“Many UNESCO meetings were cancelled on the pretext that there was no budget. No rewarding prizes were given to experts on the pretext that there was no budget. There was not enough translation of paper and technical works such as CDs to other languages, but only English and French for the same argument. The budget was very limited although the demands were many”.

On the other hand, Al-Busaidi has a different view. He is optimistic that things will improve. He believes that "UNESCO has been able to adapt with the available funds and has created ways of extra-budgetary support, which is somewhat successful, and things will go better by managing the existing".

In summary, UNESCO has been suffering from reduced income owing to the non-payment of their dues by some of its key members including USA. The regular budget of this organization has been cut by almost 25 percent, which implies a reduction of workforce by a substantial extent. For example, administrative positions were reduced from 2,114 posts in 2011 to 1,467 posts in 2015 (Hüfner, 2017:100). Although an increase of staff based on extra-budgetary funds can be observed from 492 to 775 during the period 2000–2015, the adjustment with the reduced budget has resulted in a serious reduction of programme activities (Hüfner, 2017). However, the sign of hope is that UNESCO is still surviving, and it has not compromised on its core functions. A world with UNESCO is better than a world without it, at least for heritage conservation.

#### *Priority of education may hinder cultural advancement*

UNESCO's budget is assigned to several specific sectors including education and culture. Some perceive that the distribution is unfair, especially as the data and evidence suggests that UNESCO allocates more budget to education than culture. Boccardi (UNESCO) clarifies the stance of UNESCO in this regard. He argues:

“The budget allocation of UNESCO is directed by its member states. It's their decision. UNESCO does not prioritize culture over education or vice versa. Member states standardize the assessment of the priorities. The fact is that education is a much more universal issue than culture. As a result, state parties may prioritize education over culture. For instance, everybody in the world wants to promote education through different means including information and communication technologies. On the contrary, it can't be certainly said that every state has heritage underwater, intangible culture heritage or illicit traffic issues. UNESCO, as an

intergovernmental organization, puts its priority reflecting on what the state parties believe they should achieve. So, UNESCO can't emphasize on state parties' culture if the state party's priority is education although doing so would be nice on the part of UNESCO".

Having said that, it should be noted that UNESCO has a workplan for every two years (the Programme and Budget Document C/5), which must be adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO. This plan sets out what needs to be done during this period and estimates resource requirements to achieve the target. The budget is then submitted to member states specifying the resource requirement for each sector or section. If the proposed budget is allocated, the target can be achieved. "Sometime the estimated budget is not approved", says Mustafa (UNESCO), "in which case, the priority issue comes again by the direction of member states" Mustafa (UNESCO) added.

A further point is that the promotion of cultural diversity is not uniform across regions and countries. There are some priority areas and groups. Mustafa (UNESCO) contends that Africa as well as the East developed countries are prioritized. The small islands are also a priority for UNESCO. The Africa priority is unambiguous: to achieve greater gender equality. These two areas are the main priorities of UNESCO. In addition, any programme or project which looks at reducing the gender gap, for example, is a priority. This implies that there are many groups at UNESCO and every group has its priorities. For example, the Arab states group has different priorities than Western Europe or Asia or America.

Nevertheless, there is near unanimity from the interviewees in the logic of the prevailing approach by UNESCO member states to make "Education" a top priority compared to the other four sectors: Culture, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information. For example, Al-Balushi says "it is logical. Education is a starting point for all other sectors. If you promote education, you indirectly promote the sectors of culture, science, communication, etc., especially with the recent increase in conflicts and wars". Al-Harthi mentions an example to clarify the importance of the education sector. He says, "the Oman Ministry of Education has 85,000 employees but the Ministry of Heritage and Culture does not have more than 3000 employees. Education is concerned with foundations, so their fields are more important. It is a large, complex system". Al-Yaqoubi adds, "all problems can be tackled through education. But what is beneficial to the culture sector is the fact that the organisations that support UNESCO outside of the budget, do it mostly for the benefit of culture and not education". The last point mentioned by Al-Yaqoubi refers to NGOs, as

previously discussed in this chapter. It is true that most of them are working in the field of culture.

The above discussion highlights that although UNESCO is often seen to be synonymous with heritage, education is sometime alleged to be prioritized over other sectors of UNESCO. Although the officials did not deny this claim outright, the institution is of the view that UNESCO serves the member states. Thus, if there is any priority sector, it is not because of UNESCO's priority but because the member states want it. Education is a priority area worldwide due to its huge socio-economic impact and foundational role in nurturing a culture of respect toward heritage.

#### *Limited number of UNESCO's official languages may hinder cultural diversity*

UNESCO is a flagship in upholding and nurturing cultural diversity among nations. However, despite being a body of the United Nations, it has only six official languages: English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish. Limiting UNESCO communications to these languages may be considered contrary to the spirit of cultural diversity.

There are some obvious reasons as to why these are the official languages at UNESCO. Some may be logical, and some may be accidental. Guerin (UNESCO) articulates the issue:

“These languages were associated with the biggest powers after the Second World War. Compare this situation to the security council members of the UN. Five permanent members of the UN were the allies during the second world war. It is just the power after the Second World War that played a critical role in deciding these languages, while there are other languages that are much more spoken”.

Apart from this, there are some other reasons which are practical and economic. These six languages are among the top ten spoken languages of the world and hence, they are globally representative. For instance, Spanish can cover most of Latin America and Mediterranean countries. English is the second most spoken language after Chinese. French and English are the universal languages nowadays. There are many sovereign countries formerly part of the Soviet Union, which speak Russian. Arabic is the fifth most widely spoken language in the world, one of the oldest spoken languages and the most abundant in terms of the number of words. More importantly, “it is practically infeasible to cover all of the languages” says Mustafa (UNESCO). She continues,

“Within one state party, there may be five or six languages which sum up about 300 languages of UNESCO's 195-member states. It is impractical to cover all of them. In



addition, the cost of translation and interpretation is extremely costly. So, on the one hand the cost aspect of the issue is to be considered. On the other hand, UNESCO's matters should be open and inclusive as possible. Considering all these pros and cons, the current practice seems to be most realistic to achieve UNESCO's purpose".

Another important constraint is that documents of UNESCO are mostly published in English and French. Interpretation and translation are extremely expensive. A large part of UNESCO's budget goes on interpretation and translation. Guerin (UNESCO) sees this as a primary reason:

"The language selection has to come down to something practical. That is the underlying reason that working languages of UNESCO are French and English".

The agreement is pragmatic and reflects the situation at a point in time when most international diplomatic communication was through the medium of English or French, Boccardi (UNESCO) notes:

"If a rule is established that UNESCO starts working in Arabic and Chinese, for example, a certain number of countries will be happy, but the majority will be completely cut out. It is just a convention agreed by the UN and if the situation changes they can also change these rules. It is not carved in stone. UNESCO does not necessarily like the concept of two working languages, but at least the six official languages can be considered".

Theoretically, it is true that the widest possible representation of the globe is essentially required to preserve the cultural heritage and ensure cultural diversity. Limiting the working languages to two may seem to be unfair because it undermines the ability of countries to represent themselves without mediation. However, the reality is that there must be sufficient budget to implement a language policy. UNESCO's works are not merely confined to meetings and conferences. Mustafa (UNESCO) explains:

"It produces and disseminates a lot of materials including brochures, leaflets, booklets. These activities require a lot of resources. Thus, it is unfortunate that due to the budget constraint, UNESCO has to stick with English and French".

Undoubtedly, there is much that can be shared from the Arab world, as well as the Chinese, Russian and Spanish-speaking worlds. Much of it is not reaching the audience due to language barriers. As an initial step, the 'web', UNESCO's most far-reaching medium, could diversify its offerings linguistically. With some new funding, this could be accomplished with

relative ease. Al-Busaidi comments “with modern technology and widespread use of tablets now, this issue is no longer a major obstacle”.

To conclude this subsection, here is a summary of this controversial issue cited by Al-Yaqoubi. He emphasizes:

“We have to be very realistic. At present, six languages are considered to meet the minimum needs of countries to deal with them, but the basic requirement is to provide translation in all languages for the benefit of all humankind. But the issue is resources and financial capacity, because it is very expensive. The financial capacity of UNESCO and all other organizations of the United Nations is limited”.

In short, there is a perceived lack of fairness but general acceptance that this is a practical matter which cannot be resolved with current resources in the foreseeable future. It might be considered as a ‘UNESCO paradox’ that UNESCO advocates cultural diversity while it restricts the number of official languages. However, this is the economic reality which UNESCO cannot avoid.

### *Political Influence on Culture*

In the *Diplomacy of Culture: The Role of UNESCO in Sustaining Cultural Diversity*, Kozymka argues that the main criteria against which UNESCO's role as an international actor should be tested should include its autonomous decision-making capacity. In other words, to what extent UNESCO is free to make independent decisions (Kozymka 2014). Meskell (2013:1) reviews some challenges that in 2011. However, it is not the first time that members had withdrawn. In the eighties, the USA, Britain and Singapore withdrew their membership as well. This raises a question about the role of cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, power and sovereignty of the organization. Al-Salmi draws the following distinction between culture and politics:

“Politics is the incubator of culture, our discussion together now, though political, is cultural at the same time. Major countries find UNESCO important and run for membership in the Executive Board. John Kerry, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the time of Barack Obama, prepared a luncheon and brought all the ambassadors of UNESCO. At each table one chair was kept empty so that John could move among all the Ambassadors. If the United States itself sent its Foreign Minister

despite his certainly busy schedule to sit with UNESCO Ambassadors, then this highlights the importance of the Organization for the US”.

Culture is different from politics, but culture cannot be separated from politics completely, otherwise it is difficult to imagine the concept of diplomacy. UNESCO is not a purely cultural organization. If it were, says Boccardi (UNESCO) “... its work could have been coordinated by some organizations like the German or the British Archeological Institute, the Institute for Art History, or Muscat Centre for Handicrafts, for example”. He continues,

“UNESCO is a UN agency. Its mandate is peace and security and sustainable development, international cooperation through culture, education, sciences and communication. So, the political dimension is inherent and inevitable. It is impossible to take it out. This is indeed a challenge to work together for a positive solution. In this challenge sometimes it succeeds, and sometimes it does not”.

There are some basic rules through which UNESCO maintains its neutrality. For instance, Executive Board members at UNESCO are elected to take decisions and the norm is to respect the mandate. Within this mandate UNESCO is certainly free to plan its processes and establish activities, which means that member states cannot influence the neutrality of UNESCO. Its strength lies in having its own standards, principles, guidelines and its own procedures. In the case where the member states express their interest in certain aspects of UNESCO activities, it tries to maintain a balance. UNESCO relies on members’ support to approve their projects. Again, Al-Salmi, who believes that UNESCO is a "fully politicized organization", explains:

“There are lobbies, yes; but you have to have good justifications for your cause. Like the issue of Palestine, despite the threat and domination of America, the case has won many votes from the majority of the member states”.

Other Omani interviewees at UNESCO do not like the idea of 'politicising' the organization, except to the extent that culture interacts with politics. They insist that there is no 'veto' power on decisions made by the General Conference of UNESCO, for example. This gives credibility to the decisions emanating from the meetings of the Organization. Al-Balushi stated her view on the impact of politics within UNESCO's corridors saying:

“UNESCO works or tries to work away from politics, but each country has a special agenda that it tries to pass through UNESCO. Maybe voting makes politics present even if we try to separate it from the work of the organization. The unavailability of 'veto' at UNESCO creates full credibility in voting, unlike some other agencies”.

Regarding the veto, Jafar indicates that US, and a number of countries that attempt to dominate the decisions of UNESCO, have already tried to impose their veto within UNESCO on the Executive Board, but their request was rejected. Then, they tried to soften programmes that were considered political, but again this idea did not pass. Therefore, hidden conflict exists but UNESCO tries to neutralize politics as much as possible, although as Al-Harthi comments, it is "sometime difficult to do so".

One of the strategies UNESCO uses to neutralize dominant powers is through diversification. Mustafa's understanding (UNESCO) can be paraphrased as follows. It cannot be denied that sometimes things happen under pressure. To counterbalance any undue influence, UNESCO has certain norms to follow. Diversification policy is practiced widely. This implies that putting all eggs in a single basket eventually leads to higher risk; the basket could break; the eggs could break altogether. UNESCO has certain organizations and state parties which help it reduce the level of dependency on any single party or member state. Also, it is not right to assume that funds will always come from a particular person or state party. Diversifying the source of funds dilutes the influencing power of a single party. Mustafa (UNESCO) adds,

"Since UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization, it wants to have state parties contribute as much as they can. Obviously not all the members can contribute the same, but if all contribute as much as they can because they believe in UNESCO's conventions, they believe in what they do, then it will be a little bit better than assuming that money will come from only one point. You have to contribute to something that you believe in".

UNESCO has to find a suitable trade-off to resolve an inescapable systemic paradox. Its power rests on the recognition and mandate from the member states because it needs to convince these states to be part of UNESCO and contribute financial and moral support. On the other, it has to stand its own moral ground, circumventing the effect of great power conflicts of interest, which is definitely not an easy task. In this litmus test, UNESCO has sometime failed, as Kozymka explains. However, it has been able to maintain its moral ground which is its main *raison d'être*. This issue will be elaborated in the concluding part of this thesis.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to achieve two main objectives: to describe UNESCO's various activities aimed at helping member states preserve and maintain their cultural heritage, tangible and intangible; and to assess the effectiveness of UNESCO's role towards its member states along with a discussion of the obstacles UNESCO encounters in its effort to carry out its responsibilities in a proper and fair manner.

Regarding the above objectives, the chapter provides some important insights. It is found that UNESCO believes in cultural diversity and this organization continuously attempts to promote the spirit of cultural diversity. Similarly, cultural diplomacy underlies the foreign policy of many countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the experts interviewed, cultural diplomacy can be considered an effective tool to profess international peace and respect. Since some forms of culture are inherently linked with religion, UNESCO clearly demarcates between culture and religion. 'UNESCO prioritizes the value of culture rather than the truth claims of religion' might be a better formulation. However, if some norms or traditions of any religion fall into the domain of universal culture, there is no objection in promoting such culture.

UNESCO clearly has a role in promoting and maintaining cultural heritage of member states. However, the governance of the cultural heritage of a member state rests entirely on the discretion of that state. In other words, which heritages are to be listed as world cultural heritage, and how they are to be maintained are entirely the decision of the state concerned. UNESCO does not interfere in this regard. Rather, it plays a facilitator role by setting standards and guidelines, delivering advisory services, making expert services available for member states and so on. Experts, nonetheless, appreciate these efforts of UNESCO and have positively rated its effectiveness. It is endorsed by all the experts interviewed that the presence of UNESCO is a proven positive symbol for the worlds of culture. Its absence would definitely be felt.

Despite all these positive notes, some hindrances are obstructing the smooth operation of UNESCO. The most salient among them is the paucity of funds. The shortage of funds at UNESCO has been heightened by the withdrawal of the USA, provider of more than 20 percent of UNESCO's budget. Budget restrictions have forced UNESCO to cut some projects meant to be welfare enhancing as far as heritage conservation is concerned. Moreover, even though UNESCO's official language are six, most information and documents are published only in English and French. It is true that such a practice goes against the spirit of cultural diversity which UNESCO advocates, but experts have asserted

that confining UNESCO's official languages to six is the realistic choice given the underlying circumstances. The Omani interviewees unanimously agreed that there was no impact of UNESCO's financial crisis on Oman, because Oman is a payer more than a receiver. Moreover, political influence is also noted as an obstacle in some cases. Meskell (2013:1) reviews some challenges that the WH faces today and cannot be ignored are: "*expert opinions and decision making, the increasing and overt politicization of the World Heritage Committee, and UNESCO's fiscal crisis exacerbated by the recent US financial withdrawal*". In her other book, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*, Meskell (2018) acknowledges "we must recognise that as an organisation with a global reach, for the past seventy years UNESCO has been influential in making that protection possible". She is quick to add, though, that it might be impossible for any organisational framework to keep 'archaeology' above the fray given its lack of ability "to reconcile fundamentally different worldviews" (Meskell, 2018:142). However, UNESCO has its own principles and institutions to neutralize such possibilities. This has helped this intergovernmental organisation to work on its way toward improving peace and amity by nurturing culture and heritage.

The next chapter will continue to analyse the interviews conducted, but will focus on Oman in particular, its relation to UNESCO, the success of Omani cultural diplomacy, the preservation of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and other aspects related to the content of the study.

## **Chapter 8. Institutional Voices II: Oman**

### **8.1. Introduction**

Chapter 7 has detailed some important issues related to culture and heritage illustrated by the key officials of UNESCO. The organization's role in preserving and maintaining the cultural heritage of member states was specially emphasized. In the current chapter, we portray the voice of a member state, Oman. The presentation focuses mainly on exploring how Omani officials have responded to the efforts of UNESCO to preserve the cultural heritage in Oman and whether cooperation between Oman and UNESCO has been sensitive to the mutual interest of both parties. Oman is an active member of UNESCO. It joined in 1972 and ratified many UNESCO conventions. It has five heritage sites on the UNESCO world heritage list and seven elements on the intangible heritage list. Although membership of UNESCO does not necessarily imply a give-and-take relation between member states and UNESCO, it is however, important to examine the opinion of member states as to the benefits they receive from UNESCO and UNESCO's view towards a particular member state. The perspective from Oman forms the substance of this chapter.

### **8.2. Oman-UNESCO relations**

The last leadership of the Sultanate has consistently emphasized mutual relations politically, economically, and also culturally. The rich culture of Oman attracts significant attention from neighbouring countries and other important partners with which Oman maintains a diplomatic mutual tie. Likewise, Oman acknowledges the importance of its relations with UNESCO, and this is reciprocated. Boccardi (UNESCO) recalls: "I remember that Sultan Qaboos was very committed to environmental sustainability and so I always have a very good relation and I remember good operation with Oman on heritage and conservation in general".

Bandarin (UNESCO) highlights the partnership relation between Oman and UNESCO:

"In the case of Oman, I think that we play the role of partners, rather than directing or deciding. The role of the partners is quite active in promoting ideas and models and fundamentally the cultural policy".

Oman-UNESCO relations have been further reinforced by Oman's proactive cultural outlook. Mustafa (UNESCO) refers to one of such proactive initiative by Oman:

"Oman is trying to show an initiative in certain cases. For example, After the ESDG, the sustainable development goals came out, I got a call from a person of Omani Research Council who was asking me for potential experts who can contribute to an international conference. It is appreciable that Oman is trying to attach the cultural heritage to the sustainable development. Nobody called Oman and advised them to focus a bit more on sustainable development now. Sustainable development goals came out from their own initiative and then they said okay we want to understand more about it through an international conference and see what comes. It wasn't UNESCO related. They just asked for advice on whom to contact for contribution to such event. This shows their passion for 'sustainable development'".

All Omanis interviewed for this study agree that Oman's tie with UNESCO is strong and effective, and Oman does not wait for the financial support of UNESCO, as mentioned above. For instance, Al-Salmi says:

"Our relationship with UNESCO is very strong. The cooperation, the existing programmes and the visits of the UNESCO Director-General to Oman several times and His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to UNESCO, and the several visits by UNESCO Ambassadors reflect the strong relation between Oman and UNESCO. I myself have trained at the UNESCO Headquarters (World Heritage Centre) for three weeks".

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture is the main beneficiary in the field of cultural consultation. Al-Busaidi describes the connection saying, "Our relation with UNESCO is more about consultations on certain things. We have built local capacity through our experience with UNESCO, but we have not relied on its financial resources". He also explains the reason for this good permanent relationship with the organization:

"The Sultanate from the beginning to the present day is more than excellent with UNESCO, because of its clear principle in the treatment and the lack of double vision, as its relationship is based on mutual respect and principles for peace and reconciliation. Oman had no negative treatment at all".

Al-Balushi confirms what Al-Busaidi said when she says, "at each meeting, we note that Oman has been mentioned positively and is considered to be cooperating and dealing with others, and to refrain from all kinds of conflicts that occur inside or outside UNESCO". The conflict between UNESCO and the member states can stem from multiple sources mainly



from dissent in opinion between them about preserving and maintaining cultural heritage. Oman is very particular in respecting rational suggestions of UNESCO. In the case where Oman could not live up to the expectation of UNESCO, in the Arabian Oryx case, Oman mutualized such dissent in opinion in a diplomatic way. This was possible because, as Al-Harthi explains, endorsing the factors mentioned by Al-Busaidi: "... we send experts and specialized people to UNESCO and not just an honorary presence". Also, Oman maintains its neutral political stance with regional and international economies which helps it avoid any possible conflict that may arise in strategies for preserving cultural heritage. Furthermore, Oman is proactive in cooperating with activities that match the core values of UNESCO. For example, Oman was the first among the Arab countries to extend its cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for Understanding (APCEIU) at UNESCO. The centre promotes values of global citizenship and the Ministry of Education of Oman has introduced the principles of citizenship in the curriculum.

Further, Al-Lawati demonstrates that the existence of the Sultanate in UNESCO is effective, through the presence of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate in Paris.

"We are effectively present in all its committees. We add to the work of UNESCO and not burden as is the case with some countries. Oman's voluntary contributions to UNESCO are well known. For example, the Sultanate contributed to the translation of the principles of the World Heritage Convention into Arabic in 2005 and published in a separate book all the basic texts relating to the Convention, and we are known in UNESCO, as is the case with The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation".

The Omani interviewees therefore agree that there is a strong relationship between the Sultanate and UNESCO. Mohammed Al-Shithani (henceforth, Al-Shithani), the Director of Planning and Studies at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science and a member of the Board of Directors of the Sultan Qaboos Centre for Culture in Washington, has no reservations. He says, "Oman's relationship with the organizations in general and with all countries is good and wise, reflected in the Sultan's policy to win the hearts of all, and strengthen relations with everyone". Al-Shithani refers here to the vision of the Sultanate, and its leader His Majesty Sultan Qaboos since he took office, to extend the hand of friendship to all countries of the world, and this is what happened.

The spirit of Oman is portrayed in the country's national flag: a green colour indicates the land which has been freed through fighting and bloodshed (red) and the white signifies the peace the nation wants to live with. Maintaining continuous peace with neighbours and

the international community is prioritized in the regional and foreign policy of Oman. Oman attempted to mediate the peace talks between USA and Iran. Also, the country has hosted high level political delegates from both Palestine and Israel and urged them to de-escalate the tension and differences that exist between them. (See for example, *Peace Diplomacy*, Al-Mahri, 2019). Although it is seriously tough to maintain a politically neutral stance, especially at a time when the GCC is mired by political rifts between and among nations (the multilateral conflict in Yemen, the political rift between KSA and Qatar), Oman has still been able to prevent itself from being drawn into regional alliances. Such a strategy has an economic pay-off and it would not be wrong to argue that economic benefits follow Oman's policy of peace and cooperation. For example, Oman has been continuously trying to develop its infrastructure to tap the part of business excluded by the GCC political crisis (Al-Wahaibi, 2019). At the same time, the fall in the oil price since June 2014, forces Oman to search for alternative sources of income. Tourism is considered a sector with huge potential in Oman. Conservation of cultural heritage will definitely provide an extra edge toward this move. Thus, the positive attitude of Oman towards regional peace and cultural stewardship should pay off economically as well, although the outcomes remain unpredictable.

Oman-UNESCO relations are summed up in the felicitous phrase of Musa when he says, "Even the walls of UNESCO know about Oman". It is worth noting that Musa had long experience (over 30 years) with UNESCO as a permanent delegate of Oman and he presided over the General Conference of the Organization for four years. Therefore, his perspective comes from his long involvement in this area, which confirms the depth of the relationship between UNESCO and Oman. The active and effective role of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate in Paris has greatly contributed to strengthening the sustainable relationship between Oman and UNESCO.

There is only one voice among the Omani respondents, Al-Shamakhi, who described Oman's relationship with UNESCO as good but not excellent. He attributed the reason to "the person or persons working in the field of culture, especially the conventions of UNESCO. Sometimes you find that those who deal with these files do not have that passion, so there is no follow-up unfortunately". Here, he means precisely the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, as was the case in evaluating the work of UNESCO as a whole, the interviewees were asked to rate Oman-UNESCO relations on a scale from 0 (very bad) to 10 (very good). The results calculated by taking the average of responses to this question showed a score

of 8.1 out of 10 (the lowest score was 7), which is higher than the average score of 7.5 for the effectiveness of UNESCO. The overall score reflects the deliberations and views raised above.

### **8.3. Oman is rich in cultural heritage**

Oman has witnessed a huge renaissance in various fields since 1970. Among various remarkable developments, cultural heritage conservation, both tangible and intangible, is notable. Bandarin (UNESCO) describes the cultural heritage of Oman and its people:

“It is very soft country and the people of Oman believe in culture, they believe in preserving and maintaining cultural heritage. The country has a plenty of cultural heritages indeed, in its territory. There are many countries like Yemen, Emirates, Qatar and many others who have big heritage. But Oman (and Yemen) has the most ancient heritages including the Frankincense road, which is really fantastic. In addition, the archeological area near Salalah is very interesting; it now seems to be the city for the transition (undergoing change)”.

The cultural sensitivity of Oman can be understood by activities to restore the Bahla Fort. Boccardi (UNESCO) explains his experience,

“After the Fort’s restoration, some part of it was not looking good. It seemed that there was a lack of planning manifested by the fact that some parts of the new construction did not conform to the traditional character. That was an issue”.

The restoration works were made complex by several things which can be attributed to the lack of timely planning in archeology and heritage conservation. For example, some parts of the fort needed urgent intervention. The small extra-murus mosque with its multi-arched mihrab and the reception rooms of Bayt Al-Hadith with their threefold arcature, carved wooden doors and decorated ceilings were already decayed beyond the restoration level. (Michon & Guillaud, 1995). Also, the situation of the Qasabah appeared to be particularly complex because this huge and impressive monument was approaching a very dilapidated state. Any restoration of this required someone with knowledge of the present and past state of such buildings, but this expertise was lacking and it meant that the earlier restoration was far from perfect. The concerned authority realised this deficiency and recruited international experts for consultation. The restoration works were then completed to a suitable standard. Boccardi (UNESCO) continues,

“So, there was a new architectural change after which the restoration work looked much better particularly, in regard to issues with oases. The control of building activity within the oases around the Bahla Fort was highly appreciated mainly by UNESCO and also by local groups as well as the visitors. In the southern part of Oman where the wonderful Frankincense sites as well as the port, and the cultural landscape are located, the presentation was very well-done. In addition, it was seen that Oman was very keen on environmental protection”.

Mustafa (UNESCO) emphasizes the richness of culture and heritage in Oman when she says:

“I can tell you from my personal experience that you guys have very rich cultural identity. I've noticed it. I think the identity of Omanis will never be at risk”.

Unlike certain practices, or common words, the survival of which depend largely on whether a particular community practices them or not, Omani identity and culture have become tangible. Thus, it is hard to believe that the culture of this country, as a whole, would be at risk. Mustafa (UNESCO) praises Oman for its cultural initiatives, "With the culture field, I think Oman is trying to show an initiative in certain cases". Al-Salmi refers to the deeply rooted civilisation that exists in Oman:

“Oman is a civilised country. It is one of the oldest civilised settlements on earth ... see if you want to the UNESCO site 'Land of Frankincense’”.

For her part, Al-Balushi attributes the Sultanate's keen interest in heritage and culture to the Sultan himself.

“The Sultanate's interest in its heritage reaches the top of the pyramid ladder, because the Sultan himself is very interested in heritage and Oman is a pioneer in preserving its long-standing heritage, with the establishing of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage from the beginning, and recently the new National Museum, which is one of the best national museums in the Middle East [The National Museum of Oman won the first prize in the category of the best general project of light effects at the Middle East Awards 2017] . The Sultanate's efforts and trends in the world in this regard is obvious and leading”.

Anyone who reads about or visits to the Sultanate of Oman easily discovers the wealth of cultural heritage both tangible and intangible. It preserves its heritage and originality to this day. UNESCO is well aware of this and cooperates with the Sultanate in many programmes

and activities. Musa indicating to this point says "Thankfully, we, the Sultanate of Oman, have a presence in UNESCO. People always remember us. If we talk about heritage, they know very well that we are rich in heritage".

#### **8.4. Delisting of Arabian Oryx Sanctuary – an exception to the spirit of cultural heritage**

Despite all these claims of the richness of the Omani cultural heritage, Oman has only five tangible heritage sites on the world heritage list. It once had six, but one, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, was removed, which from the point of view of UNESCO is deeply disappointing. Also, this event shows that even in a country where UNESCO priorities are understood and implemented, economic interests may be preferred over cultural or environmental interest, which was definitely painful for UNESCO.

The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary is an area located in the Central Desert and Coastal Hills of Oman. The unique desert ecosystem of the area is supported by seasonal fogs and dew. The diverse flora of the sanctuary includes several endemic plants (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/654/>). Most importantly, its rare fauna includes the first free-ranging herd of Arabian Oryx which was considered a species under threat of global extinction in the wild in 1972. The Oryx was reintroduced here in 1982. It was declared the first natural reserve in the Sultanate in January 1994, and in the same year UNESCO agreed to list it among the World Heritage Sites.

However, on June 28, 2007 the reserve was removed from the World Heritage List by UNESCO due to the fact that Oman decided to reduce the site by 90% which was in contravention of the Operational Guidelines of the Convention. The Oman government made a plan to proceed with a hydrocarbon search in the area (petroleum exploration) which reduced the size of the sanctuary by nine-tenths. This allowed the prospecting companies to operate in the oil fields in and around the huge area of the Oryx Sanctuary (see Chapter 4 page 98).

It was unprecedented in the history of the convention. It had never happened before that a state party submitted a nomination and then decided to undo it later. Boccardi (UNESCO) expresses his concerns,

“Some members of the committee were even wondering if it was possible for the country to sort of change its mind in a sense later on, from a legal point of view, as

the site has been now recognised as having outstanding universal value. But, obviously, the country has sovereignty over its territory. It can do what it wants. But the only consequence ultimately is that it is no longer a world heritage property which I think was the preferred solution at the time”.

UNESCO cannot directly intervene in a country's economic and political decisions. It can, at best, make a request to preserve and maintain cultural heritage; however, honoring the request depends on the country itself. On December 12, 2006 Oman sent a draft version of the new map identifying the area of new Oryx Sanctuary, which according to the statement of UNESCO is 90% less than the original area. The committee formed by UNESCO examined the submitted document and concluded that the new defined area is not enough to protect the purpose of protecting the Arabian Oryx, which is under threat of extinction (UNESCO, 2007). In its 31<sup>st</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee held on Christchurch, New Zealand in 2007 UNESCO adopted the decision to delist Arabian Oryx, without any prior request or proposal. In fact, there was no scope from the UNESCO's part to make any request, as the decision of reducing the size was unilateral. Confirming this point, Musa attempts to provide justification. "The interest of Oman is above everything". The interest here represents the national economic interest presumably decided by the regulatory authority as representative of the citizens. Since legislative bodies are the representative of the people of Oman, there was no dissent opinion in this regard. Undoubtedly, this decision gives a clear indication of the unique features of the Oman political system.

Of course, some reservations remain as to whether the benefits derived from the new economic arrangement outweigh the aesthetic and economic benefits derived from the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary as a natural heritage site. The Sultanate's efforts in investing in Omani world sites for cultural tourism, for example, are still very limited and do not rise to the level of ambition set by Oman Ministry of Tourism. But it is difficult to estimate the monetary damage caused by the delisting of the sanctuary. It is noteworthy that Musa was the one who led the Sultanate to implement the decision to delete the Oryx Sanctuary in the corridors of UNESCO through the meetings of the World Heritage Committee in 2007, as he was the chair of the General Conference of UNESCO. I think it would have been more difficult to achieve if the chair had not been an Omani. As mentioned previously: it was a new incident in the world of Cultural World Heritage, but it gave greater credibility to heritage sites, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

This case necessitated reconsideration and discussion of some of the 1972 Convention principles, as Al-Lawati comments. There are many world sites that have lost their

outstanding universal value (OUV) but are still on the World Heritage List, as in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, due to wars, destruction, and lack of attention. Therefore, the possibility of relisting the site after registration gives greater credibility to this list from the perspective of Al-Lawati. He argues that

“The Sultanate's policy known as daring to clearly say what it wants and do what it wants. There was great confusion and a matter of surprise. When the resolution was adopted, it was considered a historical landmark moment for the 1972 Convention. A paragraph was put forward for future registration, if the Sultanate changes its mind. We gave real credibility to the World Heritage List. The issue of delisting has become possible after it was prohibited”.

Although anyone might think that there was some reputational damage from Oman to UNESCO, subsequent years have shown that Oman's relationship with UNESCO has not been affected by this event. On the contrary, another tangible heritage site has been registered so far (Ancient City of Qalhat), and many other intangible heritage elements. This negates the Sultanate's lack of credibility in registering its future positions. Oman has remained reluctant to return the site to the WHL, although there was a paragraph in the decision that the site may be accepted by the Organization in the event that it wishes. Besides Oman, there is only one more state party which delisted a file, Germany. Al-Lawati briefly recounted the story of the site's deletion:

“The German city of Dresden has been listed on WHL as a cultural landscape. The river banks are the OUV of the city. After a while the Dresden municipality decided to add a bridge on the banks of the river due to increased traffic. UNESCO and the WHC rejected because the site would lose its value. UNESCO put another alternative to build a tunnel instead of the bridge. The Dresden federal government went to the Supreme Court. The court requested people to vote on either the bridge or the tunnel. People chose the bridge. UNESCO threatened to delete the site but the Dresden authorities did not mind and so the site was delisted”.

Thus, after the deletion of the Oryx Sanctuary, the delisting has become a real threat and a stick for those who do not obey and do not maintain OUV. Oman requested UNESCO to delist the site but for Germany it was different. It raises a new vision in the issues of the World Heritage File: who should sign the registration file, the local, regional or national government? It is better to involve each level of governments in the file agreements to avoid any dissatisfaction in the future. There will be more discussion on this issue in Chapter 9 page 221.

There is also a concern from Oman to assess what effect, if any, the withdrawal of the Oryx Reserve might have on the natural environment and tourism in Oman. The Adviser Office, however, does not think that this event is going to have any adverse effect on Oman as a whole. Al-Salmi reiterates the case,

“The withdrawal of the Oryx Reserve was a strategic decision. Oman decided that as the first country to do so. We discovered a huge risk, as we are a country dependent on oil in the first place. Registering a site in the list is followed by big commitments. You can find unregistered sites that are protected and meet the requirements and perhaps exceed UNESCO requirements. A site listed in the World Heritage list does not suggest that it is more important than others, but it is one of the most notable ones”.

For her part, Qawas expresses her feeling about this unique incident, which provoked wide discussion and argument in UNESCO at the time. She says,

“The oil-rich Oryx reserve, 37,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is large in size, and UNESCO has requested that it can be scaled down, if necessary, but it was reduced to 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Also the number of animals at the reserve decreased very much because of poaching. So, UNESCO decided to put it at on the danger list but the WHC experts advised Oman to remove it”.

With regard to the decision to delete the reserve (31COM 7B.11), issued in June 2007 - New Zealand, nothing is mentioned in the decision about the proposal mentioned by Qawas regarding placing the reserve on the UNESCO List of Endangered Heritage, but the fact that the spokesperson is a specialist on cultural affairs between UNESCO and Oman in the office of the permanent delegation in Paris, she was familiar with all case details that took place at the time.

Of course, Oman has undertaken other measures to uphold the spirit of natural and cultural conservation. Al-Salmi recalls one of the natural initiatives with ICOMOS (The International Council on Monuments and Sites which offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites). Al-Salmi continues,

“Oman adopted the theme of archeological parks and we are the first to do so in ICOMOS. In fact, the first conference on archeological parks was in Salalah which was followed by the conference of the International Scientific Committee for Heritage Sites in Salalah as well. We came out with a document called the Salalah Recommendation, which was recently adopted in New Delhi's conference as one of



the documents of the International Council of Sites and Monuments. It is a document that calls for the creation of archeological parks and distinguishes between Archeological and non-Archeological parks”.

To summarize, some key points should be underlined. First, Oman still maintains a close relation with UNESCO despite this incident. Second, Oman delisted one heritage site, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, which was a strategic decision on the part of Oman. Although such a move is clearly at odds with the spirit of heritage conservation propagated by UNESCO, it shows full respect for sovereign decisions, which is critical for allowing UNESCO to work effectively with the member states. Oman-UNESCO relations in the post-Arabian Sanctuary phase does not render a conclusion that the delisting has a damaging effect on the Oman’s effort and reputation to preserve and maintain natural heritage, beyond the sanctuary itself, although universal value, which is quite unambiguous in the case of an endangered species might have been lost.

#### **8.5. Should Oman work independently to preserve its own heritage?**

Sometimes a question surfaces as to whether Oman should maintain liaison with UNESCO, continuing to pay a high monetary fee, or whether it should develop its own strategies and initiatives to conserve its cultural heritage without the help of UNESCO. When the question was directed to Al-Salmi his opinion was quite emphatic.

“UNESCO has been able to organise safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage systematically and put them under a specific framework. UNESCO is a corporation with many stakeholders. It is not an NGO. Its existence is more important than its absence. However, UNESCO cannot go to work in every country. It gives them the regulatory framework that they are supposed to apply in accordance with local laws. UNESCO is universal, but it cannot enter your home and impose things on you”.

Given its current capacity, this organization cannot take on the responsibility to influence all cultural aspects of the world. Rather, its conventions, the World Heritage Convention 1972, for example, are guiding countries in their own policy development. Many countries work as models for others in developing policies for heritage - both tangible and intangible.

In the case of Oman, UNESCO plays the role of a partner, rather than directing or deciding in the place of the Sultanate. But the role is quite active in terms of promoting ideas as well as models and developing the cultural policy of the country. So, UNESCO is more

like a partner and it has to be seen from this perspective rather than just an external force. Al-Salmi explains,

“UNESCO has the experience and knowledge. It is a house of culture and a great experience that must be taken advantage of. Also, let's not forget that UNESCO has established several programmes here in Muscat”.

Musa, who has worked with UNESCO for more than 30 years, comments from the perspective of long experience:

“Oman's great and positive reputation in UNESCO is a gain. Also, the money you pay to UNESCO returns in listing the Omani archeology and heritage in the World Heritage List, such as Bahla Fort. These global sites can be used to get you back millions of dollars by promoting tourism”.

The conventions of UNESCO can be considered as soft power (as Bandarin, UNESCO, described them). Moreover, it is likely that Oman, like any other country in the world, can preserve tangible heritage without the help of others. However, intangible heritage is something that cannot be conserved or preserved, only safeguarded. Mustafa (UNESCO) clarifies the distinction.

“Intangible cultures cannot be put in a box. It is like living heritage. Its continuation depends on its context and the communities that practice it. So, continuous patronization of intangible heritage is essential, and UNESCO helps individual countries in different ways to do this”.

It is not surprising that the member states expect some return for their contribution to UNESCO. However, it is worth mentioning that UNESCO's return, as Al-Salmi explains “... comes indirectly. With programmes and activities, when UNESCO holds a conference and an expert comes, then it's a human resources investment.”

If Oman, for example, had not been a member of UNESCO and had not ratified the World Heritage Convention, the incentive to nominate sites, develop a management plan, and undertake conservation work would not have been there as they exist today. Oman has five heritage sites which act as models for others. These five sites, for their aesthetic and economic importance, may influence other states or communities to take more care to preserve and maintain natural and cultural heritage sites. Also, Oman can try to apply the same ideas and the same methodology for developing its own heritage. If Oman did not have those five world heritage sites, it might be more difficult. UNESCO is a platform for

exchange of ideas, values and international cooperation. Member states use it to work for others as mutual learning and support.

If a member state works just by itself in complete isolation, it could do wonderful things, but experience shows that this is less likely to happen. For example, the US withdrawal from UNESCO will have various effects on the country in general and global cultural and educational activities in particular. Since the US withdrawal occurred in December 2018, it is still too early to assess any potential impact. However, this does not deter experts from speculating about the consequences. Papagiannis, UNESCO's Media Services Chief argues, "the withdrawal of the U.S. will have an impact on the United States' level of engagement in global science programmes, and in the leadership of these programmes" (Ortolani, 2017). In his view, beyond any visible loss to the USA caused by its withdrawal from UNESCO, the natural environment will suffer.

Political will to conserve and protect is much stronger if there is also external support. Even the incentive of being recognised internationally by UNESCO, being in the World Heritage List, and being able to be a part of international network means a lot for some countries or communities in their effort to preserve cultural heritage. Boccardi (UNESCO) shares a noteworthy example.

"The city of Georgetown in Malaysia was listed in the World Heritage List because of its historic centre on the Malaga street. It was an ancient trading port between East and West. Ships and spices travelled from Georgetown and Malaga, they went all the way to Oman, through the spice road and silk road. At some point, there was a project for the construction of three new hotels, 28 floors in the middle of the historic centre. The local authorities had already approved the plan, but the local community was against it. It would completely despoil the site which has been described in the World Heritage List. So, UNESCO intervened in the process. It forwarded the message that the country can do whatever it wants, but implementing the project means to ruin a beautiful and historic city. This will also imply the loss of the status of the World Heritage because if the country goes ahead with this project, the World Heritage Committee would probably put it on the danger list and then delete it from the list. So, there was a long discussion internally within Malaysia between central and local governments. Eventually, they decided to cancel the project and keep the World Heritage status for tourism as well as the beauty of the place. Without UNESCO's soft pressure, they might simply destroy the site".

The efforts of the Sultanate in the field of safeguarding the heritage are not hidden, but without the presence of the international organizations, and UNESCO in particular, the heritage will remain at the national level, away from the global heritage. Al-Busaidi says,

“Thank God, we have made a great effort to preserve the national heritage under the orders of the Sultan. We have achieved much, and our work is ongoing, but the greatest challenge and the success is to advance the level of national heritage to world heritage”.

The above statement implies that it would be difficult to uplift a national heritage site to the international level without the assistance of UNESCO. Listing a site in the UNESCO’s cultural heritage list gives the site a brand image at the international level. Salim Al-Muhairi, the Expert of Intangible Cultural Heritage - The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, stresses the same point.

“The preservation of the cultural heritage by the Sultanate is long-standing, and the Sultanate is very interested in preserving its heritage and has an inventory before being requested by the organization, under the attention of His Majesty the Sultan himself. But the organization is in no doubt about the assistance and added value which has contributed significantly to conservation”.

So, the role of UNESCO is clear. Its role is in helping to save heritage, improve education and sciences, and share communication and information. UNESCO brings concepts that are relatively new like sustainable development to the table. For heritage, it shows state parties and communities how to tie heritage to sustainable development, heritage to gender inequality, heritage to agricultural development and so on. But in the end, if the state party or community does not want to safeguard the heritage and does not believe it is worth saving, there is nothing UNESCO can do. “UNESCO means to support and not to fix a problem for a member state. It is not sustainable if UNESCO comes forward and fixes something. UNESCO rather, shows how to fix problems”, says Mustafa (UNESCO).

There are 193 states members of UNESCO as of 2020. It must offer some value otherwise they would not agree to become members. It is a kind of a club. Members learn from each other in ways which benefit them. Guerin (UNESCO) comments on its value for members:

“Of course, heritage conservation can be done alone but the party will lose out on much valuable information of what is going on other countries and what are new advantages and the new explorations are. Many countries, which are members of

UNESCO, have a reason because they actually derive benefit from it. So, Oman should continue its membership with UNESCO for the greater interest of the cultural heritage of the country instead of moving alone”.

The indirect benefits which a member state receives may not be involved with the country itself. Boccardi (UNESCO) points this out,

“UNESCO is an organization for international cooperation. So, Oman, which is a relatively wealthy country, pays UNESCO and in return, it helps some less well-off countries like Chad, Mauritania or Yemen. This is the spirit of international cooperation. If every dollar that a member state puts into UNESCO should go back to it, then it is not cooperation. That is like buying services from private company like a heritage conservation firm. A contribution to UNESCO is a type of spirit showing cultural cooperation to the world”.

Musa also supports Boccardi's argument (UNESCO), "You do not always pay to take. Sometime a part of what you pay is a contribution to poor countries in Africa and others. It is a part of our religious and humanitarian duty". This vision of Musa is particularly attributable to Islamic and Omani thought, as everyone testifies that the Sultanate of Oman has a reputation for helping the poorest countries as much as possible, without any media fuss. Sultan Qaboos himself oversaw several initiatives in this regard.

Finally, the amount of benefit from any organization will be determined by the Member State itself. According to Al-Shamakhi,

“If the National Commission and the Permanent Delegation of that country are active and have access and lobbies, the rate of achievement is greater, and vice versa”.

In general, the primary goal of membership in these international organizations is political and diplomatic rather than technical. UNESCO does not offer many things except counselling and experts. It does not offer a golden spoon to the member state, but the state will seek to draw upon these experiences. Although it may not always seem to be rational economically to contribute financially to UNESCO, membership of UNESCO is more than simply a give-and-take relation. It is a question of accepting responsibility, on behalf of others by contributing more than the material benefits received. (See chapter 4 page 73 for the Oman annual contribution to UNESCO). This notion, however, does not nullify the possibility that UNESCO has many things to offer for its member states. With its technical knowledge and skills accumulated over the years, UNESCO can extend support and technical know-how which is useful for identifying and preserving the national heritage of

member states even if a particular heritage site is not listed in UNESCO's heritage list. From this perspective, it makes sense for Oman to maintain the status quo with UNESCO. A go-it-alone policy may prove financially beneficial for Oman in the short-run, but long-run benefit of the country, as far as heritage conservation is concerned, lies in maintaining membership with UNESCO (see chapter 9 page 233).

## **8.6. The effect of UNESCO's financial constraints on Oman**

UNESCO, as mentioned earlier, is in a phase of financial constraint caused by the withdrawal of USA funding. Given the strong ties between UNESCO and Oman, it is to be expected that Oman will be affected by the recent financial hardship of UNESCO. This question was put to Al-Salmi, who stated that UNESCO financial constraints do not have any effect on Oman. Although Oman maintains strong cultural relations with UNESCO, the relation is confined mostly to UNESCO's advisory role towards maintaining Oman's cultural heritage and other conservation instead of UNESCO's financial flow to Oman. He explains,

"We (in the office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs) cooperate with UNESCO, but we do not have programmes that are funded by UNESCO, and we do not ask for support from the organization. As far as the financial crisis is concerned, UNESCO goes back and forth with funding, sometime there is abundance and sometime there is a shortage".

Hasan Al-Lawati emphasizes the same point; the UNESCO financial crisis has not affected Oman.

"We are dependent on our financial resources. The government pays a great deal to preserve the heritage. Thankfully, we did not feel any problem. Yes, we hear about the repercussions of the UNESCO financial crisis, as will happen with the meetings of the General Assembly for World Heritage on next November 15, 2017. For the first time, although UNESCO has six official languages, the meetings will be in two languages only. Thus, we feel the fiscal deficit indirectly. UNESCO's financial crisis is not new, it existed from 6 or 7 years ago, but it has now intensified".

Al-Salmi and Al-Lawati are only two examples. Otherwise, as previously mentioned, all the Omani interviewees agree that there is no direct effect of the UNESCO financial crisis on Oman. Here are four other examples. "We are not waiting for any financial aid from anyone": (Al-Harhi), "Oman does not need financial support from UNESCO" (Al-Muhairi), "We do

not have programmes that we need to be supported, because we are a supportive body” (Al-Shithani), “We did not ask UNESCO for help; we did everything on our own” (Nasser Al-Rawahi, Head of the Aflaj section of UNESCO - Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources).

Indeed, such a financial crisis has a positive side as well. It often strengthens the organization in the sense that it forces institutions to look for diversified sources of funds as well as cut financial outlays in areas which are not crucially important for UNESCO. In other words, it may be an opportunity for them to rearrange their priorities. It is not only the inflow of funds that is important, but outflows also should be rational when it comes to spending on culture. Al-Salmi continues,

“If one does not know how to spend rationally then there is a problem. Sometimes we go through times of prosperity and other times not really so. When we have abundance, we have no problem, the problem occurs at the time of need. When we are in a state of prosperity, we must spend rationally. Crisis sometime wakes us up, but our society is an essential part of these ups and downs. If society does not control its expenses, no one will control it for them”.

The bottom line is, UNESCO is a non-profit organization. It spends whatever it receives as contributions. It is hard to work without liquidity. However, withdrawal of a country, when it is a major one, badly affects the activities of UNESCO but not in such a way that it will halt its operations. Similarly, many member states, especially the wealthy, are not relying on UNESCO’s funding to preserve their cultural heritages and thus, are not likely to be affected by UNESCO’s financial constraints.

### **8.7. The way forward for Oman - Co-ordination among different state branches**

Many branches of the state are involved with maintaining and preserving cultural heritage in Oman. The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (ONCECS) is one of them. As described in Chapter 3, Oman established the national commission in 1974 to strengthen the relationship between Arabic, Islamic and international organizations involved in education, culture and sciences. Also, it is trusted with the responsibility to promote internal coherence between and among the relevant educational, cultural and scientific ministries and bodies in the Sultanate by disseminating information about Oman’s

heritage, as well as details of its activities at home and abroad in the educational, cultural and scientific fields. However, to what extent the ONCECS has been able to discharge its due responsibilities is a critical question. Al-Salmi states:

“There is no need for national commissions if they act merely as a postman. The National Committee should be the real focal point. Anything that comes from any side must first be filtered through the commission. The commission shall be the real judge of whether the case shall be executed or returned. If the National Commission does not play this role, it is a waste of time and money”.

He spells out the responsibilities and requirements of the Commission.

“National Commissions in some European countries are highly qualified. Not everything is raised to UNESCO or vice versa. The National Commission must have scientific, administrative, financial and technical capabilities and should not blame the ministries and local authorities. The power of the National Commission should be well balanced. It is the one that determines who is attending UNESCO meetings and manages all things”.

Al-Shamakhi, is less critical of the quality of work of the National Commission, but he stresses the need to develop the work as well, "The National Commission is often doing its work, but sometime it needs to work hard to improve its work more and more".

There is no doubt that the commission can play a vital role in representing Oman's cultural heritage to the world and also can effectively manage national cultural heritage in Oman through establishing strong connections between state parties and the concerned organizations like UNESCO. In so doing, it has to formulate strategies while strengthening its capacity to discharge its responsibilities in a cost-effective manner.

Hilal Al-Hajri, Director-General of Arts, Ministry of Heritage and Culture (former), stresses that "the National Commission can do more to strengthen its ties with UNESCO and other cultural institutions in Oman. There are platforms to work with UNESCO a lot but they need to be strengthened". For example, Oman has many heritage sites on the tentative list of UNESCO. Oman needs to rethink how to list more sites on the UNESCO heritage list. This needs long-term planning in which all related Omani bodies work together towards an integrated model for developing national cultural heritage and promoting heritage tourism. Similarly, ONCECS has a greater role to play. The work in the National Commission 'has a different flavour', as Al-Yaqoubi, who has worked for the National Commission for more than 17 years so far, comments. He explains,



“ You are now dealing with international issues on the international scene, global thinkers, challenges and visions. The five fields, depth of information and knowledge, and dealing with all public, private and civil institutions is a feature of the Commission's work”.

The global nature of the work in the National Commissions (NCs) distinguishes it from the work in any other sectors and governmental institutions. The vision of the international organizations that the Commission deals with should be always present before its employees. Al- Noufli says, "The vision of UNESCO, which is to 'think globally and work locally' should be represented in each of us so as to accommodate this vision well and apply it on the ground with the best international practices". He says" UNESCO's National Commissions can be a vehicle for international cultural diplomacy and promotion of cultural diversity". Yet, the relevant national institutions will have the most prominent role.

Coordination among different departments is crucial because there is an overlap in responsibilities between different branches of the state. For instance, agricultural works do not usually overlap with oil and gas. But culture and heritage overlaps with almost everything including the work of the municipalities, religious affairs, tourism, roads, social development, universities, and museums. Each of these units may have ideas which should be connected together and should have a form of integration. This certainly calls for internal cooperation and greater understanding between and among different interrelated bodies. A framework of understanding and the possible roadmap for future action led to the development of the Law of Cultural Heritage in Oman, which was issued recently by Royal Decree No. 35/2019 on May 2, 2019 (See Appendix 1 page 235). Al-Hajri comments on this cultural 'interference' in response to a question concerning the difficulty of the work of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture as cultural work is distributed among many Omani establishments.

“Cultural work is not as interfering as it is integrated. Culture is a very broad concept that includes the arts of all kinds, literature in all its genres, and thought in all its spectra and trends. The overlap is good because cultural work is complementary”.

Finally, contrary to the views of both Al-Salmi and Al-shamakhi, Al-Busaidi considers the ONCECS as "the most remarkable example of coordination among all the cultural stakeholders in the Sultanate". It is believed that the ONCECS has more to deliver, especially in terms of maintaining liaison with its foreign counterparts and establishing stronger ties with UNESCO (see recommendations on chapter 9 page 220).

## 8.8. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine Oman-UNESCO relations and their impacts on Oman in preserving cultural heritage. In the context of Oman, UNESCO also plays a noteworthy facilitator role. As far as cultural affairs are concerned, Oman counts on a strong tie with UNESCO, indicated by Oman's five tangible cultural heritage sites and nine intangible culture heritage elements listed on the UNESCO heritage list. Moreover, Oman has ratified many UNESCO conventions believed to be helpful for preserving and maintaining the cultural heritage of the country. Although the delisting of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary met with some backlash from the UNESCO side, this international body, respects the country's decision in regard to its internal affairs. Finally, the question was raised whether it is worth contributing so much to UNESCO. The answer is obviously affirmative, as one expert puts it: "its presence is worth more than its absence", even in the context of Oman. However, much depends on how far the national commission can coordinate and cooperate with international bodies including UNESCO. Although there is a broad consensus that the current performance of the ONCECS is satisfactory with respect to its on-going initiatives, it may strive further to maintain proper coordination among the different branches of the state so that this critical institution meets the expectations of citizens.

Now, the time has come to discuss all findings obtained from the study tools in Chapters (6-8) through the next chapter (Chapter 9), to come up with general visions and ideas on which to base recommendations that can be delivered to the stakeholders.

## **Chapter 9. Findings and Recommendations**

### **9.1. Introduction**

This chapter attempts to highlight the major findings of the thesis and recommend some guidelines for policy formulation and regulation based on the findings. In so doing, it is appropriate to restate the objectives of the thesis. The main objective of this research is to assess the role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman during the last 50 years. To achieve this objective, the literature review endeavours to trace the roots of the evolution of culture and heritage in Oman historically, including its maritime history and connections to Ibadhi doctrine. Oman's geographical location played a fundamental role in the past allowing contact with other countries via the sea and facilitating transfers of culture and religion to others. Some of the historical sites of Oman can be traced back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC such as Samahram Port in Salalah and Bahla Fort in Bahla. Particular emphasis has been placed on the modern era of the renaissance since 1970, in which Oman has paid great attention to its cultural heritage and has enacted several laws which ensure safeguarding and protection of heritage from damage.

However, historical perspectives do not provide us with an inside and contemporary view of the role of UNESCO in relation to the Sultanate of Oman. Thus, the thesis has included primary data from a survey and interviews with officials who have relevant responsibilities for preserving the culture and heritage in Oman. This method provides primary data to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the efforts to preserve and maintain this. However, it is only one side of the story. We need a pragmatic reflection of what UNESCO is doing to help the member states. Thus, the research has collected perspectives from UNESCO through interviews with key persons who are in charge of different aspects of culture and heritage at UNESCO. Capturing views from both sides helps to interpret the relationship between expectation and reality. A balanced discussion involving UNESCO and Oman is a prerequisite for recommendations that are pragmatic and achievable. The following sections present the major findings of the thesis.

### **9.2. Major findings**

#### *9.2.1 Cultural diversity*

In regard to peoples' understanding of the meaning of cultural diversity, as they understand or interpret it applying their common sense, almost all the participants accepted the view that they understand the intended meaning of the word 'diversity' both within and among nations. However, there was sometimes confusion between the concept of cultural diversity and the concepts of multiculturalism and cultural expressions. Al-Busaidi and Khamis, for example, pointed to this issue (see chapter 7 page 155). This finding carries an important implication that a lack of understanding about the meaning of cultural diversity would make it difficult to implement positive strategies for cultural diversity which are critical for establishing peace and prosperity across the world. In line with this expectation, the research has found that respondents are very likely to recognise that UNESCO has been successful in enhancing cultural diversity in member states, including the Sultanate of Oman. However, opinions differ with regard to the extent that UNESCO has been able to promote cultural diversity. For example, the number of languages to officially communicate its activities has been limited to six, despite the fact that language is one of the major indicators of cultural diversity.

Although there have been many changes politically and economically since the establishment of UNESCO (and the UN agencies in general), they have decided to stick with these six official languages. There has been no attempt to deviate from this policy until now. It is likely that increasing official languages from their current number would have a positive impact on cultural diversity. Some of the respondents from UNESCO, however, think that it is realistically impossible for this intergovernmental organization to communicate its efforts and activities towards members through all the languages. This does not however, mean that UNESCO just ignores other languages. It observes International Mother Language Day on 21<sup>st</sup> February every year. In addition, the UN General Assembly marked 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages with the aim to raise global attention and awareness about the languages which are at critical risk of extinction. At present, about 31 percent of the world populations use one of the six official languages of UNESCO. Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bengali are the other most spoken languages not included in the UNESCO's list of official languages. Such a limitation practically limits *de facto* cultural diversity to some extent, but there seem to be no practical and viable alternatives. The importance of cultural and linguistic diversity is recognised in UNESCO's policies for minority languages, which contribute to preserving all these languages, whether or not they are used as an official language at UNESCO. For example, the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Moseley, 2010) is supervised by UNESCO itself, and has a special focus on 'endangered languages'.

As previously discussed in Chapter 7 (page 154) the term 'diversity' in the field of culture has a disruptive potential. Appignanesi (2010) questions the separation between culture and cultural diversity, as the first concept in itself includes issues of diversity and inclusiveness. There is no need to create the second concept, which may give rise to 'the strains of separation between cultures' (Appignanesi, 2010: 23).

Labadi (2013) also shows that there is an inclination to compare the nominated properties of (OUV) with other similar sites, focusing on the effects which reinforce the perception of differences and hierarchy among cultures. According to her, the nominations' emphasis on pre-colonisation sites damages the top status of the European states as the place of human civilisation.

At UNESCO, diversity is respected and sustained, and it is one of the four basic pillars to build a society based on knowledge and information (see page 66), but at the same time it must be seen from a universal human perspective. This is another paradox that cannot be solved. However, regardless of all these issues related to the perspective of cultural diversity from the side of UNESCO, and the potential problems of respecting it and applying it on the ground, as is the case with the limited number of official languages in UNESCO, the organization is striving to bridge this loophole with technical documents and international treaties that are obliged to spread the culture of cultural diversity with its global perspective as widely as possible, like the 2005 Convention. But UNESCO must be fully aware that with new technology and lifestyles, the concepts of culture and cultural diversity are expanding to accommodate new things that were not taken into account before, and therefore it is always necessary to renew and review of these concepts and the obligations needed in cooperation with member states.

### 9.2.2. *Heritage*

*Tangible Heritage:* As discussed previously, heritage can be cultural and natural. Cultural heritage can also be divided into tangible and intangible heritages. Like the word 'cultural diversity', it was found that respondents are aware of the concepts of 'cultural heritage' in general and 'tangible/intangible heritage' in particular. However, some respondents are not familiar with the term 'natural heritage,' perhaps because they are used to thinking that heritage is something that is created and maintained by human beings. Naturally gifted heritage is not commonly recognised according to our survey, which can be attributed to the

fact that natural heritage is widely understood to be the object of conservation strategies for the natural environment.

While the respondents are quite aware of and understand the meaning of certain concepts of heritage, they are not equally aware of the major conventions and principles of UNESCO. The results show that only a tiny percentage of the community represented by the interviews in Oman is aware of those world standards (principles) which inform the issue of tangible heritage (Outstanding Universal Values, OUV). The lack of awareness of global standards on tangible heritage may be a result of the complexity of these OUV which only need to be considered and discussed when preparing a new file for inclusion in the WHL. The sample of interviewees and survey respondents included few with experience of working in the preparation of these files from the relevant ministries. Most of them were department directors and decision-makers, not technical specialists. This is because the study aimed to assess the relationship between UNESCO and Oman (see Chapter 5 page 115).

*Intangible heritage:* it was found that the communities which are involved in preserving and maintaining cultural heritage are very much aware of the meaning of intangible heritage. While they are aware of it, respondents spontaneously accept that it is difficult to identify intangible cultural heritage within a single country. This finding is very practical because a single intangible cultural heritage can be practiced by communities of different countries. Thus, it is sometimes impractical to confine it to a particular culture, nation, or a country.

One positive aspect found in relation to Oman is that the respondents expressed satisfaction with the Sultanate's effort and its international position in the field of listing Omani intangible cultural heritage in the UNESCO list. In particular, respondents were prompt in stating that most of the development in maintaining and highlighting cultural heritage in Oman took place in the last half century. They argue that since 1970, Oman's cultural and natural heritage has been given extra attention partly because of its rich history and culture, but mainly because of the visionary leadership of Oman under the late His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos. They added that with or without UNESCO, Oman's conservation of its heritage would be a success story. However, they are not denying that: with UNESCO, it is even more successful because it has raised the status of heritage from the local to the international level.

### *9.2.3. Interrelationship between politics, culture, and religions*

The research confirms a commonly held belief that cultural diplomacy plays an important role in cementing relationships between and among countries. Culture is used as 'soft power' and a tool for foreign policy of a country. It has prompted many countries to rely on cultural diplomacy to enhance mutual cooperation and understanding. The findings have confirmed this common perception. The results further establish the view that cultural diplomacy, if practiced properly, can be a significant element to ensure common understandings among nations. The idea that culture is part of the broader scope of politics is endorsed by the majority of the respondents. This may be a concern for civil society because when politics is mixed with culture, there can be a tendency that culture is used as a tool to achieve political objectives. In other words, political interest may overshadow the intrinsic value of culture and heritage, bearing in mind that absolute separation between culture and politics in most cases is infeasible. Despite the fact that culture is a resource for politics and politics is a resource for culture, the research confirms the perception that world's great powers (as political actors) do not have material influence on UNESCO (cultural) policies and conventions. This is, indeed, a notable finding in the sense that while culture is widely considered to be an element of politics it is not politicized by the major world powers.

To bring the meaning closer, it can be said that UNESCO, as an organization, is a political organization, that is, it derives its resources from the governments that acceding it (Member States), and the working blocs within UNESCO (regional groups) are distributed according to geographical blocs. However, its work, on the other hand, is a cultural one, which involves cultural diplomacy to strengthen cultural cooperation and the exchange of ideas values and traditions, which is in line with the results of this study.

Like the relationship between culture and politics, culture and religion have a closely overlapping relationship. Beyers (2017:1) speaks of religion as "... a cultural identity marker causing the borders between culture and religion to blur." An overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed the view that the major religions of the world promote 'cultural diversity' (see Chapter 6 page 143 and Chapter 7 page 161). However, they also confirmed that 'religion' is an integral part of 'culture' and not the other way around, which is in alignment with UNESCO's view that "... our cultural values, which often include particular religious beliefs, shape our way of living and acting in the world." As Adams explains (1993:27), "it is always a cultural community that gives a religion life and identity."

However, the relationship between culture and religion should be interpreted with great caution as far as UNESCO is concerned. The interviews with senior officials in both Oman and UNESCO reveal that the primary concern of the activities of UNESCO are solely to promote culture and cultural diversity as well as to maintain and preserve heritage across the world in general and member states in particular. Thus, the word 'religion' is not in the promotion list of UNESCO. However, if culture and religion conflate, UNESCO does not have any problem in valuing it, unless it is contrary to UNESCO's clear principles and objectives. But UNESCO raises its strong voice in any event where cultural heritage becomes the target of religion or political wrath like the destruction of the world's largest standing Buddha statue in Bamiyan, Afghanistan in 2001 by the Taliban. UNESCO strongly condemned this destruction and cooperated with the Afghan Government to establish a cultural fund to promote cultural industries and to reaffirm the importance of culture and national identity (McKenzie, 2016). In its official resolution (UNESCO, 2001: 8), UNESCO clearly stated "the Taliban have committed a crime against culture". It is detestable for the whole world to witness such callous destruction of cultural sites for religious motives, as they were not only the heritage of the Afghans, but of humanity in general.

#### *9.2.4. Education vs. Culture*

Another important debate, which often touches UNESCO, is whether this intergovernmental institution prioritizes one sector (education) over others (culture, in particular), and whether prioritizing one sector negatively affects the sentiment of the less-prioritized sector. I put this question to the officials of UNESCO who stated that UNESCO itself cannot prioritize one sector over other. UNESCO just facilitates the state parties which choose how to direct their budgets and programmes to a particular sector. On the Omani side, many participants agreed with this interpretation. An important finding here is that the UNESCO member states give 'education' the highest priority compared with the other four sectors: culture, natural sciences, social and human sciences, and communication and information. However, this may be a feature of developing or less developed countries (including Oman) where education still needs priority. Since UNESCO does not have any priority agenda, this claim cannot be proved independently.

#### *9.2.5. International role of UNESCO*



An important finding of this research is the evidence that the respondents expressed their trust in UNESCO to preserve world heritage. They see UNESCO as a guardian-like institution that has the capacity and mandate to advocate actively and help member states directly to preserve their natural and cultural heritage. This reliability results from the fact that UNESCO's role in the fields of education, culture, science and communication is deemed successful by the state parties as well as civil societies. This multilateral organization is a unique institution that has outreach worldwide which has enabled it to prioritize the agenda of culture and heritage along with other contemporary issues.

It has been already emphasized that civil society should be engaged through the activities of UNESCO to uphold the spirit of culture and heritage. The respondents stressed that UNESCO's programmes are perceived to be effective in engaging civil society. However, a note of caution needs to be sounded. Only very few independent civil society organizations exist in Oman. In general, non-governmental organizations, nonprofit organizations and labour unions constitute the civil society in Oman but to a very limited extent (see for example Al-Hashimi, 2009). UNESCO is a policy-making body rather than an implementer. This implies that UNESCO has limited scope to engage civil society *per se*. However, it does not rule out the institution's ever-increasing intention to work with the civil society, because UNESCO believes that without the active participation of civil society, preserving and maintaining heritage are unlikely. In particular, intangible cultural heritage is that which people carry on themselves through certain practices and performance. Without these practitioners, culture is destined to die. As a consequence, UNESCO attempts to utilize, indirectly through the facilities of member states, every opportunity to engage civil society through its activities. It has already stipulated for files to list in the intangible heritage list the practitioners agreement and involvement. This is the case in Oman as well. (See Chapter 4 page 101).

It was not possible to reach a clear conclusion to the question of whether UNESCO is effective in reducing the digital divide. I have explained this in terms of the complexity of the concept of 'digital' as well as the question of how the digital divide is created in a society, because in most cases it happens without a full understanding. In Oman, the digital divide is recognised and reviewed by the concerned authority of the country, but few studies have highlighted the areas where the digital divide is having a clear impact on the society and life of the people. For instance, Elnaggar (2008) argues that women in particular are at a higher risk of being digitally marginalized. This can be attributed to the traditionally male-dominated ICT sector, the lack of and unequal access to Arabized internet content and training, and

the lack of awareness and policy advocacy. To ameliorate the current digital divide, the government has undertaken many notable steps, including the development of a national e-payment as well as government services gateway, launching the digital Oman national strategy, and most importantly, establishing the Information Technology Authority (ITA). All these initiatives intend to narrow the digital divide in Oman, and provide better access to on-line services (Riffai et al., 2012).

In addition, contextualizing the efforts of UNESCO which aim to alleviate the digital divide, to make them part of people's understanding, is difficult. Despite this statement, UNESCO continues to undertake initiatives including recognizing computer literacy as a basic skill in educational systems, encouraging member states to emphasize virtual universities, virtual laboratories for outreach to marginalized segments of the population, building linkages and synergies between science and local and indigenous knowledge to mention but a few (Abid, 2002). They can help to reduce the digital divide in the society. This theme will form one of the items in the policy agenda to be discussed later in this chapter.

#### *9.2.6. UNESCO's financial crisis*

Despite the laudable endeavour of UNESCO to promote and support cultural and natural heritage across the world, the institution's capacity has sometimes been undermined by the financial constraints caused by the withdrawal of wealthy members, notably the USA, UK, Singapore and Israel. My interviews with some concerned authorities of UNESCO confirm that the financial crisis has reduced UNESCO's capacity to extend its support towards preserving and maintaining cultural heritage of the world and promoting cultural diversity. Some of these negative impacts ensuing from financial hardship resulted in the downsizing the UNESCO workforce by 22.5 percent since 2011, and curbs on various initiatives involving the member states. Meskell (2013:491) notes "the shortfall (of budget) was closer to US\$240 million and that the effect was crippling on vital programmes, making it almost impossible to keep global operations going". She further iterates "UNESCO's newly advertised positions have been frozen and consultancies and short-term programmes have been cut".

In terms of Oman, the respondents - in most instances - are not aware of the financial constraints on UNESCO. Even when they are, they feel that they are not directly hit by the economies that this international institution has to make. This result actually puts the

initiatives of UNESCO in a positive light in the sense that despite its financial hardship, negative effects do not penetrate to the activities of many member states.

The Sultanate of Oman is classified as a country with income above the international average and hence receives only a small amount of funding from UNESCO. It focuses more on 'moral' support for the use of UNESCO's name and logo. However, if there is any effect of the UNESCO financial crisis, it is through the ONCECS for example, and the discontinuation of support for the biennial Contribution Programme since the beginning of the 2013 crisis (see for example Hüfner, 2017).

#### *9.2.7. Oman-UNESCO Relations*

One of the major objectives of this research was to assess Oman-UNESCO relations with regard to the former's support to the latter's initiatives to properly maintain and preserve its cultural and natural heritage. One episode that may be considered to have undermined the relationship is the delisting of the Arabian's Oryx Sanctuary from the UNESCO's heritage list (see above, page 194). Despite this exception, the respondents from both sides confirmed that Oman has cordial relations with UNESCO. However, there was a feeling in some respondents from Oman that UNESCO's support for the Sultanate is immaterial, in financial terms, and hence it is a high time to reassess if Oman's financial contribution to UNESCO really does make much sense. In other words, the Sultanate can independently manage its heritage without help from UNESCO. But the majority of the respondents do not support the idea that Oman could do better alone, without the help of UNESCO. These findings are consistent and confirmed by the positive response of another statement that the development of the cultural scene in Oman has developed strongly in the last five decades and that the Sultanate's international experience, including membership of UNESCO, has helped the country to promote its cultural and natural heritage. For instance, apart from listing Omani heritage on UNESCO's permanent and temporary lists, UNESCO cooperates with Oman in organizing many international conferences, establishing the International Silk Road Platform Network, and setting up Tsunami monitoring stations along the Oman coast, to name but a few. Thus, a go-alone policy might hinder the achievements it has made so far.

#### *9.2.8. The Oman National Commission*

As this study focuses on assessing the relationship between UNESCO and Oman - specifically in the cultural field, the shortcomings or strengths of this relationship are connected with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, the body responsible for coordination between the organization and governmental and civil authorities operating in the Sultanate. The Oman National Commission, along with several local bodies, most notably the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, is the key official entity that undertakes various efforts for 'world' heritage conservation. Thus, it is imperative to examine the involvement of this unit with various initiatives at the national level and with UNESCO.

The positive note about this institution is that - in general – participants are aware of its existence and role. In addition, they agree with the statement that the Oman National Commission (ONCECS) is doing its best to help various local institutions to benefit from the expertise of UNESCO and other Arab and Islamic organizations. While the above positive feeling is welcome, there is something which the ONCECS needs to carefully analyse when augmenting its future efforts to preserve heritage. Most of the participants of the ONCECS attended a maximum of two events or activities organised by UNESCO or the ONCECS. Only very few of the respondents mentioned that they attended activities organised by UNESCO or the ONCECS more than three times. In general, such statistics do not seem to fit to the spirit of upholding heritage in a country as rich in culture and heritage as the Sultanate of Oman. The responses could be taken as an indication that there is a lack of engagement in depth. It is unclear why this is so when there are many and varied events and programmes implemented between UNESCO and the Sultanate.

The low-participation result, as discussed in Chapter 6, might be because the targeted population for the questionnaire is those who are not among the decision makers or the leaders, whereas the majority of programmes are aimed at more senior employees. In addition, the process of building a network of local experts in various fields makes it essential for the leaders to delegate the same persons each time to participate in UNESCO's various activities, thereby reducing the participating opportunities for the rest. The issue needs to be carefully scrutinized and addressed, to determine the causes of limited participation. It may be because that UNESCO does not organise enough events for the delegates of member states, or because the delegates do not find these events worth attending. This has to be properly identified and remedial actions must be put in place to increase participation in cultural conservation activities.

Now is the time to answer the two questions of the research, but very briefly, so that the same discussion that was previously presented in more than one place is not repeated.

*1. In what respects has UNESCO played a role in sustaining cultural diversity in Oman during the last fifty years, 1970-2020?*

1. As previously mentioned in this chapter (page 203), UNESCO has succeeded in promoting cultural diversity in its member states, including the Sultanate of Oman. The most important aspect of success lies in helping to preserve cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. Oman has so far five tangible cultural heritage sites in the word list, and nine intangible cultural heritage elements, and these lists are increasing year on year. The Sultanate uses its common experience with UNESCO in preserving and developing these sites in the rest of the various local sites, in addition to everything related to supporting cultural diversity. For example, but not limited to, Oman has benefited from the periodic reports requested by UNESCO annually, and the scientific issues on which it is based, in its work related to the preservation of its local heritage symbols and sites. Moreover, the various international and regional conferences and joint programs implemented between Oman and UNESCO during the last fifty years, see Chapter 4, have greatly contributed to the development of the Omani cultural scene and sustaining Oman cultural diversity.

*2. What is the relationship between the aims and outcomes of UNESCO's activities within the Sultanate of Oman?*

Speaking generically away from Oman, one of the important findings of this research is evidence that respondents expressed their confidence in UNESCO to preserve world heritage. They see UNESCO as a trusteeship-like institution with the capacity and mandate to actively advocate and assist member states directly in preserving their natural and cultural heritage.

Participants expressed the view that preserving Oman's heritage will be a success story with or without UNESCO. Of course, with UNESCO, it is more successful because it has raised the status of heritage and all cultural programs from the local to the international level. They emphasized that the efforts made to preserve heritage and to include sites on the World Heritage List in Oman are still below the level of ambition commensurate with the wealth of the Sultanate.

### **9.3. Policy recommendations**

Based on the above findings, some policy recommendations are offered which are expected to make a positive contribution to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage worldwide

and in Oman in particular. The recommendations are offered under four different but interrelated headings: (I) general recommendations which both UNESCO and member states can initiate, (II) recommendations from the perspective of Oman, (III) recommendations from the perspective of UNESCO, and (IV) a summary of the points that should be investigated in the future.

#### *9.3.1. General recommendations*

General recommendations are capable of being initiated and implemented by all the parties for the overall benefit of heritage across the world.

##### *Developing people's awareness of culture and heritage*

The interview respondents are of the view that there is a lack of awareness among the general population about the importance and value of preserving and maintaining cultural heritage. However, peoples' awareness is at the core of proper nurturing of culture and heritage. In fact, heritage is by the people, of the people and for the people. As heritage consists of material elements and spiritual culture, awareness creation must involve different approaches. For instance, for tangible and natural heritage, which have a physical presence, peoples' acceptance of the need to maintain the neatness and cleanliness of the heritage sites is important. Since tourism is a vital activity surrounding heritage sites, utmost care must be taken so that sustainable tourism is ensured without any deviation. Campaigns for environmentally responsible or sustainable tourism with the help of tourism departments at the state level, as well as international tourism organizations at the request of UNESCO, should be deliberately implemented to make people conscious of their role in preserving heritage. Tourism constitutes a major portion of government income and hence this sector cannot be discouraged. As a result, environmentally responsible or sustainable tourism should be implemented gradually. This means that an abrupt shift from traditional to environmental tourism may have a disruptive effect on the tourism industry as a whole because people need adequate time to adapt to a new system abandoning their old practices.

Therefore, a gradual shift is recommended. Although at the beginning, a pro-environmental approach of tourism may seem to be economically value-reducing, in the long run, the cost benefit analysis will support such approach. This, however, requires proper

planning to identify the sources of environmentally degrading activities in the tourism value chain. For example, the tourism value chain includes accommodation, food and beverages, transportation and ground handling, and activities or excursions. All these steps involve the use of resources and a carbon footprint. Sustainable tourism depends critically on identifying the carbon footprint of each of these activities and mitigating them (Michailidou et al., 2016; Lee and Hsieh, 2016; Mihalic, 2016, Miller et al., 2015).

The primary responsibility for this lies on UNESCO at the top, and member states at the bottom. UNESCO should find some ways to implement such an awareness programs on a continuous basis. It is understood that UNESCO has financing constraints. Keeping this in mind, UNESCO should utilize the resources of member states in creating awareness among people to preserve and maintain cultural heritage. This first requires preparing medium to long-term plans. A medium-term plan may include seminars, exhibitions, conferences, and other such events. The resources required for such events are not hefty or unaffordable to member states; they can seek resources from various local and multinational corporations as sponsors. Such an engagement of corporations is also expected to increase the publicity for heritage which, in turn, increases the awareness among people.

In the long-run, UNESCO can encourage member states to include history, its importance as well as the self-actualization aspect of a culture or heritage, to the national curriculum. Since promoting education is also a primary purpose of the organisation, UNESCO can take the lead in this very well and at a minimum cost compared to alternatives. But this will require enormous efforts from UNESCO as it has to convince national leaders by highlighting the intellectual, aesthetic, and material benefits a member state can derive from inculcating its culture and heritage into the mind of new generations.

On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is very delicate and hence protection of ICH must be approached differently. In particular, methods that involve constant practicing and repeating elements of ICH should be applied. Some forms of cultural heritage are nurtured by smaller population groups such as a tribe or local community. In such a case, attempts should be made to make this group aware of the universal value of the specific culture they are inculcating. To help achieve these objectives, measures such as general education to create awareness, special training on the proper methods and mechanisms to identify and preserve culture and heritage, and showcasing at the national and international level, may need to be taken. The role of museums, professionals, media and educational institutions needs to be assessed and properly utilized to make people aware about the culture and heritage. For example, independent research organizations can continue their

endeavor discovering ICH while proposing best strategies to preserve the existing ones. Research and educational institutions can contribute by developing educational practices and activities to be used in and out of the classroom. At the same time, they can attempt to spread the knowledge about ICH especially with regard to their preservation and development. It is also important to instil a sense of cultural diversity among communities. Media can play a critical role to highlight near-extinct ICH and help survive valuable ICH. Other civil think-tanks including NGOs can attempt to establish networks with several stakeholders and train people to increase their understanding and awareness about culture and cultural diversity that can be kept alive through preserving ICH.

There should be medium to long term plans to achieve these objectives. In the medium-term, various efforts can be made, for example, to redirect tourism policy to highlight the intangible culture of the country. In so doing, the member states should come forward with their strategic plans and communicate those plans with UNESCO who should play a facilitating role in implementing those plans. Internally, member states should coordinate among and between different ministries such as the tourism ministry, ministry of culture and heritage, ministry of religious affairs, and ministry of environment. In the long-term, proper preservation of intangible cultural heritage requires a greater role of tribes and museums. Intangible cultures, in particular, those which are nurtured by small communities or tribes, are at a risk of extinction if adequate measures are not put in place. Member states should identify those ICH and take various measures including proper recording and spreading the cultures among the mainstream population of the country.

#### *Increased engagement of civil society*

Like raising public awareness, engaging civil society is a *sine qua non* for ensuring greater preservation of cultural and natural heritage. I have found through the interviews that the current level of civil society engagement with UNESCO's work is not sufficient although this multilateral body recognizes that "the working principle of UNESCO is that it is not enough to make a difference to the delegates, but it is important to make a difference to the person on the street, which is actually the civil society" stated by Bacardi (See chapter 7 page 166 for details). Civil society includes non-profit organizations or NGOs, community organizations, and professional and volunteer groups which can identify the spaces for improvement of any public activities and the ways to achieve this (like the Connecting Cultures Project, (see chapter 4 page 91). However, opportunities for UNESCO to directly engage civil society are very limited, which can be attributed to the fact that the fundamental



job of UNESCO is to set standards and promote knowledge. It (UNESCO) is an intergovernmental organization and not so much an implementing agency with lots of operational work. Hence such a limitation reduces its capacity to engage civil society.

Nevertheless, both UNESCO and the member states should seek more possibilities to engage civil society. There are numerous opportunities through which both UNESCO and member states can engage civil society (both the national and international think-tanks) to help improve the work of the organization in the fields of education, culture, science, and information. Such an attempt will not only help increase public awareness about the values of heritage as mentioned above but also this effort will stimulate innovative ideas and knowledge for both member states and UNESCO as to how UNESCO's limited resources can be used economically to achieve the stated objectives.

While this top-down approach remains valid, there is the possibility that a bottom-up approach to support cultural heritage can be applied. A bottom-up approach, which comes about through the relationship of people to objects, places and practices, refers to the development and preservation of heritage at the local level (Harrison, 2010). A notable example of such an initiative is the Barrio Yungay, in Chile. The neighbourhood was built in the 19th century and became a workers' neighbourhood characterized by the presence of one flat house with a central common space. To maintain the status quo the residents formed 'Neighbors in defense of Yungay', an organization that intended to protect the neighbourhood from real estate pressures. The organization eventually managed to convince the Council of National Monuments to declare the area as a typical zone in 2009. Since then, development of cultural and heritage has been taking place in Yungay in several ways (Tyler et al., 2018) .

At present, UNESCO has created some opportunities for NGOs to be involved with evaluating files. However, more avenues should be opened for these kinds of compatible organizations to be involved with various projects initiated by national government and UNESCO alike. In particular, cultural heritage has traditionally been identified, maintained and protected by culture professionals who leave very limited room for the local community to be engaged to maintain their own assets. Local communities can be mobilized by the state parties, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture for instance, to identify previously untapped sources of talent, inspiration, ideas and energy amongst their citizens. Sometimes NGOs can play this role as part of their commitment towards the society. Also, cultural outreach programmes, from central authority to local authority or community, can be increased so that civil society experiences more opportunities to be engaged.

A point to note here is that such a responsibility lies more on the shoulders of national government rather than UNESCO. Member states must find ways to attract their civil organizations to be proactive in cultural conservation. Although civil society in Oman is not left much space because the government sectors crowd out civil society, some notable organizations including the human rights group and the women's association are working to reduce the gender gap and create awareness about individual rights. Also, some Omani groups concerned with preserving heritage and culture, such as "Memory of Oman", play positive and pioneering roles that deserve to be linked to the roles played by UNESCO and other relevant organizations. Moreover, research, development and excavation of heritage sites are examples in which civil society's participation in heritage conservation can be encouraged.

Engaging civil society has no short-term solution. There should be a medium to long-term vision in which relevant ministries can ask the existing NGOs to submit their future vision so that national government can find appropriate promotional works to be distributed to these NGOs. In addition, various research-related initiatives from the national government should be encouraged. At present, The Research Council (TRC) of Oman sponsors various types of research. Heritage research, which is not properly emphasized in the current plan, can be linked to TRC projects. Such an attempt will create various avenues for civil society associations to engage with culture and heritage preservation.

### *9.3.2. Recommendations from the perspective of Oman*

#### *Oman's internal strength should be enhanced*

The Sultanate of Oman is internationally recognized for its cultural and biological diversity. Over the last five decades, Oman experienced remarkable achievements in terms of discovering and preserving cultural and natural heritage under the farsighted vision and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Its continuous effort to present cultural and natural heritage to the international community has earned it a reputation which deserves to be maintained. It requires however, ever increasing efforts toward this end. Based on this expectation, the consensus, found in the survey, is that the national efforts to protect, support and develop this diversity are still inadequate. Oman's internal cultural strength, specially the ministry of Heritage and Culture and Ministry of Tourism as well as all cultural-affairs bodies, should be enhanced by increasing the size of those responsible bodies to a

reasonable extent along with increasing their skills and experience through training and development .

To make any specific recommendations in this particular regard, further research is required to examine the internal weaknesses of certain ministries or agencies. However, it can be inferred based on my survey results that the preservation of archeological sites according to modern standards is an essential common goal. Many respondents argue that the Sultanate lacks unified efforts for discovering, recording, preserving, and international listing of archeological sites. Undoubtedly, additional listing of sites while preserving the old is vital to this effort. These world sites should be displayed through organizing seminars, symposiums, and festivals so that the new generation is acquainted with the history and culture of Oman. This will not only help people to be aware about culture and heritage of the country and its high contribution to sustainable development, but also 'word of mouth' marketing for tourism will be enhanced at least nationally.

Here, some short-term targets can be set. For example, organizing seminars and symposiums across the major and populated cities as well as towns in Oman will have high impact on creating awareness among people. In addition, such initiatives are expected to introduce Omani culture and heritage to the mass population which will help effectively to maintain and preserve them. Obviously, primary responsibility to initiate such efforts lies with the ministry of cultural and Heritage. In fact, these initiatives fall into their regular function and hence significant extra resources are not essential. Only a proper understanding of what needs to be emphasized in those seminars and symposiums is required. The ministry of cultural affairs can seek input from social think-tanks by engaging civil societies. In addition, the medium- to long-term vision should emphasize capacity building among local experts so that more and more cultural and heritage sites can be identified and put forward for the UNESCO heritage list.

Oman is considered to be a country with great reserves of heritage and cultural landmarks which have enabled it to be one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world. For instance, in 2008, the Sultanate of Oman was chosen as the best international tourist destination in the poll conducted by Vogue International Magazine. (Sherine, 2014). As a result, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture should work together to create Oman as an attractive platform for tourists. Oman is very stable politically and is a welcoming country. It is also rich in natural heritage. These two determinants should be emphasized in campaigns to promote Oman. The infrastructure of Oman is also up to the mark, especially after the opening of the new airport in Muscat and other airports and

seaports in different cities. Unlike some cities and states which emphasize modern architectural beauty for tourism purposes, Oman can emphasize landscape-based natural tourism in which it has some unique features.

Moreover, these ministries' collaborative activities with the outside world can be enhanced through mutual cooperation and cultural exchanges. Even though the respondents have suggested that 'further efforts are essential to preserve Omani tangible and intangible heritage' (Question 25 of the questionnaire), they placed special emphasis on this aspect stating that there is a lack of harmonization between Oman's international acceptance or recognition in the field of cultural and biological diversity and its national efforts in this field. This means that offices in charge of tourism, heritage, and cultural affairs in Oman need to strengthen their internal networking and cooperative efforts between and among them towards preserving and maintaining cultural and natural heritage. Internal capacity, in particular, the diplomatic capacity of Omani experts needs to be enhanced for this to occur. This particular weakness in the transition from local to international is not peculiar to Oman, but to Arab countries in general (shown in chapter 4). Thus, the entire region should work together to increase their networking capacity. A regional forum could be formed to share experience and ideas at the respective country level toward a common heritage goal in the region.

#### *There is more room for Oman-UNESCO cooperation*

This point is related to our analysis of the preceding point. There is no question about the fact that Oman enjoys cordial relations with UNESCO. It has also been stated that a go-it-alone policy for preserving heritage without the help of UNESCO is unlikely to pay off for Oman. Yet there is still room for furthering Oman-UNESCO cooperation. Although this initiative may come from either side of the collaboration, Oman must be proactive in this regard because UNESCO is an internationally recognized body to help countries preserve and maintain their cultural heritage. Oman, and especially the primary responsible body to coordinate between Oman and UNESCO, the ONCECS, must utilize this organisation and its platforms to showcase its culture, heritage, and biological diversity to the world. For example, the Sultanate of Oman, cultural entities in cooperation with the ONCECS, can do more to list more tangible and documentary sites on UNESCO's world records (World Heritage List and Memory of the World Record).

When respondents were asked to specify the number of times they have participated in one or more activities organized by UNESCO or the ONCECS in the survey, most of them said the number is less than two (50% of the participants). Only very few responded attended training and conferences more than three times. This is, indeed, a point to ponder. Why is the number so unexpectedly low? Is it because UNESCO and the ONCECS do not organize more events such as workshops, conferences, symposia, exhibitions so that more people can attend and earn knowledge and skills to employ them for better work? There is no convincing explanation for this result even utilizing my work experience in the National Commission over a long period, Given the massive number of events that the ONCECS organizes in cooperation with a number of concerned authorities, it was expected that everyone would have participated several events. In Chapter 6 (page 145) two possible reasons were suggested for this perplexing result. One is that the organized events are not attractive or participatory enough to attract participants, assuming that participation is voluntary. Another possible reason is that the civil servants are rotated quickly between different posts, responsibilities or ministries which results in the constant emergence of new staff.

It follows that there is room for major improvement in this regard. To improve the rate of participation a questionnaire survey to prospective participants should be conducted to assess the exact reasons for absenteeism. The ONCECS can easily do it without incurring exorbitant cost. The findings of this survey can be used to increase participation in events. To address the second problem, work rotation should not be so frequent that a particular officer changes desk without properly understanding the ins and outs of the assigned jobs.

### *Economic interest over cultural affairs can be reassessed*

Respondents considered that the withdrawal of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary from the UNESCO WHL was an exception to the spirit of preserving natural heritage in Oman. UNESCO, as a flagship organization of heritage conservation, was not happy about the way Oman dealt with Arabian Oryx Sanctuary. However, Oman is a sovereign nation and it has the right to decide about its internal affairs when there is conflict between heritage conservation and economic interest. It is not unique in this. However, our point here is to argue that it is important to have second thoughts and to explore all the alternatives before a site is permanently abolished from the World Heritage List. In other words, all the alternatives to delisting a site must be exhausted. This argument is sensible because Oman has shown its pro-heritage attitudes in the past few decades, but it seems that the economic

rationale is sometimes prioritized over cultural or aesthetic interest as reflected in the case of the delisting the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary. At the same time, there must be an impact assessment after an event occurs. No such study has been conducted so far since the delisting of Arabian Oryx Sanctuary.

Thus, it is imperative to examine if the assumed benefits have been realized or not. Such a study may not serve to restore the original state of the Sanctuary even if the perceived benefit was not realized, but such an impact assessment would provide guidelines for similar actions in the future. To accomplish this objective, a working group or an ad-hoc committee can be formed if there is a necessity to alter a heritage site. The committee will thoroughly study the pros and cons of altering the site, and what alternatives are available to achieve a particular national objective without altering a heritage site. The committee must envision the economic worth as well as the cultural value of heritage. The result of the report can be communicated to various stakeholders, nationally and internationally, for further discussion. This will reduce the chance of making a wrong decision.

The hope is that Oman is sufficiently rich in natural and cultural heritage, and that the delisting of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary has not created a permanent scar on the spirit of heritage conservation. However, listing a site on UNESCO's World Heritage List gives it additional value. Thus, Oman can utilize the opportunity to add more sites to the UNESCO heritage list. In so doing, the state has to engage civil society and all stakeholders for several purposes (i) to identify heritage, tangible or intangible, that has the potential to be listed (ii) to prepare the file offering the heritage to UNESCO for consideration to list (iii) to mobilize network advantage and seek support from members states highlighting the cultural importance of heritage (iv) to follow-up with UNESCO and the ONCECS to periodically update the status of the file/ site and send the reports.

#### *Establishment of an Oman World Heritage Centre*

The registration of five files of tangible cultural heritage and nine elements of intangible cultural heritage in UNESCO's world lists is an achievement for the Sultanate that should be preserved and developed by increasing the number of these files as much as possible for the reasons already explained in detail in the previous chapters of this study.

However, a number of respondents in the interviews and survey pointed to the need for an independent centre in the Sultanate to deal with all these files and elements of both tangible and intangible heritage that have been registered and will be registered, under one

umbrella. The need for this centre or committee, in addition to facilitating the requirements of the existing elements, is that it would facilitate the registration requirements of the new elements, which have to be subject to the criteria in terms of first creating a national tentative list, and then following the detailed registration steps, in accordance with the latest World Heritage Centre's conditions. Of course, attention will be given to the ONCECS and the reasons for not being able to play this important role as the entity that cares about the world heritage. The truth is that the ONCECS has supervision over the five different areas of UNESCO. It also deals with three organizations, not just UNESCO. The Centre must attract experts and technicians specialized in the field of heritage to perform the work required of it to the fullest, as discussed in Chapter 7. It is difficult for the ONCECS to achieve all these goals with the current organizational structure. Quoting from one interview with a participant who emphasized this point,

"Our problem is that 'heritage' is not our specialty, and when we requested a financial item for that, our request was rejected, as the ministry is not interested in this approach. Also, with regard to tourism development, our request was rejected by the Supreme Planning Council as it belongs to the Ministry of Tourism. Our specialty here is different as only our department in this ministry is dealing with heritage. When you go to the top leaders, they are dedicated to the ministry's main interests. The issues of heritage or tourism are not of their attention. And if we impose this site to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, there will be a gap because they will need us in technical matters. Hence, there is an urgent need for an independent body specialized on the Omani World Heritage".

The dispersion of these sites and elements between several government agencies makes it difficult for UNESCO, represented by the Omani National Commission, to follow up on the requirements of these sites like the periodic management plan to update the World Heritage Committee with the latest developments in this regard. On the one hand, the Commission has the advanced competencies required to manage global-standard Omani sites; on the other, it has weaknesses especially with regard to maintaining sites which simultaneously require machinery or equipment and consultation services. For example, according to the reactions of research participants, there is no comparison between and among the 'Archeological Sites of Bat, Al-Khutm and Al-Ayn (1988)' and 'Land of Frankincense (2000)' in terms of level of cleanliness and care for the sites and overall management. This may be for various reasons including insufficient supply of resources and lack of proper planning and management.

These are the issues that can be tackled easily in the short-term. For example, these problems happen not because there is always a lack of adequate resources, but also because of lack of adequate dissemination of information and proper monitoring. Thus, when there is a shortage of supplies, the centre must inform the headquarters at the station to deliver supplies in time. A concrete recommendation would be to create a small 'supplies requisition and monitoring committee' at the country level to take care of this. In the long run, creation of a national centre or committee for Omani world heritage is urgently required. It requires each party that succeeds in listing a site or element in the world list to have a representative on this body. Such an effort will inevitably raise the efficiency of all concerned sites and generate attention and focus on them. This will eliminate the need for new departments to be created in the government bodies which are specialized in these Omani world sites. Much of its success, however, would depend on its organizational structure, including the scope of operation and supervision. Autonomous status for the centre would be a good starting point.

#### *Completion of establishing the category II centre under UNESCO*

Chapter 4 of this thesis which covers Oman and UNESCO sheds light on the centres and institutes established under UNESCO in categories I and II. The Sultanate is proposing to establish a category II centre for handicraft industries as Oman is a pioneer in this field at the regional level (see Chapter 4 page 105).

In addition to the above recommendations, the establishment of such a centre in Oman under the umbrella of UNESCO should greatly contribute to the enhancement of the cooperation between the Organization and the Sultanate, as well as its role in promoting the richness of Oman in culture and heritage, and exchanging experiences at various levels locally, regionally and internationally in preserving, developing and advancing the common heritage to the regional and global level.

#### *9.3.3. Recommendations from the perspective of UNESCO*

##### *Sources of finance should be diversified and strengthened*

UNESCO is a not-for-profit organization which runs on the contributions of member states and extra budgetary contributions. It has been experiencing financial hardship since the US stopped paying its dues in 2011 and finally withdrew its membership in December 2018 to



remain as an observer. In one sense, it can be said that UNESCO is used to this sort of financial constraint. It has been able to adjust to this condition over the years. On the other hand, such an adjustment comes at the cost of serious reduction in programmes, activities, and personnel.

As an example, UNESCO has suspended its contribution programme to several member states since 2011, involving programmes costing in excess of US\$100,000. This procedure may affect UNESCO's prestige, power and its active role in its five areas of work on the international scene. Thus, it is imperative to attempt to alleviate the financial hardship of UNESCO. The best option is definitely to request the member states to increase their contribution proportionately to compensate the loss caused by the withdrawal of the US. This may seem to be difficult, but UNESCO should make an attempt to convince the member states that the survival of this intergovernmental institution is in the best interests of member states and cultural heritage of the world at large. Although motivational attempts to convince member states to pay their dues will remain in place, Hufner (2017) suggests that UNESCO asks for advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice as to the obligations of member states under the Charter of the United Nations in the matter of financing. He refers to a 1962-case where such an opinion was asked.

UNESCO can consider various academic studies which show that UNESCO listing of sites increases tourism value significantly (see for example, Buckley, 2004; Huang et al. 2012; Mariani and Guizzardi, 2019). However, tourism is a small part of what UNESCO offers to the member states. For instance, the World Heritage (WH) brand signals property so irreplaceable that its values must be sustained intact in perpetuity. A single country or a particular community may find it difficult to ensure the perpetuity of that property due to financial incapacity or technical know-how. UNESCO can highlight through workshops or conferences the cases of sites or valuable properties or even languages which were irreplaceable and invaluable in terms of historical and aesthetic values but became extinct due to improper maintenance or carelessness. Thus, member states have something to gain from being associated with UNESCO.

Currently, there are 193 member states of UNESCO. Hence, it is realistically impossible to effectively increase its membership as well as financial contribution significantly. The best option could be to convince the USA, which paid about a quarter of the budget of UNESCO, to rejoin. Towards this, cultural diplomacy may be a powerful tool. US is one of the top 10 countries listing their sites in the world heritage list. As of 2019, USA has a total of 24 sites included in the list. Obviously, this country has the capacity to maintain and preserve them

alone, but a combined effort with UNESCO would enhance the aesthetic values of these sites. A dedicated team of UNESCO should emphasize this aspect to convince the USA for joining again as a regular member.

Alternatively, UNESCO has to apply cultural diplomacy by which it can obtain the commitment from the members, who did not pay in the past, to pay their dues. If UNESCO can collect dues from the member states, the amount would be enough to repay the debt. For instance, Hufner (2017) estimated that as of 2016, the United States owed a total debt of US\$470.84 million, and Israel US\$7.13 million. Japan, the second largest contributor, did not pay its annual dues of US \$31.26 million for 2016. They combine 41 per cent of the mandatory contributions and the total amount is very close to UNESCO's regular budget for one biennium. Moreover, a heritage-based regional contributing bloc like a regional economic-bloc may be created in which each member in the region may support others for their contribution to UNESCO. A number of respondents from the study sample indicated that there are many UNESCO external offices in different countries of the world whose staff and activities are draining the UNESCO budget. Perhaps an intelligent and fast assessment of this reduction, especially with the era of technology and easy communication with member states, will help greatly to maintain the organization's budget and direct it towards greater effectiveness in establishing different programmes and activities. Perhaps, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 signals an opportunity for UNESCO to learn how to manage its affair remotely. UNESCO can seriously think of replacing physical human resources with technology to save costs.

#### *Enhancing outreach of UNESCO's activities*

UNESCO should also focus on extending its outreach to the majority of the world population. One important area to target for this purpose is the existing digital divide. The digital divide, represented by the growing inequality between the rich and poor nationally and internationally in accessing new information technologies, is a critical social stigma of the modern world. Various initiatives at both state and international levels have been undertaken to reduce the digital divide across countries. UNESCO is a flagship organization that has made commendable efforts to reduce the worldwide digital divide. It has initiated various projects including support for knowledge and information activities for low-income areas in various countries. But current outreach efforts of UNESCO are not enough to have a significant impact on reducing the digital divide. In addition, the ongoing financial constraint

is believed to have a negative impact on its capacity to expand the outreach activities to bridge the gap.

The research respondents did not give an affirmative answer to the question as to whether UNESCO is effective in reducing the digital divide. This may be due to the fact that UNESCO's attempt to bridge the digital divide goes unnoticed or does not reach a broader audience. This calls for an additional effort in outreach activities as well as evaluating UNESCO's work in this area. Also, UNESCO currently publishes its documents in six official languages which restrict its reach to people who speak languages other than these languages. Regarding the Arabic language, on 18 December 1973, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Arabic as the sixth official language of the Organization. Since 2012, the International Day of the Arabic language is celebrated every year on 18 December to promote and celebrate this language. However, working documents in the Arabic language and translations relating to all documents of the agreements, programmes and future plans of the Organization should be made available by seeking funding in partnership between the Organization and interested Arab States. Although it is not the ideal time to propose this, owing to budget constraints, an increase in UNESCO's activities beyond its head office is the basic *raison d'être* of UNESCO.

#### *UNESCO should maintain its neutrality*

There are two issues in this regard: balancing education vs. culture, and political neutrality. The common perception is that UNESCO cares more for education than culture. However, the organization argues that the state parties mostly decide on the agenda and the budget, so the secretariat has little influence in setting priorities. In addition, new setbacks may emerge due to the on-going financial constraints of UNESCO as this limitation would mean that UNESCO has to rely more on member states for budgetary contributions. Thus, UNESCO needs to provide stakeholders with clarification to mitigate information asymmetry and misconceptions regarding the priority of one sector over other. Moreover, the balancing task, if there is any, should come more from the member states rather from UNESCO itself. Perhaps, inadequate outreach from UNESCO, as indicated earlier, may have been responsible for this perception. Thus, UNESCO's outreach office should properly disseminate information regarding its role, duties, and limitations to dispel any misunderstanding to member countries.

The second issue is maintaining the political neutrality of UNESCO for which it deserves more credit. Some critics (Shepherd, 2006; Ericksen, 2001), both state and non-state actors, have argued that UNESCO will sometimes bend under political pressure. For example, the US withdrew its membership in 1984 alleging that UNESCO used to advance Soviet interests, only to rejoin in 2003. Again, the belief that UNESCO was biased towards Palestine at the expense of Israel prompted the US and Israel to withdraw in 2018 (see above, page 211). Apart from these claims, which need more explanation in the context of international power politics, UNESCO has been able to protect itself from being politicized by the great powers, thanks to the absence of the 'veto' power which applies in the Security Council - one of the United Nations organs. This has resulted in increased trust in UNESCO's activities which the organization needs to maintain to carry out its mission. Although it is difficult to imagine cultural diplomacy without political elements, UNESCO should rely on political elements as a means of cultural diplomacy to the extent that it enhances the overall welfare of heritage conservation and maintenance. However, it has to engage with NGOs and other civil society entities as well.

#### *9.3.4. Summary of the points that can be investigated in the future*

In the interests of completeness and objectivity, it is appropriate to list here a number of recommendations and suggestions gained from the reactions of respondents to the questionnaire. They are not included in the above but should be addressed in further research and studies on the content of this thesis.

- There must be a clear and agreed upon vision for the actual development of the cultural fields in the Sultanate, and there should be joint efforts between all institutions working in the culture sector. Oman's Cultural Heritage Act was issued on May 2, 2019, with the participation of various government agencies and civil society organisations related to heritage issues, making it a leap forward and a block to build the vision in this regard. E-Oman, which was characterized by the idea of 'big data', where big data is used to tackle challenges in real time, is another block (Saxena and Sharma, 2016). The Oman 2040 vision, adopted after days of deliberation from various stakeholders and civil society, is a major step forward in the field of strategic planning, including without doubt the cultural aspect. The vision catchphrase was "All Oman" meaning that, unlike before, everyone has a stake in the formulation of this vision. Several meetings were held in all the cities of Oman. The vision was

elaborated under three main themes: individual and society, economy and development, governance and institutional performance.

- Increasing opportunities for training and qualification for Omani youth in UNESCO's corridors and informing them of all that is new and useful. It is true that in recent times, more opportunities have been created for young people to participate in UNESCO programmes and clubs, such as the UNESCO Forum, which is held immediately before the General Conference every two years. However, the participation of specialists in the field of world heritage in a training programme at UNESCO HQ funded by their work will contribute to the identification of experts on the basis of the standards necessary to conform to the practices and the focus of UNESCO.
- There is a failure to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage located outside the Sultanate, which belongs to the Sultanate, such as the Omani manuscripts in Zanzibar, which have been subject to damage or theft by people who may not appreciate their historical value. UNESCO can help Oman by upholding the conventions in this regard or via the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation.
- There is a need from UNESCO to amend the registration clauses of intangible cultural heritage files as they sometimes cause confusion between the Urgent Safeguarding List and the normal list, so that two different States should not be allowed to register the file under two different files with the same name. An example of this is the 'Art of Al-'Azzi', which the Sultanate of Oman succeeded in including on the List of Intangible World Heritage for Humanity in 2012, to be followed by the United Arab Emirates inscribing it to the List of Intangible Heritage in Needs of Urgent Safeguarding in 2017.
- Oman's delegations to participate in the meetings of UNESCO always change (unlike most countries). This leads to a lack of specialization and depth in the terms of reference of the participating committees and represents a lack of Omani experts in these areas. An exclusive club of the same delegates does not support other aims, like widening participation. The diversification of cadres participating in the corridors and programmes of UNESCO and other organisations would contribute to increasing the knowledge quantity of a greater number of Omani experts, and at the same time reduce the negativity of the "lack of participation in the activities and programmes of UNESCO" previously discussed in Chapter 6.

- The efforts of the Oman National Commission (ONCECS) in urging the concerned authorities to register the Omani heritage onto the WHL are positive and important, but it is recommended that the ONCECS expands its efforts and moves away from its focus on the capital so that it has access in the different governorates in Oman as well. This recommendation is intended to ensure that the ONCECS finds arenas to its activities (not only in the cultural sphere but also in all the areas in which it operates) outside the capital Muscat, where more than 90% of the initiatives and activities of the Commission are based.

#### **9.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has summarized the major findings of the research. It is to be noted that only major findings are highlighted here, and that further detailed results are available in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Based on these findings, some policy prescriptions are also offered. These policy options are observed from the perspective of Oman, and UNESCO. However, the cited policies are not an exhaustive list. They are only based on the findings of this thesis. Thus, care must be taken that these prescriptions are to be interpreted in context.

Finally, the contribution of this thesis to the existing literature can be highlighted under several headings, as follows

##### *9.4.1 Complex relations between UNESCO and Member states*

UNESCO is primarily a intergovernmental organization, as mentioned several times during this thesis, and what the Director-Generals (DGs) and all the members of the UNESCO Secretariat do in the Headquarters (HQ) and its offices is only to implement what is agreed upon by the two governing bodies of the organization: the Executive Board (EB) (which meets at least twice a year), and the General Conference (GC) (which meets every two years). The GC consists of representatives of all the member states of the organization, whereas the EB members rotate according to the elections held at the GC.

Thus, the relationship of UNESCO with the Member States is reciprocal to serve common interests. UNESCO's authority depends on the appreciation and delegation of member states because it needs to persuade these countries to be part of UNESCO and to contribute to financial and moral support, and this is what UNESCO lacks in many cases. It must uphold its own moral principles, while preventing the pressures of great powers or the

so-called "conflict of interests" from affecting it. As demonstrated by the interviews in UNESCO and Oman, and by Kozymka (2014), this mission is certainly not easy. However, the organization has been relatively successful in maintaining its ethical basis which is the fundamental ground for its existence.

Nevertheless, the great role that the National Commissions for UNESCO and the permanent delegations in Paris do play (or should play) must be recognised. From my experience of working in the Oman National Commission for more than a decade, it is clear that it has a pivotal role in making the relationship between UNESCO and the member state a strong or weak one. For example: providing the participating delegations with the necessary documents for each field at the General Conference meetings, and making the commission the 'Focal Point' and the House of Expertise on all issues related to UNESCO. It enhances the Sultanate's position in the organization and further strengthens the bonds of cooperation with it. There is reason to believe that the ONCECS has more to deliver, especially in terms of maintaining liaison with its foreign counterparts and establishing stronger ties with UNESCO.

On the other hand, as explained in Chapter 7 (page 165), UNESCO lacks power that is essential to get its principles accepted and applied in some circumstance. It proposes policies and guidelines. However, eventually it is up to the member states to accept them. There are many examples mentioned in this regard, but the best evidence for this claim from Oman's side is undoubtedly what happened with the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (see above in this chapter). The conflicts which occurred when establishing the 2005 Convention to protect and promote cultural expressions between the United States, on one hand, and France and Canada, on the other, is another example (Kozymka, 2014).

Nevertheless, UNESCO must continue to wield its soft power in order to defend the principles for which it was created and strengthen its relations with compatible non-governmental institutions. Together, combining strong support and self-reliance they can hope to neutralize the influence of superpower politics in strategic decision-making.

#### *9.4.2 Re-examination of some key concepts related to heritage*

Understanding the concepts which are part and parcel of UNESCO's activities, is essential for proper formulation of guidelines and their effective implementation. Although such concepts already exist in the burgeoning literature on culture and heritage, this thesis has re-examined some key concepts related to heritage such as cultural diversity, cultural

diplomacy, the interrelationship between culture and religion, between culture and politics, natural vs. cultural heritage, tangible and intangible heritage including underwater heritage etc. The uniqueness of these clarifications here, compared to the existing literature, is that these concepts are spelled out in the interviews with UNESCO officials who plan strategies and prepare guidelines for member states. This supply side (UNESCO) view is then compared with the understanding of the demand side (member states, Oman in this case). An articulate and consistent understanding of these concepts between these two interacting parties are prerequisite for policy formulation and implementation. Only then we can expect to observe a pragmatic relation between society and culture and appreciate the role of heritage for attaining mutual respect and peace.

#### *9.4.3 An inside view of the interplay between culture, religion, and politics*

Another important contribution of the thesis is that it has reassessed the role of UNESCO in promoting culture when culture is mixed with or influenced by politics and religion. In the past, UNESCO faced some critical questions (or has been criticized) in both political and religious terms (for example, in relation to the US-Russia and Palestine-US cases). This thesis viewed and highlighted these issues through the lens of UNESCO officials for further discussion and analysis. An inside view rather than a surface understanding constructed on the basis of certain presumptions and prejudices presents a clearer picture of the standing of this intergovernmental organization. UNESCO's view is clear in this particular regard - religion is an important part of culture which shapes and is shaped by culture or they reinforce each other. However, UNESCO does not talk about religion; it is not on its agenda. If an element of religion conflates with culture, UNESCO promotes it as cultural expression not as a religious construct. Similarly, cultural diplomacy as soft power is used as a tool for foreign policy. UNESCO believes that it has been able to maintain its neutrality required for managing heritage worldwide. One of the facts that is presented as evidence to support the above claim is that while UNESCO has accepted financial hardship, it has stood firmly by its decisions with regard to heritage preservation and development.

#### *9.4.4 The importance of civil society and national organizations*

Another important insight of this thesis is that it provides new evidence on the importance of engaging civil society to preserve natural and cultural heritage. Although such a view is not new in the literature, our findings have identified elements of civil society that can be



mobilized and empowered to facilitate heritage preservation. Emphasis has been placed on the role of academia, education institutes, NGOs, and other social think tanks. This finding is expected to create a new thrust for national government and UNESCO alike to find ways in which civil society can be engaged more in heritage preservation. The findings also contribute to showing how cooperation or lack thereof, can affect the effectiveness of national organizations which are responsible for upholding the national heritage. It is exemplified by Oman's National Commission (ONCECS) which is playing a pivotal role by helping Oman in preserving heritage. It can deliver much more by improving coordination between different branches of the state which are striving individually or jointly to preserve heritage in Oman.

#### *9.4.5 Testing the 'go-alone' hypothesis of a member state - Oman*

This thesis has examined in detail the interrelation between UNESCO and Oman. In this thesis, Oman serves as case from the pool of UNESCO's member states. The case of Oman illustrates some unique features compared to other member states because it is one of only two countries that have delisted a heritage site from the UNESCO's heritage list. The thesis provided an opportunity to explore the events of this unprecedented "historical" event by the Sultanate of Oman, which was reported by the media with great concern, especially for not disclosing the reason as to why the site had to be delisted. Also, it was a matter of concern whether this (delisting) damaged the relationship between Oman and the Organization. Obviously, such an event goes against the spirit of UNESCO. Thus, Oman is an ideal case to show the stance of UNESCO after this happening or how UNESCO deals with this issue and how the relationship between UNESCO and a member state develops after such an event. It has been found that UNESCO was respectful to a country's sovereign decision which is important for long-term relationships between UNESCO and its member states. This will provide a reference for other members states to form their expectation if such an event is inevitable. From this perspective, the statement that 'Oman itself can maintain and preserve its cultural heritage without the help of UNESCO' was not accepted by the respondents. Oman contributes financially more than it receives from UNESCO. But UNESCO membership is more than a simple financial give-and-take relation. This finding offers an important implication for other members of UNESCO. The organization helps member states to preserve and maintain heritage which may bear the history of a particular country or community. Thus, the brand value of being associated with UNESCO and the support it extends to member state are worth the contribution. The research has found that

Oman-UNESCO relations are amiable and conducive for mutual cooperation toward heritage conservation.

Appendix 1. - Royal Decree for Omani Heritage Law

**Royal Decree 35/2019  
Promulgating the Cultural Heritage Law**

We, Qaboos bin Said, the Sultan of Oman  
after perusal of the Basic Statute of the State promulgated by Royal Decree 101/96,  
the National Heritage Protection Law promulgated by Royal Decree 6/80,  
and Royal Decree 40/2016 Determining the Competences of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture  
and Approving its Organisational Structure,  
and after presentation to the Council of Oman,  
and in pursuance of public interest,

**have decreed as follows**

**Article I**

The attached Cultural Heritage Law shall apply.

**Article II**

The Minister of Culture and Heritage shall issue the executive regulation of this law within one year from the date of its entry into force, as well as the decisions necessary for implementing its provisions, and until they are issued, the regulations and decisions in force shall continue to operate to the degree that they do not contradict with its provisions.

**Article III**

The National Heritage Protection Law promulgated by Royal Decree 6/80 is hereby repealed, as well as every provision contrary to this law or in conflict with its provisions.

**Article IV**

This decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall come into force on the day following the date of its publication.

**Issued on: 26 Sha'ban 1440**

**Corresponding to: 2 May 2019**

**Qaboos bin Said  
Sultan of Oman**

1. Tentative List : The first step a country must take is to make an 'inventory' of its important natural and cultural heritage sites located within its boundaries. This 'inventory' is known as the Tentative List, and provides a forecast of the properties that a State Party may decide to submit for inscription in the next five to ten years and which may be updated at any time. It is an important step since the World Heritage Committee cannot consider a nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List unless the property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List.
2. The nomination file: By preparing a Tentative List and selecting sites from it, a State Party can plan when to present a nomination file. The World Heritage Centre offers advice and assistance to the State Party in preparing this file, which needs to be as exhaustive as possible, making sure the necessary documentation and maps are included. The nomination is submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review and to check it is complete. Once a nomination file is complete the World Heritage Centre sends it to the appropriate Advisory Bodies for evaluation.
3. The advisory bodies: A nominated property is independently evaluated by two Advisory Bodies mandated by the World Heritage Convention: the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), which respectively provide the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of the cultural and natural sites nominated. The third Advisory Body is the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), an intergovernmental organization which provides the Committee with expert advice on conservation of cultural sites, as well as on training activities.
4. The world heritage committee: Once a site has been nominated and evaluated, it is up to the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee to make the final decision on its inscription. Once a year, the Committee meets to decide which sites will be inscribed on the World Heritage List. It can also defer its decision and request further information on sites from the States Parties.
5. The criteria for selection: To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet the ten criteria. These criteria are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en>, Accessed on 22/4/2017.

#### Appendix 3.- (C5) UNESCO Programme and Budget 2018 – 2019

# Summary of integrated budget resources by operational and staff budget and by source of funds

## Integrated budget based on the Appropriated regular programme budget of \$595.2M

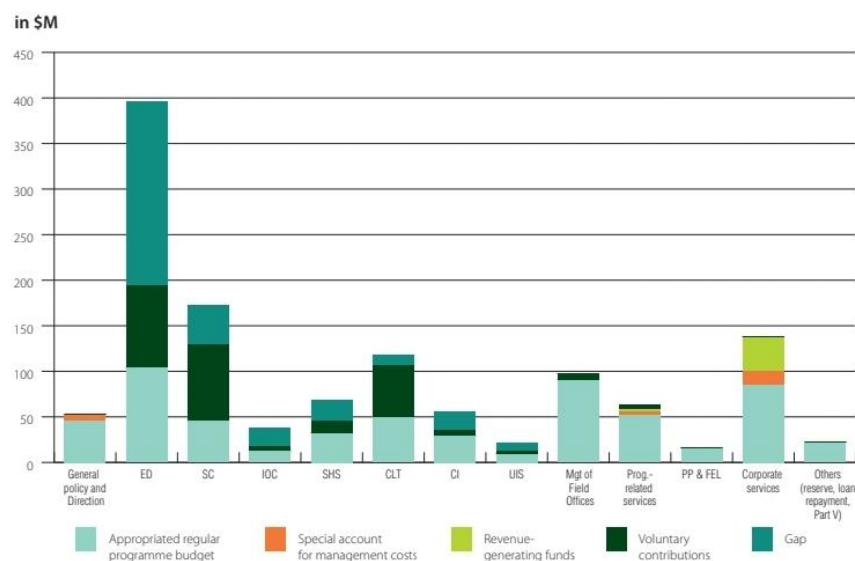
PART	Breakdown by operational and staff budget			Breakdown by source of funds					Total
	Operational budget	Staff budget	Total	Appropriated regular programme budget <sup>1</sup> \$595.2M	Special account for Management costs	Revenue-generating funds	Voluntary contributions	Gap	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>PART I – GENERAL POLICY AND DIRECTION</b>									
<b>A. Governing bodies</b>	8 047 900	2 251 500	10 299 400	10 299 400	–	–	–	–	10 299 400
<b>B. Direction</b>									–
1. Directorate	1 283 000	7 961 300	9 244 300	6 055 500	3 188 800	–	–	–	9 244 300
2. Internal Oversight	590 100	6 554 700	7 144 800	4 680 100	2 464 700	–	–	–	7 144 800
3. International Standards and Legal Affairs	297 500	4 300 800	4 598 300	3 012 200	1 586 100	–	–	–	4 598 300
4. Ethics	227 300	914 800	1 142 100	748 200	393 900	–	–	–	1 142 100
<b>C. Participation in the Joint Machinery of the United Nations System</b>	20 994 600	–	20 994 600	20 994 600	–	–	–	–	20 994 600
<b>TOTAL, PART I</b>	<b>31 440 400</b>	<b>21 983 100</b>	<b>53 423 500</b>	<b>45 790 000</b>	<b>7 633 500</b>	–	–	–	<b>53 423 500</b>
<b>PART II – PROGRAMMES AND PROGRAMME-RELATED SERVICES</b>									
<b>A. Programmes</b>									
Education	344 950 500	51 865 400	396 815 900	103 948 500	–	–	89 794 700	203 072 700	396 815 900
Natural sciences	144 161 800	28 604 300	172 766 100	46 320 500	–	–	83 132 500	43 313 100	172 766 100
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission	29 694 500	8 487 100	38 181 600	12 608 200	–	–	4 800 000	20 773 400	38 181 600
Social and human sciences	45 725 600	22 896 400	68 622 000	32 026 300	–	–	13 295 700	23 300 000	68 622 000
Culture	83 055 100	35 118 600	118 173 700	50 497 500	–	–	56 342 500	11 333 700	118 173 700
Communication and information	37 298 500	18 282 300	55 580 800	29 404 800	–	–	5 763 000	20 413 000	55 580 800
UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)	21 983 500	–	21 983 500	9 140 500	–	–	2 700 000	10 143 000	21 983 500
Management of field offices	40 305 000	53 694 400	93 999 400	87 204 700	–	141 800	6 652 900	–	93 999 400
Supplementary funding for the field network reform	659 800	3 080 200	3 740 000	3 740 000	–	–	–	–	3 740 000
<b>Total, II.A</b>	<b>747 834 300</b>	<b>222 028 700</b>	<b>969 863 000</b>	<b>374 891 000</b>	–	<b>141 800</b>	<b>262 481 300</b>	<b>332 348 900</b>	<b>969 863 000</b>
<b>B. Programme-related services</b>									
1. Coordination and monitoring of action to benefit Africa	2 967 700	3 694 600	6 662 300	6 162 300	–	–	–	500 000	6 662 300
2. Coordination and monitoring of action to implement gender equality	617 900	1 646 000	2 263 900	2 225 800	–	–	38 100	–	2 263 900
3. Strategic planning	2 049 100	10 959 000	13 008 100	8 259 000	4 349 100	–	–	400 000	13 008 100
4. Organization-wide knowledge management	5 327 500	8 991 100	14 318 600	10 318 600	–	–	4 000 000	–	14 318 600
5. External relations and public information	6 443 000	18 597 600	25 040 600	22 110 000	–	2 930 600	–	–	25 040 600
6. Field support and coordination	850 800	1 565 400	2 416 200	2 216 200	–	–	200 000	–	2 416 200
<b>Total, II.B</b>	<b>18 256 000</b>	<b>45 453 700</b>	<b>63 709 700</b>	<b>51 291 900</b>	<b>4 349 100</b>	<b>2 930 600</b>	<b>4 238 100</b>	<b>900 000</b>	<b>63 709 700</b>
<b>C. Participation Programme and Fellowships</b>	14 361 100	1 366 800	15 727 900	15 727 900	–	–	–	–	15 727 900
<b>TOTAL, PART II</b>	<b>780 451 400</b>	<b>268 849 200</b>	<b>1 049 300 600</b>	<b>441 910 800</b>	<b>4 349 100</b>	<b>3 072 400</b>	<b>266 719 400</b>	<b>333 248 900</b>	<b>1 049 300 600</b>

1 The Appropriated regular programme budget of \$595.2M is financed by assessed contributions on Member States of \$581.2M and by additional appropriations of \$14M from the FITOCA reserve and other sources.

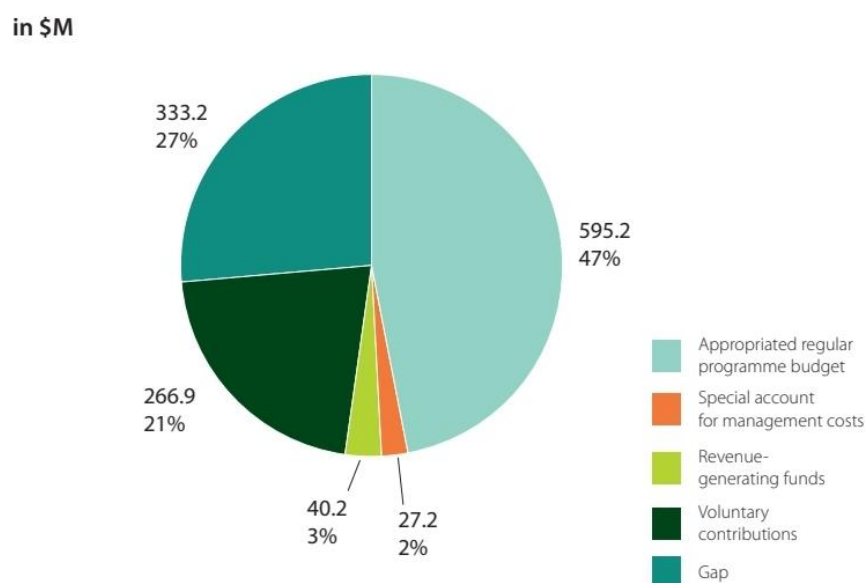
PART	Breakdown by operational and staff budget			Breakdown by source of funds					
	Operational budget	Staff budget	Total	Appropriated regular programme budget <sup>1</sup> \$595.2M	Special account for Management costs	Revenue-generating funds	Voluntary contributions	Gap	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>PART III – CORPORATE SERVICES</b>									
<b>A. Human resources management (HRM)</b>	17 900 600	13 891 100	<b>31 791 700</b>	25 551 100	6 240 600	–	–	–	<b>31 791 700</b>
<b>B. Financial management (BFM)</b>	2 061 400	16 215 300	<b>18 276 700</b>	11 848 800	6 239 500	–	188 400	–	<b>18 276 700</b>
<b>C. Management of support services (MSS)</b>	34 149 900	30 155 700	<b>64 305 600</b>	31 041 900	–	33 263 700	–	–	<b>64 305 600</b>
<b>D. ICT Infrastructure and operations (IOP)</b>	1 200 500	6 786 200	<b>7 986 700</b>	5 231 700	2 755 000	–	–	–	<b>7 986 700</b>
<b>E. Management of security and safety</b>	3 162 700	12 120 700	<b>15 283 400</b>	11 449 400	–	3 834 000	–	–	<b>15 283 400</b>
<b>TOTAL, PART III</b>	<b>58 475 100</b>	<b>79 169 000</b>	<b>137 644 100</b>	<b>85 122 900</b>	<b>15 235 100</b>	<b>37 097 700</b>	<b>188 400</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>137 644 100</b>
<b>TOTAL, PARTS I-III</b>	<b>870 366 900</b>	<b>370 001 300</b>	<b>1 240 368 200</b>	<b>572 823 700</b>	<b>27 217 700</b>	<b>40 170 100</b>	<b>266 907 800</b>	<b>333 248 900</b>	<b>1 240 368 200</b>
Reserve for staffing adjustments	–	1 530 200	<b>1 530 200</b>	1 530 200	–	–	–	–	<b>1 530 200</b>
Reserve for the after service health insurance long-term liability (ASHI)	–	3 450 700	<b>3 450 700</b>	3 450 700	–	–	–	–	<b>3 450 700</b>
<b>PART IV – LOAN REPAYMENTS FOR THE RENOVATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS PREMISES &amp; THE IBE BUILDING</b>									
	12 186 200	–	<b>12 186 200</b>	12 186 200	–	–	–	–	<b>12 186 200</b>
<b>PART V – ANTICIPATED COST INCREASES AND CONTINGENCIES</b>									
	2 283 500	2 925 700	<b>5 209 200</b>	5 209 200	–	–	–	–	<b>5 209 200</b>
<b>TOTAL, PARTS I-V</b>	<b>884 836 600</b>	<b>377 907 900</b>	<b>1 262 744 500</b>	<b>595 200 000</b>	<b>27 217 700</b>	<b>40 170 100</b>	<b>266 907 800</b>	<b>333 248 900</b>	<b>1 262 744 500</b>
Offsetting related to management costs recovery from voluntary contributions			(27 217 700)						(27 217 700)
Adjustment and offsetting related to the estimated internal charge back for Revenue-generating Funds			(10 780 100)						(10 780 100)
<b>NET TOTAL BUDGET</b>			<b>1 224 746 700</b>						<b>1 224 746 700</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Appropriated regular programme budget of \$595.2M is financed by assessed contributions on Member States of \$581.2M and by additional appropriations of \$14M from the FITOCA reserve and other sources.

**Chart 1 – Integrated budget by programme sector and by main part of the budget  
(based on Appropriated regular programme budget of \$595.2M)**



**Chart 2 – Total Draft 39 C/5 budget by source of funds  
(before offsetting adjustments)**



## Appendix 4. Contribution of Oman to UNESCO in 2019

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture  
Organisation  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura  
Организация  
Объединённых Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
наук и культуры  
منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للترقية والعلم والثقافة  
联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

### CONTRIBUTION TO UNESCO'S REGULAR BUDGET

#### AMOUNTS DUE IN 2019

## OMAN

RATE OF ASSESSMENT: 0.148%

	Portion payable in USD	and	Portion payable in EUR
Advance to the Working Capital Fund (see Table II of document UNESCO/BFM/151)	732		
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUDGET			
- 2018 Contribution	195 541		150 688
- 2019 Contribution	198 662		153 093
AMOUNT DUE IN USD	394 935		
AMOUNT DUE IN EUR			303 781
BOTH AMOUNTS ARE PAYABLE (*)			

Payments are to be made in USD and in EUR only by bank transfers to the following bank accounts:

in USD:	in EUR:
Account holder: UNESCO	Account holder: UNESCO
Bank: Citibank, N.A.	Bank: Société Générale, Paris, France
Branch: 940 – New York	Address: Agence Paris Croix Rouge
Address: 111 Wall Street	6, rue de Sèvres
New York, NY, 10043 USA	75006 Paris
Account n°: 36378785	France
SWIFT: CITIUS33	IBAN: FR76 3000 3033 0100 0372 9190 997
ABA N° 021000089	SWIFT: SOGEFRPP

**Important:** Reference to be quoted in your bank transfer: **OM CONT19**

(\*) In accordance with 39 C/Resolution 68, unless the amounts assessed in USD and in EUR are received simultaneously and in full, credit will be given against the contributions due in the proportion in which they are assessed (47% EUR and 53% USD) using the United Nations operational rate of exchange prevailing on the date of receipt.



## Appendix 5. Institutions and individuals who have been granted the UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize since the establishment

1991: Environment Institute Veracruz state (Mexico)

1993: Professor Jean Genik (Czech Republic).

1995: Malawian authorities based on the management of natural protected to Lake Malawi in Africa (Malawi).

1997: Association informally to protect forests Organization World (Sri Lanka).

1999: Charles Darwin Foundation on the island of the Galapagos in the Republic of Ecuador in Latin America (Ecuador).

2001: Chad Association for volunteers to protect the environment (Chad).

2003: Peter Johann Shi of Norway and the Republic of Venezuela's Environment Centre (Norway and Venezuela (.

2005: protected marine wealth and Mexican reefs in Australia and Professor Ernesto Onkerln Hoflisc Chairman of the National Committee of nature reserves in Mexico (Australia and Mexico).

2007: Institute for the protection of biological diversity in Addis Ababa and Professor Julius Oozlana director of the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Ethiopia and Slovakia).

2009: Spanish National Parks (Spain).

2011: Nigerian Institute for Forest Research (Nigeria).

2013: National Administration for the Protection of Forests in Poland and the Organization for the protection of wildlife at risk in South Africa (Poland and South Africa).

2015: Fabio A. Kalesnik, Horacio Sirolli and Luciano Iribarren of the Wetlands Ecology Research Group of the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina)

2017: The National Parks Board of Singapore (Singapore).

2019: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment 'ATREE', (India).

Source: Ministry of Education, 2019

Appendix 6.

i. Some Omani events held at the UNESCO HQ in Paris and neighboring since 1986 (In Arabic)

اسم الفعالية	المكان	التاريخ
معرض تطوير التربية في سلطنة عمان	مقر اليونسكو- باريس	أكتوبر 1986
معرض تطوير التربية والتراث العماني	بونز - فرنسا	أبريل 1987م
معرض حضارة وتراث عمان	مقر اليونسكو- باريس	مايو 1989م
معرض الصور الفوتوغرافية- بمناسبة زيارة جلالة السلطان لمقر اليونسكو	مقر اليونسكو- باريس	يونيو 1989م
الإسبوع الثقافي العماني	معهد العالم العربي- باريس	يونيو- 1989م
معرض(عمان برها وبحرها ... تراث وتأريخ)	مقر اليونسكو	مايو 1991م
معرض(البحث عن السندباد)	قصر شاويه، التروكاديرو -باريس	مايو 1992
الإحتفال بالذكرى العشرين لاتفاقية التراث العالمي	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	نوفمبر 1992
معرض عمان واليونسكو: حضارة وتنمية	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	مايو 1995
مجمع السلطان قابوس الرياضي يفوز بجائزة اليونسكو للخدمات الممتازة في مجال التربية البدنية	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	نوفمبر 1995
السلطنة تقدم جائزة متميزة للفائز الاول في المسابقة الدولية بمناسبة عام الامم المتحدة للتسامح	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	نوفمبر 1995
معرض(إشراقة من عمان) للفنانين التشكيليين العمانيين	قاعة ميروور اليونسكو — باريس	يونيو 1998م
معرض(قرم — عمان)	منطقة تور- فرنسا)	يونيو 1999م
معرض بمناسبة العيد الوطني الثلاثين	بونز — فرنسا	نوفمبر 2000م
المعروضات الفضية لعام الأمم المتحدة للحوار بين الحضارات	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	نوفمبر 2001م
جائزة اليونسكو الدولية للموسيقى لعام 2002م (لمركز عمان للموسيقى التقليدية)	مدينة آخن — ألمانيا	نوفمبر 2002
معرض الوطن العربي .. تراث وحضارة	مقر اليونسكو- باريس	ابريل 2003م
معرض صور وأفلام عمان	مقر اليونسكو — باريس	فبراير 2005

نوفمبر 2005	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	كلمة جلالة السلطان بمناسبة مرور 60 عاما على إنشاء اليونسكو
يناير 2012	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	الأيام العمانية الثقافية
سبتمبر 2012	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	ندوة التراث الأثري في عمان
نوفمبر 2015	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	كلمة جلالة السلطان بمناسبة مرور 70 عاما على إنشاء اليونسكو
أبريل 2016	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	ندوة علمية للاحتفاء بالطبيب العماني راشد بن عُميرة الرُستاقِي
سبتمبر 2018	مقر اليونسكو - باريس	معرض التسامح في عمان "رسالة الإسلام"

- ii. Some events held in Muscat between Oman and UNESCO (2010-2019)  
(In Arabic)

## Appendix 7. The Omani properties on the World Heritage List

1. Bahla Fort (1987): This site is located in Bahla in interior region of Oman where the views of the castle towering and walls, a massive wall of a length of 12 km, and watchtowers of more than 40 towers. Furthermore, just next to the fort, there is a mosque, Quran schools, old mud houses, some water canals 'Aflajs', a traditional market and a Pottery factory. All of these traditional places make the castle a symbol of power and grandeur of that time. Due to these reasons and to its historical location which back to the third millennium BC and associated with many ancient civilisations in Mesopotamia and Persia, it has qualified to be the first Omani heritage site listed on the World Heritage List in December 1987.
2. Archeological Sites of Bat, Al-Khutm and Al-Ayn (1988): The sites are located in Ibri in Aldhahira rejoin of Oman. They are an extremely outstanding example of settlements of the third millennium BC in Oman as they include the largest concentration of towers and archeological cemeteries which characterized that era. Because the sites was considered as human heritage which meets the conditions of authenticity, integrity and standards of outstanding value, the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO listed the sites on the World Heritage List in 1988.
3. Land of Frankincense (2000): The cultural interaction between East and West, in which Oman plays a prominent role through the trade of frankincense, is an asset humanly encouraged the Government of the Sultanate of Oman on the maintenance and rehabilitation of archeological and natural sites associated with this trade. Therefore, four sites in Dhofar registered in the World Heritage List in 2000, which are: Wadi Dawkah, Shisr (Wabar), Albalid, and Khor Rori (Sumhuram).
4. Aflaj Irrigation system (2006): In recognition of the creativity of distinguished engineering in which Oman has excelled in building Aflaj, UNESCO accepted to list five Omani Aflajs within the WHL. These five aflaj irrigation systems are representative of about 3,000 such systems still in use. The roots of this irrigation system date back to AD 500, but archeological evidence proposes that it existed in this extremely arid area as 2500 BC. Water is channeled from underground sources or springs to support agriculture and domestic use by using gravity. The fair and active management of sharing of water in villages is still guided by the astronomical observations and supported by common values and shared dependence. The five selected Aflajes are: Daris and Alkatmin in Nizwa, Almalki in Izki,, Algilh in Sur, and Almaysir in Rustaq.

(The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, 2013).

5. Ancient City of Qalhat (2018): The site is located on the eastern coast of the Sultanate of Oman towards the ancient city of Sur. It is surrounded by internal and external walls, and there are some cemeteries. Qalhat was the interactionn place of several civilisations between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries AD, during the reign of the princes of Hermes, who used it as a major port to transport goods and commercial goods to and from different countries of the world (World Heritage Centre, accessed on 22/11/2019).

Appendix 8. The Decision (31 COM 7B.11) of the World Heritage Committee for delisting Arabian Oryx Sanctuary from the World Heritage List

11. Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (Oman) (N 654)

Decision: 31 COM 7B.11

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision 30 COM.7B.10 adopted at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006),
3. Recalling that, according to Article 6.1 of the Convention, the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List constitute World Heritage, the protection of which is the duty of the international community as a whole and recalling further the duty of the international community to assist and to cooperate with States Parties in their endeavour to conserve such heritage,
4. Recalling that States Parties have the obligation under the Convention to protect and conserve the World Cultural and Natural Heritage situated on their territory, notably, to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection and conservation of such heritage,
5. Further recalling the results of the vote by which the Committee decided not to delete the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary from the World Heritage List,
6. Noting with alarm that despite several years of intensive efforts, the wild population of Arabian Oryx in the property is in serious decline and its future viability is uncertain,
7. Also noting that most recommendations from the 2000 monitoring mission as well as from previous Committee decisions, in particular Decision 30 COM 7B.10, have not been implemented,
8. Notes with deep regret that the State Party failed to fulfill its obligations defined in the Convention, in particular the obligation to protect and conserve the World Heritage property of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary;
9. Regrets that the State Party has proceeded to significantly reduce the size of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, in violation of Paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines, thus destroying the property's Outstanding Universal Value and integrity;
10. Regrets that the entreaties of the World Heritage Committee, at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) failed to protect the property;

11. Further regrets that the State Party is seeking to pursue hydrocarbon exploration activities within the original boundaries of the property, as recognized by this Committee, thus contributing to the loss of Outstanding Universal Value;
12. Concludes with regret that, having further consulted IUCN and being convinced that as a result of the reduction of the Sanctuary under Omani Law, the property has deteriorated to the extent that it has lost its Outstanding Universal Value and integrity;
13. Decides to delete the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (Oman) from the World Heritage List.

Decisions report (Christchurch, 2007)

WHC-

07/31.COM/24, p. 51

Source: UNESCO, (2007). DECISIONS ADOPTED AT THE 31st SESSION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE, Paris.

## Appendix 9. The Omani elements on the Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

1. Al-Bar'ah, music and dance of Oman Dhofari valleys (2010): "Al-Bar'ah is a Bedouin musical tradition from the Dhofar Mountains in southern Oman. It takes the form of a warlike dance performed to drums and the chanting of poetry in a local tribal dialect. Al-Bar'ah is performed in a half circle formed by ten to thirty men and women. As they chant and clap, two male dancers holding "khanjars" (daggers) perform codified dance movements, brandishing their daggers above shoulder level. The dancers' steps are uncomplicated, but coordination with other performers and the music requires considerable skill. Each tribe has its own characteristic form of al-Bar'ah, possessing different drum rhythms and dance movements. The musical accompaniment is provided by the "al-kasir, al-rahmâni" and "ad-daff" drums and "al-qassaba" flute. The dance is performed outdoors, on occasions such as weddings, circumcisions and religious feasts. as of other Omani Bedouin dances, class and other distinctions are erased, as tribal leaders perform alongside the most humble of the population. The tradition represents the chivalric spirit, strength, courage, generosity and hospitality associated with Bedouins. The dance also emphasizes poetic themes of love and flirtation. Al-Bar'ah has many practitioners from Dhofar, who contribute to maintaining and transmitting its poetic variety and practice. .In 2010, Al-Barah Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity".
2. Al 'azi, elegy, processional march and poetry (2012): "Al 'azi is a genre of sung poetry performed in the northern regions of the Sultanate of Oman. It constitutes one of the major expressions of Omani cultural and musical identity. It takes the form of a poetry contest punctuated by sword and step movements and poetic exchanges between a singer poet and a choir. It may involve a large number of participants from one village or tribe, guided by the poet who recites improvised and memorized poems in Arabic. The performers must pay attention to his movements and recitation, and respond with appropriate replies and movements. The poems express pride of belonging and may eulogize the tribe, important people or historical moments. Al 'azi enriches the cultural and intellectual side of the community through creative reinvention of existing poems, and plays a great role in conserving society's oral memory. It also promotes unity and communication and emphasizes the need to overcome disagreements between members of society. Al 'azi is performed at all national and social occasions as an emblem of social pride, strength and unity. At present it is practised by over a hundred



ensembles. In 2012, it is Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.

3. Al-Taghrooda, traditional Bedouin chanted poetry in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman (2012): “Al-Taghrooda traditional Bedouin chanted poetry is composed and recited by men travelling on camelback through desert areas of the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman. Bedouins believe that chanting entertains the riders and stimulates animals to walk in time. Short poems of seven lines or less are improvised and repeated between two groups of riders often as antiphonal singing. Generally the lead singer chants the first verse and the second group responds. Poems are also chanted around campfires, at weddings, and at tribal and national festivities, particularly camel races, and some Bedouin women compose and chant while engaged in collective work. The most important aspect is the social bonding during the oral exchange of verses. Themes include sending messages to loved ones, relatives, friends or tribal chiefs. It is also a medium for the poet to pass comment on social issues. Other functions include settlement of disputes among individuals or tribes, highlighting historical achievements, and contemporary themes such as good driving practice and health issues. Performances also provide a chance for audiences to learn about their past history and have a glimpse of their traditional way of life. The ability to compose and chant poems is transmitted through the family and by community elders. In 2012, it is Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.
4. Al-Ayyala, a traditional performing art of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (2014): “Al-Ayyala is a popular and expressive cultural performance practised in north-western Oman and throughout the United Arab Emirates. Al-Ayyala involves chanted poetry, drum music and dance, and simulates a battle scene. Two rows of about twenty men face each other, carrying thin bamboo sticks to signify spears or swords. Between the rows musicians play large and small drums, tambourines and brass cymbals. The rows of men move their heads and sticks synchronously with the drum rhythm and chant poetic lyrics, while other performers move around the rows holding swords or guns, which they occasionally hurl to the sky and catch. In the United Arab Emirates, girls wearing traditional dresses stand at the front, tossing their long hair from side to side. The melody has seven tones in an irregular repeated pattern, and the chanted poetry varies according to the occasion. Al-Ayyala is performed during weddings and other festive occasions in both the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Performers come from diverse

backgrounds and age groups. The lead performer is usually an inherited role and is responsible for training others performers. Al-Ayyala is inclusive of all ages, genders and social classes. In 2012, it is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.

5. Al-Razfa, a traditional performing art of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (2015): “Al-Razfa is a traditional performing art practised throughout the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman. It is performed by men of all ages and classes during social occasions, such as weddings and national festivals. Male performers form two facing lines with dancers filling the space between. Led by the main singer, the two rows create a dual chorus, singing chants in an antiphonal manner to the accompaniment of drums and other instruments. Many chants are verses of traditional Nabati poetry, carefully selected to match the occasion. The dancers perform choreographed movements to the music while holding wooden replica rifles in their hands and in some cases, young girls swing their hair in time to the music. Originally performed as a communal celebration of victory, Al-Razfa is now widely popular as a form of entertainment. Practitioners have adapted musical instruments and composed melodies to interest younger audiences while maintaining the older expressions and oral traditions of the art. Performers may include heads of State and elders or very young children. Today, Al-Razfa is transmitted directly within the family through participation and observation at social occasions. The roles of individual performers are learnt by practice, while girls receive instruction from their mothers and older sisters. In 2015, it is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.
6. Arabic coffee, a symbol of generosity in the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (2015): “Serving Arabic coffee is an important aspect of hospitality in Arab societies and considered a ceremonial act of generosity. Traditionally, coffee is prepared in front of guests. Coffee-making begins with the selection of beans, which are lightly roasted in a shallow pan over a fire, then placed into a copper mortar and pounded with a copper pestle. The coffee grounds are placed into a large copper coffee pot; water is added and the pot is placed on the fire. Once brewed, it is poured into a smaller coffee pot from which it is poured into small cups. The most important or oldest guest is served first, filling a quarter of the cup, which can then be refilled. Common practice is to drink at least one cup but not exceed three. Arabic coffee is made and enjoyed by men and women from all segments of society, particularly in the home. The sheikhs and heads of tribes who

serve Arabic coffee in their meeting spaces, elderly Bedouin men and women and owners of coffee trading shops are considered the main bearers. Knowledge and traditions are passed on within the family through observation and practice. Young family members also accompany their elders to the market to learn how to select the best coffee beans. In 2015, it is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.

7. Majlis, a cultural and social space in the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (2015): “Majlis are ‘sitting places’ where community members gather to discuss local events and issues, exchange news, receive guests, socialize and be entertained. The Majlis is where the community gathers to resolve problems, pay condolences and hold wedding receptions. It is typically a large space with carpets on the floor and cushions against the wall. There is usually a stove or fire to prepare coffee and other hot beverages. The Majlis space is open to all people and may be frequented by family members, tribes and inhabitants of the same neighbourhood, and other remote neighbourhoods. Community elders are considered true bearers, especially those with extensive knowledge concerning nature, genealogy and tribal history. Judges and religious sheikhs have special importance in the Majlis as they adjudicate on disputes and clarify political, social and religious rights and responsibilities. Women have their own Majlis, although some prominent women attend other Majlis, which are particularly academic or literary in nature. Majlis also play an important role in the transfer of oral heritage, including folk stories, folk songs and ‘Nabati’ poetry. As Majlis spaces are open to all age groups knowledge is mostly transmitted informally as children accompany community members on their visits. Through observing elders in the Majlis, young people learn the manners and ethics of their community, dialogue and listening skills, and respect for the opinion of others. In 2015, it is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.
8. Horse and camel Ardhah (2018): " is practised across many regions of Oman. On Alardhah day (meaning the ‘day of the festival’ in Arabic), people gather around the racecourse to watch shows by horse and camel riders that reflect Omani people’s skill in dealing with and taming the animals. Traditional arts (such as the reciting of traditional poems) also accompany the demonstrations. Alardhah starts with a display of traditional acts, such as horses and camels lying down, riding standing up, joining hands with another rider at great speed, and other similar actions. This is followed by a display of horses and camels draped with decorative clothing and beautiful silver

sets. Alardhah is associated with many social occasions in Omani society, such as religious and national celebrations. The practice is an integral part of the society's culture in rural and urban areas and reflects great skill as well as people's devotion to the care of animals. Alardhah involves both men and women and is an opportunity for traditional bands and craftspeople to display their talents. At the community level, Omanis organize Alardhah on various social occasions, which involve young people. Civil organizations also play a key role in transferring the related skills, and horse groups at the university teach students equestrian skills and how to perform Alardhah".

9. Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices (2019): The date palm has been connected to the regional population of the submitting States for centuries, serving both as the source of numerous associated crafts, professions and social and cultural traditions, customs and practices, and as a key form of nutrition. The date palm is an evergreen plant typically associated with dry climates, where the roots of the plant penetrate deeply into the earth in search of humidity. Bearers and practitioners include date palm farm owners, farmers who plant, nurture and irrigate the date palm offshoots, craftspeople who produce traditional products using various parts of the palm tree, date traders, creative individuals and performers of associated folkloric tales and poems. The Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices have played a pivotal role in strengthening the connection between people and the land in the Arab region, helping them face the challenges of the harsh desert environment. This historic relationship in the region and the element has produced a rich cultural heritage of related practices between people in the region, knowledge and skills maintained to this day. The cultural relevance and proliferation of the element over the centuries prove how committed the local communities are to sustaining it; this is achieved through collective participation in multiple date-palm related activities and numerous festive rituals, traditions and customs. It is inscribed in the ICH list by Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Source: ONCECS, 2020; UNESCO Website. (n/d). Elements on the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage – Oman. Accessed on 25/1/2020. Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/oman-OM?info=elements-on-the-lists>

دور منظمة اليونسكو في استدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان، 1970-2020

The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity

in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

البيانات الشخصية

الجنسية: عماني/ وافد الجنس: ذكر/ أنثى المؤهل الدراسي: دبلوم/ بكالوريوس/ ماجستير/ دكتوراه/ .....  
العمر: الوزارة/ المؤسسة: المسمى الوظيفي (اختياري):

1. كم مرة أتيح لك الاشتراك في نشاط أو أكثر ساهمت في تنظيمه منظمة اليونسكو أو اللجنة الوطنية العمانية للتربية والثقافة والعلوم؟ (لطفاً ضع دائرة حول الرقم الصحيح)

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فيما يتعلق بأنواع التراث والتنوع الثقافي، هل سمعت من قبل عن المفاهيم التالية وتذكر معناها؟ (لطفاً ضع علامة ✓ على إحدى الخانتين)

المفهوم	نعم سمعت به وأدرك معناه	لا لم أسمع به من قبل
2. التراث الثقافي		
3. التراث الطبيعي		
4. التراث المادي		
5. التراث غير المادي		
6. التنوع الثقافي		

والآن، اقرأ كل فقرة من الفقرات الآتية، ثم اختر درجة موافقتك عليها بوضع علامة ( ✓ ) أمام الخانة الملائمة:

م	الفقرة	لا أوافق مطلقاً	لا أوافق	لست متأكداً	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
7	من وجهة نظري أن الأديان السماوية المعروفة بما فيها الإسلام تشجع على التنوع الثقافي ولا تتصادم معه					

م	الفقرة	لا أوافق مطلقا	لا أوافق	لست متأكدا	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
8	"الدين" هو جزء لا يتجزأ من "ثقافة" المجتمع وليس العكس					
9	نجحت منظمة اليونسكو في تعزيز التنوع الثقافي في الدول الأعضاء بما فيها السلطنة					
10	اليونسكو فاعلة في إشراك مؤسسات المجتمع المدني بالدول الأعضاء في أنشطتها وبرامجها المختلفة					
11	سمعت بالأزمة المالية لمنظمة اليونسكو التي بدأت منذ عام 2011					
12	لقد شعرت بالآثار السلبية للأزمة المالية لليونسكو في إطار عملي في المؤسسة الحالية					
13	تؤدي الدبلوماسية الثقافية دورا هاما في نجاح العلاقات بين البلدان					
14	لا يمكن فصل الثقافة عن السياسة وبالتالي فالقضايا الثقافية لا بد أن تتداخل مع القضايا السياسية					
15	تشبه اليونسكو بقية منظمات الأمم المتحدة في أنها تدار من قبل القوى العظمى في العالم					
16	معظم الوثائق والدوريات الصادرة عن اليونسكو هي باللغتين الإنجليزية والفرنسية فقط، وهو ما يتناقض مع مبادئ اليونسكو من حيث دعم التنوع الثقافي وتعدد اللغات					
17	نجحت اليونسكو إلى حد كبير في تقليص الفجوة الرقمية بين الدول الأعضاء					
18	تبذل اليونسكو جهودا كبيرة للحفاظ على التراث الثقافي بأنواعه، وهي ناجحة في هذا العمل					
19	سمعت أو قرأت عن المعايير العالمية الاستثنائية (التي أنشئت مع اتفاقية اليونسكو لعام 1972، OUV) التي يجب أن تكون متوفرة في أي موقع تراثي من أجل الانضمام إلى قائمة التراث العالمي					
20	من الصعب تحديد أصل رموز التراث الثقافي غير المادي لأنها تتجاوز حدود البلدان					
21	أرى بأن منظمة اليونسكو ناجحة في المجالات المنوطة بها والمتعلقة بالتربية والثقافة والعلوم والاتصال					

م	الفقرة	لا أوافق مطلقا	لا أوافق	لست متأكدا	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
22	شهدت سلطنة عمان نهضة كبيرة في مختلف المجالات بما في ذلك صون التراث والبيئة منذ عام 1970م وحتى اليوم.					
23	يعود السبب الرئيس في نجاح السلطنة في صون التراث والبيئة إلى القيادة الحكيمة لصاحب الجلالة السلطان قابوس بن سعيد المعظم.					
24	سلطنة عمان كان بإمكانها تحقيق نفس النجاح في مجال الحفاظ على التراث دون مساعدة من اليونسكو					
25	ما زال هناك الكثير الذي يتعين القيام به في مجال حفظ التراث العماني المادي وغير المادي					
26	لدى السلطنة أربعة مواقع تراثية مدرجة في قائمة التراث العالمي حتى الآن. ومن وجهة نظري، فإن هذا الوضع لا يعكس ثراء التراث العماني العريق، حيث يجب أن يكون لدينا المزيد من مواقع التراث العالمي.					
27	فيما يتعلق بالتراث الثقافي غير المادي، فإن سلطنة عمان لديها سبعة رموز مدرجة في قائمة التراث الثقافي غير المادي للبشرية حتى الآن، وبالنظر إلى الفترة القصيرة لإدراج هذه المواقع (حوالي 10 سنوات)، أعتقد أن عمان محظوظة في تسجيل هذا العدد					
28	أحد الجوانب الإيجابية للتراث الثقافي غير المادي هو أنه يستكشف رموز التراث المشترك بين الدول، مما يساعد على اكتشاف الماضي الطويل الذي يجمع بين هذه الدول، ويؤسس لروابط وعلاقات مشتركة جديدة					
29	سلطنة عمان معروفة دوليا بثراء التنوع الثقافي والبيولوجي، ولكن الجهود الوطنية لحماية ودعم هذا التنوع لا تزال دون مستوى الطموح					
30	المشهد الثقافي في عمان قد تطور بشكل ملحوظ على مدى السنوات الـ 47 الماضية					
31	يعود أحد أهم أسباب تطور المشهد الثقافي في عمان إلى الخبرات العالمية والمنظمات الدولية التي انضمت إليها السلطنة بما فيها اليونسكو					
32	لقد سمعت عن اللجنة الوطنية العمانية للتربية والثقافة والعلوم					
33	أعتقد بأن اللجنة الوطنية العمانية للتربية والثقافة والعلوم تبذل قصارى جهدها لمساعدة المؤسسات المختلفة في					

م	الفقرة	لا أوافق مطلقا	لا أوافق	لست متأكدا	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
	عمان على الاستفادة من خبرات منظمة اليونسكو والمنظمات الأخرى العربية والإسلامية					
34	بوجه عام، أعتقد أن العلاقة بين سلطنة عمان ومنظمة اليونسكو علاقة ممتازة					

• هل لديك إضافات أو ملاحظات أو مقترحات على أي من القضايا التي تم طرحها أعلاه؟

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The Questionnaire (In English)

**The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity  
in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020**

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**Personal Details**

**Gender (circle one):** Male / Female

**Age:**

**Highest qualification (circle one):** BA / MA / PhD / Others

**Employer:**

**Job title (circle one):** Employee / Head of Department / Deputy Director / Director / Deputy General Director / General Director / Other

**Nationality:**

1. How many times have you participated in activities organized by UNESCO or the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture & Science?

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1-2

3-5

>5

Regarding kinds of heritage, I have heard about the concepts:

**(Please tick one box)**

**No**

**Yes**

2. Cultural heritage

☐☐

3. Natural heritage

☐☐

4. Tangible heritage

☐☐

5. Intangible heritage

☐☐

6. Cultural diversity

☐☐

**For each of the following statements, please rate how strong your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick mark in the appropriate box**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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7	The major world religions, including Islam, promote 'global diversity' and they are not in conflict with it.					
8	"Religion" is an integral part of the "culture" of society and not the opposite.					
9	UNESCO has succeeded in enhancing cultural diversity in member states, including the Sultanate of Oman.					
10	UNESCO is instrumental in involving civil society institutions of Member States in its various activities and programs.					
11	I have heard of the financial crisis of UNESCO that started in 2011.					
12	I felt the negative effects of the financial crisis of UNESCO within the framework of my work in the current institution.					
13	Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in the success of relations between countries.					
14	Culture cannot be separated from politics and therefore cultural issues must overlap with political issues.					
15	UNESCO is similar to the rest of the United Nations organizations in that it is run by the world's great powers.					
16	Most of the documents and periodicals issued by UNESCO are in English and French only, which is contrary to the principles of UNESCO in terms of supporting cultural diversity and multilingualism.					

17	UNESCO has largely succeeded in reducing the digital divide among Member States.					
18	UNESCO is making great efforts to preserve cultural heritage of all kinds and is successful in this work.					
19	I am familiar with the universal criteria established in the UNESCO 1972 Convention (OUV), that have to be met by any heritage site, to qualify for the World Heritage List.					
20	It is difficult to identify intangible cultural heritage with a single country.					
21	I believe that UNESCO is successful in its areas of education, culture, science and communication					
22	The Sultanate of Oman has witnessed a major renaissance in various fields, including the preservation of the environment heritage since 1970.					
23	The main reason for Oman's success in safeguarding the heritage and environment is the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.					
24	The Sultanate of Oman could have achieved the same success in heritage preservation without the help of UNESCO.					
25	Much remains to be done in the preservation of Omani tangible and intangible heritage.					
26	The Sultanate has four heritage sites listed on					

	the World Heritage List to date. In my view, this situation does not reflect the wealth of the Omani heritage, as we must have more World Heritage sites.					
27	With regard to the intangible cultural heritage, the Sultanate of Oman has seven symbols on the list of intangible cultural heritage of mankind so far. Given the short period of inclusion of these sites (about 10 years), I believe that Oman is fortunate in listing this number.					
28	One of the positive aspects of intangible cultural heritage is that it explores the symbols of common heritage among nations, which helps to discover the long past that brings these nations together and establishes new common links and relationships.					
29	The Sultanate of Oman is internationally recognized for its cultural and biological diversity, but national efforts to protect, support and develop this diversity are still inadequate.					
30	The cultural scene in Oman has developed significantly over the past 47 years.					
31	One of the most important reasons for the development of the cultural scene in Oman is the international experience and international organizations to which the Sultanate has joined, including UNESCO					

32	I have heard about the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.					
33	I believe that the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science is doing its best to help the various institutions in Oman to benefit from the expertise of UNESCO and other Arab and Islamic organizations.					
34	In general, I think that the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO is excellent.					

Any more comments you would like to add regarding the issues raised above

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## Appendix 11. A Table for Interview questions and answer expectations

(The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020)

Proposed Question	The purpose	Category	Answers Expectations
First: please tell me something about yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To have a complete view about the interviewee.</li> <li>- To encourage him to talk freely.</li> <li>- To break the ice.</li> </ul>	Career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Short CV includes occupation, qualifications, experiences, career path, ...etc</li> </ul>
Could you tell me about your experience working with UNESCO? (How long? Is it a good career? Would you recommend it to others?)	- To have an idea about the interviewee feeling about working with UNESCO (positive or negative) and his general view about the organisation	Positive/negative feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive feeling</li> <li>- Negative feeling</li> <li>- Not mentioned</li> </ul>
Do you agree with the idea that UNESCO works as a world experience house? Or it is supposed to be?	- To have an idea about the interviewee feeling about working with UNESCO (positive or negative) and his general view about the organisation	Positive/negative feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- Not mentioned</li> </ul>
In terms of Cultural Diversity: what has UNESCO done to enhance cultural diversity within member states?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To talk about cultural diversity and whether UNESCO is doing well or not to promote it.</li> <li>- To know if there is any differences between big countries and small countries in terms of promoting cultural diversity.</li> <li>- To reflect the situation to Oman as a small member state</li> </ul>	Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNESCO Conventions.</li> <li>- The 2001 declaration.</li> <li>- The Cultural Diversity Fund.</li> <li>-The tentative national inventories of intangible cultural heritage.</li> </ul>
In your opinion: Do religions promote cultural diversity or they are in conflict with it and try to make a barrier to reinforce it? How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about the influence of religions in enhancing cultural diversity.</li> <li>- To reflect the situation to Oman as an Islamic member state</li> </ul>	Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes they do.</li> <li>- No they do not.</li> <li>- It depends.</li> </ul>

UNESCO has recognized recently the importance of engagement of civil society in all work stages from planning to implementation. Do you think UNESCO has been effective in involving civil society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To encourage the interviewee to talk about the UNESCO shift in paying attention to civil society and whether it is enough or not.</li> <li>- Talking about civil society is very important and related to the issue of cultural diversity which is the subject of the research.</li> </ul>	Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes I do.</li> <li>- No I do not.</li> <li>- Yes, to a certain extent.</li> </ul>
What is the hierarchy of the relationship between UNESCO and member states? For instance, when the organisation decides to grant a permission to a state to establish a Category 2 of International or Regional Institutes and Centres under the auspices of the organization?			
From your standpoint, what financial aspects is the impact of the UNESCO financial crisis? How should UNESCO respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To shed light on the financial crisis of UNESCO and how has the crisis reduce the international role of UNESCO in the field of culture, principally cultural diversity.</li> <li>- To have an idea about the current UNESCO Staff feeling about the financial status of the organisation.</li> <li>- To encourage the participants to talk about the relations between UNESCO and member states.</li> </ul>	UNESCO Financial Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Still very bad situation.</li> <li>- UNESCO has succeeded to overcome it.</li> <li>- An opportunity to search for new sources of budget.</li> <li>- An opportunity to review some of the financial policies of the organization.</li> </ul>
Still on the same topic of the repercussions of the financial crisis: the United States withdrawal, which caused UNESCO recent financial crises, preceded by the withdrawal in the eighties of Britain and Singapore, raises a question about the role of cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, power and sovereignty within the corridors of the organization. What do you think?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To encourage the participants to talk about the role of policy and diplomacy in controlling and running UNESCO work.</li> <li>- To know to what extent the common public thought which is <i>UNESCO is controlled by the great states/powers</i> is true.</li> <li>- This controversial issue has a big relation with the</li> </ul>	UNESCO Financial Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I agree.</li> <li>- I disagree.</li> <li>- UNESCO is different from the UN organisation in terms of cultural diplomacy.</li> </ul>

	theme of promoting world cultural diversity.		
In the same topic: Do you think that the financial allocations are distributed to the four sectors fairly? Does the culture sector, for example, deserve more?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To detect the organizational aspects that run the organization's work.</li> <li>- To spotlight the priorities of UNESCO.</li> <li>- To know how important is the cultural themes to UNESCO.</li> </ul>	Financial Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes I do.</li> <li>- No I do not.</li> <li>- I do not know.</li> <li>- They are changed constantly depending on the priorities of the organization's work.</li> </ul>
The UN has six official languages: English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian. Why are most of the documents and periodicals issued by UNESCO in English and French only? Do you agree that this is contrary to the principles of UNESCO in terms of supporting cultural diversity and multilingualism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an example of UNESCO Separation between perspective and reality in terms of promoting world cultural diversity.</li> <li>- To shed light on the sovereignty of some languages and states on the others.</li> </ul>	Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A financial reason.</li> <li>-There is not much interest from other language-speaking countries.</li> <li>- Agreed decision.</li> </ul>
As stated at the website of the organization, <i>"the National Commissions for UNESCO represent a comparative advantage of the organization within the United Nations system"</i> . What is meant by the term comparative advantage? ( <a href="http://www.en.unesco.org/countries/national-commissions">www.en.unesco.org/countries/national-commissions</a> )			
The issue of cultural diversity, cultural expressions has received great support globally by UNESCO through the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the new 2003 and 2005 conventions... etc. This leads to an important question: Is cultural globalisation the most powerful of all, especially with the issue of open-source information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have evaluations about UNESCO work in cultural diversity so far and whether it has succeeded or not.</li> <li>- To examine the idea of domination of some cultures on others.</li> <li>- The discussion may discover some aspects of the background and heritage of the term <i>cultural diversity</i>.</li> </ul>	Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Globalisation is still the strongest.</li> <li>- UNESCO effort in cultural diversity has succeeded</li> <li>- The countries who have rejected the world</li> </ul>



			cultural diversity are few and are easy to ignore.
The outstanding universal values conditioned by the World Heritage sites and supervised by World Heritage Centre under UNESCO umbrella are good in terms of privacy. However, are the ten requirements to be outstanding universal value, which mentioned in 1972 Convention, sufficient? Are you happy with UNESCO effort to safeguard tangible heritage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To know if UNESCO conditions are flexible or can be changed depending on the developments.</li> <li>- To evaluate the UNESCO work in protecting world cultural tangible heritage.</li> </ul>	Tangible Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They can be changed.</li> <li>- They are appropriate and enough.</li> <li>- World Heritage Centre.</li> <li>- World Heritage Committee.</li> <li>- World Heritage Fund.</li> <li>- World Heritage List.</li> </ul>
Intangible Cultural Heritage is a new theme in UNESCO, where this kind of heritage was not mentioned in the documents that were issued during the last century. What is your opinion on the view that it is difficult to identify the source of any symbol of intangible cultural heritage, and to any country in particular, it could belongs?	- To have some ideas about the obstacles facing the listing of intangible cultural heritage which is related to world cultural diversity.	Intangible Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is indeed very difficult compaing with tangible heritage.</li> <li>- There are some specific rules and regulations framing UNESCO's work in this area making it easier to do so.</li> </ul>
Countries could do some types of manipulation with the condition needed to be included in the file that needs to be prepared to list any kind of intangible symbol in the world heritage list (to be still practiced by the citizens). Some states or the competent authorities may likely try to reinvent it in a claim for inclusion in the World Heritage rather than any other state. Is this true? What has UNESCO done to avoid those kinds of issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have some ideas about the obstacles facing the listing of intangible cultural heritage which is related to world cultural diversity.</li> <li>- To shed light on the UNESCO work in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.</li> </ul>	Intangible Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I agree</li> <li>- I disagree as there are specific rules and regulations framing UNESCO's work in this area making it difficult for</li> </ul>

			states to do so
If you would like to give UNESCO a score for its successful international role in Education, Culture, Science and Communication. What is the score will be for a scale from 0 (unsuccessful at all) to 10 (very successful)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about the interviewee feeling about working with UNESCO (positive or negative) and his general view about the organisation</li> </ul>	Positive/negative feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive feeling</li> <li>- Negative feeling</li> <li>- In between</li> </ul>
Quoting from a book entitled <i>The diplomacy of culture: the role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity</i> for, Irena Kozymka (2014) on page 23: "The main criteria against which UNESCO's role as an international actor in its own right shall be tested are the following: its autonomous decision making capacity, its ability to exercise influence over and shape states' behaviour, its capability to resist pressure from powerful Member States, and lastly, the strength of its financial and human resources". Do you agree with the author?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about the interviewee feeling about working with UNESCO (positive or negative) and his general view about the organisation</li> <li>- To have a kind of evaluation about UNESCO work in terms of decision making, relationship with states, autonomy and financial and human resources.</li> </ul>	Positive/negative feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree</li> <li>- Disagree</li> <li>- I don't know</li> </ul>
Have you ever been to Oman or a county from Gulf Cooperation Council? If yes: please tell me more about it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea if the interviewee is familiar with Oman's international issues that will be discussed later.</li> <li>- To see Oman from an outside window</li> </ul>	Oman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>
Oman has witnessed a huge renaissance in various fields since 1970. Among the evolution in Oman is the cultural heritage conservation, both tangible and intangible. What is the role of UNESCO to help Oman to do so from your point of view?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To evaluate the UNESCO work in protecting world cultural heritage.</li> <li>- To shed light on Oman world heritage conservation.</li> </ul>	Omani Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oman world heritage tangible sites and intangible symbols.</li> <li>World Heritage Centre.</li> <li>- World Heritage Committee.</li> <li>- World Heritage Fund.</li> </ul>

The historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to UNESCO headquarters was on the first of June 1989. Why is this date in particular? Was there any special event at UNESCO? What were the impacts of this visit on the relationship of Oman and UNESCO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To spotlight on a very special historical Omani event related to UNESCO and whether it can be considered as a shift in relationship between Oman and UNESCO.</li> </ul>	Sultan Visit to UNESCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No special reason/event</li> <li>- There was a special occasion.</li> <li>- I do not know</li> </ul>
The Institutions and individuals who have been granted the UNESCO SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION since the establishment were all non-Arabs. Why nobody from Arab country? Was not there any Arab environmental association deserve this Prize?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about UNESCO SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, and the impartiality and integrity of arbitration committees.</li> </ul>	UNESCO SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lots of individuals, associations and institutions that nominated to the Prize, but the arbitration committees choose the best from their point of view</li> </ul>
The Oryx Sanctuary removed from the world heritage list in 2007, to be the first world site cancelled from the list. Why? Was it easy to do so?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To shed light on the purpose of the withdrawal of an Omani site from the world list and UNESCO's response to it.</li> <li>- to assess whether the cancellation of the Oryx site from the world list was because of a good relation between Oman and UNESCO, or it is a normal event</li> </ul>	Oryx Site Cancellation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial reason/urbanization/UNESCO neglecting ...</li> <li>- Normal/strong response.</li> </ul>
Oman has only four heritage sites listed on world heritage list so far. However, we know that Oman is famous for its cultural heritage and has so many sites, which can be listed too. What is your view?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about the Omani view and procedure in terms of listing tangible heritage sites into the world heritage list.</li> <li>- To assess whether OPDU staff are informed about the future cultural agenda of Oman and if there is a kind of coordination with the concerned authorities in this regard.</li> </ul>	Omani Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depends on the concerned authorities.</li> <li>- They are enough for a small country like Oman.</li> <li>- Long complex procedure for listing a site.</li> <li>- Many Omani sites have been approved for listing, just waiting</li> </ul>

			- I do not Know
How were the seventh Omani intangible heritage symbols chosen so far? Why in this order? Could you please tell me more about the procedure of listing this kind of heritage and if there are any obstacles facing Oman or UNESCO to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have an idea about the Omani view and procedure in terms of listing intangible heritage symbols into the world heritage list.</li> <li>- To assess whether OPDU staff are informed about the future cultural agenda of Oman and if there is a kind of coordination with the concerned authorities in this regard.</li> <li>- To shed light on some Omani obstacles facing intangible heritage listing.</li> </ul>	Omani Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depends on the concerned authorities.</li> <li>- There is a kind of coordination and consultation between neighbor countries.</li> <li>- I do not Know</li> </ul>
Generally speaking, do you think that the relationship between Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO is good? For a scale from 0 (very bad) to 10 (very good), what is your score?	- To have an idea about the interviewee feeling about working with UNESCO (positive or negative) and his general view about the relationship between Oman and UNESCO so far.	Relationship between Oman and UNESCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, comparing with other small countries.</li> <li>- No, not yet.</li> <li>- It depends on the area, in some areas/fields very good and in others very weak.</li> <li>- I do not know.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 12. Questionnaire Invitation Letter

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University

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Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565



### The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

I am writing to invite you to take part in a preparation of a PhD thesis looking at the role of UNESCO in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in Sultanate of Oman for the last four decades. The research is being organised by Bangor University, Wales – United Kingdom. It is funded by Ministry of Education in Oman. An Information Sheet about the study is attached with this email.

Mahmood Alabri – a PhD student at Bangor University is sending you this letter and information sheet to invite you to take part in this research. It should take less than 10 minutes for you to complete the attached questionnaire about your experience.

By completing and returning the survey, you are giving consent for your response to be included in the study. All information that you provide will remain confidential and will be anonymized for all analyses. You do not have to write your name, only some general information about your institution, gender, age ... etc.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this work, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email address [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) or my mobile telephone number 00968 99470844.

Kindly, return this survey via the same focal person who gave it to you.

Thank you in advance for participation. I look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire soon.

Yours faithfully

Mahmood Al-Abri

Bangor University

Wales, UK

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University

Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565



### دور منظمة اليونسكو في استدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان، 1970-2020

### The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

يسرني أن أبعث إليكم بهذا الخطاب لدعوتكم للمشاركة في الاستبيان المرفق، وذلك لنيل متطلبات الدكتوراة في مجال العلاقات الثقافية، دور منظمة اليونسكو في تطور المشهد الثقافي واستدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان خلال الأربعين سنة الفائتة. هذه الدراسة هي من إعداد الباحث/ محمود بن عبدالله العبري، الموظف بوزارة التربية والتعليم، وتشرف على الدراسة جامعة بانجور بالمملكة المتحدة.

وإذ أرفق لكم الاستبيان مشفوعا بورقة المعلومات حول هذه الدراسة؛ أأمل منكم التكرم مشكورين باستيفاء الاستبيان الذي لن يستغرق منكم أكثر من 10 دقائق فقط، حول تجربتكم فيما يتعلق بالعلاقة بين السلطنة ومنظمة اليونسكو. علما بأنه لن يطلب منكم كتابة الاسم أو أي من البيانات الشخصية كرقم الهاتف والهوية وغيره، هي فقط بيانات عامة عن كل مشارك.

لمزيد من الاستفسار حول ما يتعلق بهذا الاستبيان أو الدراسة ككل، يمكنكم التواصل مع الباحث على البريد الإلكتروني [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) أو الهاتف المتنقل 99470844.

لطفاً، أعد الاستبيان بعد استيفائه مشكورا إلى نفس الشخص الذي سلمه لك، أو إلى الباحث مباشرة.

شكرا جزيلا مقدما على المشاركة ، وأتطلع إلى استلام نسخة الاستبيان منكم قريباً.

وتفضلوا بقبول خالص التحية ووافر الاحترام

محمود العبري

جامعة بانجور

ويلز – المملكة المتحدة

## Appendix 14. Questionnaire Information Sheet

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University



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Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565

### INFORMATION SHEET (Survey)

The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

#### Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in a preparation of a PhD thesis looking at the role of UNESCO Organisation in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman. I think it is important for you to understand why the project is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study seeks to:

1. Shed light on the evolution of the cultural scene in Oman over 40 years.
2. Identify the role of UNESCO in providing support to Member States and the volume of this support.
3. Quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate programs, activities and events in the Sultanate of Oman which implementation was sponsored or contributed to by UNESCO.
4. Perform analytical comparisons between the programs implemented in the Sultanate of Oman by UNESCO and a number of neighbor countries.
5. Identify the most prominent strengths that contribute to stimulate the relationship between UNESCO and the Sultanate of Oman under the concept of “International cultural diplomacy”.

Why have I been chosen?

The researcher supposes that your career role and experience will contribute valuable information to this research.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You are invited to take part in a survey to show your experiences. I would be interested to receive your answers and point of view about the Omani cultural scene, cultural diversity in Oman, UNESCO world role, especially in a culture field, and any rewarding aspects.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings from this study will help us in Oman to sustain our good relationship with UNESCO and try to enhance it.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The project is being organised by Bangor University, school of Social Sciences, Wales, UK. It is funded by the Ministry of Education in Oman.

Contact for further information

Please do not hesitate to contact me Mahmood Alabri on my email address [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) or on my mobile number 00968 99470844.

If you would like more information or have any concerns about the project, please contact Howard Davis, Professor of Social Theory and Institutions, School of Social Sciences, Bangor University. His email address is [h.h.davis@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:h.h.davis@bangor.ac.uk) and his telephone number is 0044 1248 382123.

Thank you for kindly taking the time to read this information.



## Appendix 15. Questionnaire Information Sheet (Arabic Version)

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University

Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565



دور منظمة اليونسكو في استدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان، 1970-2020

The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman

### مقدمة

هذه الدراسة تم إعدادها من أجل نيل متطلبات الدكتوراة في مجال العلاقات الثقافية، دور منظمة اليونسكو في تطور المشهد الثقافي واستدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان خلال الأربعين سنة الفاتنة. لقد تم إعداد هذه الدراسة من قبل الباحث/ محمود بن عبدالله العبري، الموظف بوزارة التربية والتعليم، وتشرف على الدراسة جامعة بانجور بالمملكة المتحدة.

أتوقع بأنه من المهم لديك معرفة تفاصيل أكثر حول هذه الدراسة، لطفاً، خذ من وقتك دقائق بسيطة لقراءة الأسطر الآتية.

### أهداف الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة بالتحديد إلى:

- تسليط الضوء على تطور المشهد العماني الثقافي خلال الأربعين سنة الفاتنة.
- التعرف على دور منظمة اليونسكو في تقديم الدعم للدول الأعضاء وخصوصاً في الجانب الثقافي، وحجم هذا الدعم.
- إجراء مقارنات تحليلية بين البرامج المنفذة في سلطنة عمان من قبل اليونسكو وعدد من الدول المجاورة.
- التعرف على أبرز نقاط القوة التي تساهم في تحفيز العلاقة بين اليونسكو وسلطنة عمان.

لماذا تم اختياري؟

يتوقع الباحث أن خبرتك المهنية ستسهم ولو بشكل غير مباشر في تزويد الدراسة ببعض البيانات الضرورية والهامة.

ماذا سيحدث إذا وافقت على المشاركة؟

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في استيفاء الاستبيان المرفق. سأكون مهتمًا بتلقي إجاباتك ووجهة نظرك حول ما تم طرحه من جوانب تتعلق بالمشهد الثقافي العماني ، والتراث العماني، والتنوع الثقافي في عُمان ، ودور اليونسكو العالمي في مجال الثقافة ، وجوانب أخرى ذات صلة بالدراسة. لن يتم طلب كتابة اسمك أو بياناتك الشخصية، إنما فقط بيانات عامة عن كل مشارك.

ماذا سيحدث لنتائج هذه الدراسة؟

يتوقع أن تساعدنا نتائج هذه الدراسة في عُمان للحفاظ على علاقتنا الجيدة مع اليونسكو ومحاولة تعزيزها.

للمزيد من التفاصيل

لمزيد من الاستفسار حول ما يتعلق بهذا الاستبيان أو الدراسة ككل، يمكنكم التواصل مع الباحث على البريد الإلكتروني [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) أو الهاتف المتنقل 99470844.

أشرك على منحك الوقت الكافي لقراءة هذه المعلومات.

## Appendix 16. Interview Invitation Letter

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University



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Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565

### The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman

(1970-2020)

I am writing to invite you to take part in a preparation of a PhD thesis looking at the role of UNESCO in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in Sultanate of Oman for the last four decades. The research is being organised by Bangor University, Wales – United Kingdom. It is funded by Ministry of Education in Oman. An Information Sheet about the study is attached with this email.

Mahmood Alabri – a PhD student at Bangor University is sending you this letter and information sheet to invite you to take part in this research. It will involve a 40 to 60 minute interview about your experience. Your interview information will be used just for the purpose of this research and, if you agree, for the related publications. Any information you share will be fully or partly anonymized if you wish as well as your identification details. Normally, participants will be identified by their names, positions and institution. However, you would not be identified in any reports or outputs arising from this work, unless you give me the permission to do so.

If you decide that you would like to take part, please complete the consent form and return it back by email.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this work, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email address [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) or my mobile telephone number 00447435342996.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Mahmood Alabri

Bangor University

Wales - UK

## Appendix 17. Interview Information Sheet

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University



Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565

### INFORMATION SHEET (Interview)

The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

#### Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in a preparation of a PhD thesis looking at the role of UNESCO Organisation in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman. The researcher think it is important for you to understand why the project is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study seeks to:

6. Shed light on the evolution of the cultural scene in Oman over 40 years.
7. Identify the role of UNESCO in providing support to Member States and the volume of this support.
8. Quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate programs, activities and events in the Sultanate of Oman which implementation was sponsored or contributed to by UNESCO.
9. Perform analytical comparisons between the programs implemented in the Sultanate of Oman by UNESCO and a number of neighbor countries.
10. Identify the most prominent strengths that contribute to stimulate the relationship between UNESCO and the Sultanate of Oman under the concept of “International cultural diplomacy”.

Why have I been chosen?

The researcher has chosen you to take part in this study according to your current job title, with cooperation with the Omani office of the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO. I suppose that your career role and experience will contribute valuable information to this research.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You are invited to take part in an interview to talk about your experiences. I would be interested to hear about your role, including the challenges UNESCO might face and how you manage these, the perceived effects on your work, UNESCO world role, especially in a culture field and any rewarding aspects. We will arrange a time and place to meet, which is convenient for you. It is one time interview lasting no more than an hour. When I have completed the study, I will produce a summary of the findings which I will be more

than happy to send you if you are interested. However, taking part in this study is voluntary and withdrawal is possible at any time. Non-participation or withdrawal will have no consequences for the study.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings from this study will help us in Oman to sustain our good relationship with UNESCO and try to enhance it. Any information you share will be used only for the preparation of this study as well as papers and conference presentations. If you wish, your data will be fully or partly anonymized as well as your identification details. You would not be identified in any reports or outputs arising from this work, unless you give me the permission to do so. Your information and all findings of the study will be saved securely at the Bangor University Computer. After the research finished, all unrequired information will be securely disposed.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The project is being organised by Bangor University, school of Social Sciences, Wales, UK. It is funded by the Ministry of Education in Oman.

Contact for further information

Please do not hesitate to contact me Mahmood Alabri on my email address [sop641@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sop641@bangor.ac.uk) or on my mobile number 00447435342996.

If you would like more information or have any concerns about the project, please contact Howard Davis, Professor of Social Theory and Institutions, School of Social Sciences, Bangor University. His email address is [h.h.davis@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:h.h.davis@bangor.ac.uk) and his telephone number is 01248 382123.

Alternatively, you can contact the office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO. The email address is [dl.oman@unesco-delegations.org](mailto:dl.oman@unesco-delegations.org) and the telephone numbers are 01.45.68.30.52 and 01.45.68.30.68.

Thank you for kindly taking the time to read this information.

## Appendix 18. Interview Consent Form

Coleg Busnes, y Gyfraith, Addysg a Gwyddorau Cymdeithas, Prifysgol Bangor

College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences, Bangor University



Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Ffon/Tel: (01248) 388 220

Elusen Gofrestrig Rhif/Registered charity 1141565

### Title of the research:

The role of UNESCO in sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2020

### CONSENT FORM

Please read these statements carefully and tick the boxes that apply to you:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
I understand that all my individual information will be kept securely and used only for the purpose of the study.	
I confirm that my identification details (my name and current job title) can be used for the purpose of the study.	
I agree for this research interview to be recorded and for the recording to be used for the purposes that have been explained to me.	
I confirm that all questions that I have about this research have been satisfactorily answered	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 19. Data-collection Time-line

Date	Action
25/1/2017	Receiving Bangor University approval letter for data collection
1-28/2/2017	Sending invitation e-mails for the selected UNESCO sample
1-31/3/2017	Completing all necessary travel arrangements for Paris (visa, residence and ticket)
1/4/2017	Doing Pilot Study interview in <i>The Office of the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO</i> - Paris
2-7/4/2017	Conducting interviews - UNESCO Headquarter
14-27/7/2017	Receiving Ministry of Education approval letter for data collection – Muscat
1-31/8/2017	Sending invitation e-mails for the selected interview sample – Muscat
3/9 – 31/10 2017	Conducting interviews - Muscat
1/11/2017	Doing Pilot Study survey in <i>the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science</i> - Muscat
2/11/2017- 31/1/2018	Distributing and collecting the questionnaire survey in Muscat
1/2– 23/5/2018	Transcribing the 19 interviews
24/5 – 25/7/2018	Doing the questionnaire analysis in SPSS
9/2018 – 3/2020	Writing up the thesis

## Appendix 20. Declaration, Bangor University Research Ethics Policy

### Declaration (Students)

(PhD, MPhil, MA by Research, MA Taught and Undergraduate Degrees)

A scanned copy of this declaration should be emailed to Anwen Evans, Secretary, CBLESS Ethics Committee ([CBLESSEthics@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:CBLESSEthics@bangor.ac.uk)).

This should be accompanied by:

1. A copy of the research proposal detailing any risk as defined in the University's Ethics Policy.
2. Copies of relevant supporting documentation (for example, letters of invitation to study participants, participant information sheets and consent forms).

Prior to undertaking any research projects, students should familiarise themselves with the University's Research Ethics Policy:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/ro/recordsmanagement/REF.php>

Projects entailing no risk, as that term is understood in the context of the Ethics Policy, are generally projects that do not entail the collection of primary data from subjects. They do not have to be referred to the Ethics Committee for approval. Examples of no risk:

1. Statistical analyses of time series data published by the Office of National Statistics to investigate the impact of fiscal policy on unemployment.
2. Investigations of interlocking membership on executive boards and executive remuneration committees in the not-for-profit social enterprise companies, conducted using data obtained from government agencies, commercial databases and other public records.
3. Investigation of the British Crime Survey data to examine why some police authorities appear to be more efficient than others.

Students should note that the following research activities would normally be considered as involving more than minimal risk and, consequently, require ethical review by the College Ethics Committee:

1. Research involving vulnerable groups – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.
2. Research involving sensitive topics – for example, participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status.
3. Research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members.



4. Research necessarily involving deception or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.
5. Research involving access to records of personal or confidential information, including genetic and other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals.
6. Research that would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
7. Research involving intrusive interventions – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy.

#### Data Protection

If it is anticipated that human participants will be engaged, duly signed consent forms and information sheets should be drawn up and copies lodged with the secretary of the College Ethics Committee. Special attention must be given to compliance with the legal requirement of checks by the Criminal Records Bureau.

#### Declaration

The declaration must be accompanied by the research proposal and relevant supporting documentation. It should be signed by the student and then counter-signed by the supervisor.

I certify that I have read the University Research Ethics Policy. The issues raised there that are relevant for this research project are described in the attached research proposal.

(Sd).....Date.....

Student (NAME): .....

I agree with the declaration above

(Sd).....Date.....

Supervisor (NAME): .....

## Appendix 21. Ethical Approval Letter

**COLEG BUSNES, Y GYFRAITH, ADDYSG A GWYDDORAU  
CYMDEITHAS  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, LAW, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES**



25 January 2017

Dear Mahmood

**Re: The role of UNESCO in the development of the cultural scene and sustaining cultural diversity in the Sultanate of Oman**

Thank you for your recent revised application to the CBLESS Research Ethics Committee.

The committee has considered your application and I am now able to give permission, on behalf of the CBLESS Research Ethics Committee, for the commencement of your research project.

I wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr. Diane Seddon**  
Chair, College Ethics Committee

cc – Professor Howard Davis

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CANOLFAN WEINYDDOL  
BANGOR, GWYNEDD,  
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BANGOR UNIVERSITY  
ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE,  
BANGOR, GWYNEDD,  
LL57 2DG

TEL: +44 (0) 1248 383231  
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EMAIL: Cbless@bangor.ac.uk

YR ATHRO/PROFESSOR PHIL MOLYNEUX BA, Mphil, PhD  
DEON Y COLEG/DEAN OF COLLEGE

Registered charity number: 1141565

www.bangor.ac.uk



## استمارة طلب تسهيل مهمة بحثية

تاريخ تقديم الطلب: 2018 / 3 / 21

مقدم الطلب: محمود بن عبدالله بن محمد العبري الوظيفة: مدير دائرة  
الجامعة/الجهة المشرفة على البحث: ..... جهة العمل: اللجنة الوطنية للتربية والثقافة والعلوم  
البريد الإلكتروني: elp802@bangor.ac.uk الهاتف: 99470844  
عنوان الدراسة: دور منظمة اليونسكو في تطور المشهد الثقافي واستدامة التنوع الثقافي في سلطنة عمان

...

الغرض من الدراسة:

☐ متطلب للحصول على الماجستير ☒ متطلب للحصول على الدكتوراه ☐ أخرى (تذكر)

.....

المرحلة البحثية: وصلت في دراستي / بحثي إلى مرحلة:

☐ تحديد العنوان أو المشكلة ☐ بناء المخطط أو الأدوات البحثية  
☐ جمع البيانات أو المعلومات حول موضوع الدراسة ☐ تطبيق الدراسة الإستطلاعية  
☒ تطبيق أدوات الدراسة ☐ استخراج النتائج وتفسيرها

حجم العينة: 130

نوع عينة الدراسة: ☐ طلاب ☐ معلمون ☐ إداريو المدارس ☐ موظفون ☒ أخرى (تذكر) موظفون من خارج الوزارة

نوع الأداة: ☒ استبانة ☒ مقابلة ☐ ملاحظة ☐ أخرى .....

أود أن أطبق دراستي في نطاق مديرية/محافظة:

☒ مسقط ☐ ظفار ☐ الداخلية ☐ مسندم ☐ البريمي ☐ جنوب الباطنة  
☐ شمال الشرقية ☐ جنوب الشرقية ☐ شمال الباطنة ☐ الظاهرة ☐ الوسطى  
☐ مديريات ديوان عام الوزارة: (تذكر)

.....

عليه يرجى التكرم بـ: ☐ تسهيل الحصول على بيانات

الموافقة على جمع بيانات لبناء أدوات الدراسة

☐ الموافقة على تطبيق الدراسة الإستطلاعية ☒ الموافقة على تطبيق أدوات الدراسة

يرجى إرفاق: 1- رسالة الجامعة/الجهة المشرفة على البحث 2- مخطط الدراسة 3- أدوات الدراسة المحكّمة

ترسل جميع هذه الوثائق مع استمارة طلب تسهيل مهمة بحثية إلى البريد الإلكتروني: [tosd@moe.om](mailto:tosd@moe.om)،  
للاستفسار يرجى التواصل على هاتف المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير / 24255134 – 24255303

للإستعمال الرسمي فقط

نتيجة مراجعة أدوات الدراسة:

☐ يمكن تطبيق الأدوات بأكملها وفق الإجراءات المتبعة

☐ يتطلب تعديل بعض الجوانب في أدوات الدراسة (تذكر)

☐ يتطلب أخذ ملاحظات جهات أخرى ذات علاقة

(تذكر).....

☐ أخرى

النتيجة النهائية: ☐ تسهيل المهمة ☐ رفض تطبيق أدوات الدراسة

## Appendix 23. Correlations matrix table

The following table shows the Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Q7-Q34 with each other

		Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34
Q7	Pear	1	.157	-.006	.053	.074	-.027	.183	.103	.108	-.010	.025	.105	.107	.135	.117	.021	.188	.083	.242	.194	.100	.268	-.050	.205	-.067	.275	.180	.244
	Sig.		.158	.958	.634	.510	.813	.100	.358	.333	.928	.823	.349	.339	.225	.295	.852	.090	.460	.028	.080	.371	.015	.658	.065	.551	.012	.105	.027
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q8	Pear	.157	1	-.004	.084	.162	.154	.331	.182	.083	-.039	-.028	-.094	.211	-.078	-.147	-.043	.182	.141	.259	.180	-.027	.125	.048	.068	-.121	.333	.084	.050
	Sig.	.158		.971	.454	.145	.166	.002	.103	.459	.727	.803	.399	.057	.489	.187	.698	.101	.207	.019	.106	.810	.264	.668	.543	.277	.002	.452	.653
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q9	Pear	-.004	1	.501	.112	.308	.005	.082	-.047	.026	.229	.274	.085	.044	.177	.333	.128	.086	-.046	.041	.243	.055	-.097	.024	.212	.218	.256	.371	
	Sig.	.958	.971		.000	.318	.005	.961	.465	.675	.818	.039	.013	.447	.692	.112	.002	.253	.444	.680	.712	.028	.625	.388	.830	.055	.049	.020	.001
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q10	Pear	.053	.084	.501	1	.277	.338	.183	.027	-.080	.008	.237	.460	.182	-.111	.281	.231	.082	.153	.106	.043	.289	.011	-.030	.006	.163	.261	.318	.260
	Sig.	.634	.454	.000		.012	.002	.101	.812	.474	.940	.032	.000	.101	.321	.010	.037	.462	.170	.344	.698	.009	.919	.792	.959	.142	.018	.004	.018
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q11	Pear	.074	.162	.112	.277	1	.571	.244	-.036	-.166	-.008	-.125	.157	.296	.023	.205	.131	.074	.047	.319	-.040	-.018	.148	.049	.103	.161	.207	.200	.132
	Sig.	.510	.145	.318	.012		.000	.027	.745	.137	.941	.265	.158	.007	.839	.064	.241	.507	.672	.004	.718	.874	.184	.661	.355	.148	.062	.071	.236
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q12	Pear	-.154	.308	.338	.671	.571	1	.142	.008	-.167	.082	.046	.254	.285	.115	.139	.218	.145	.027	.163	.074	.008	.044	.142	.006	.219	.227	.260	.361
	Sig.	.813	.166	.005	.002	.000		.204	.946	.134	.466	.681	.021	.009	.305	.213	.049	.195	.809	.143	.508	.946	.696	.203	.959	.048	.041	.018	.001
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q13	Pear	.183	.331	.005	.183	.244	.142	1	.014	.028	-.020	.006	.272	.119	-.124	.177	.240	.211	-.092	.060	.245	.082	.275	.098	.247	.050	.414	.351	.249
	Sig.	.100	.002	.961	.101	.027	.204		.901	.803	.859	.960	.013	.286	.265	.111	.030	.057	.411	.592	.027	.464	.013	.381	.025	.657	.000	.001	.024
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q14	Pear	.103	.182	.082	.027	-.036	.008	.014	1	.311	.051	.022	.062	.087	-.018	-.185	-.023	-.031	.206	.131	-.026	.087	.276	.045	.025	-.009	.011	-.075	-.062
	Sig.	.358	.103	.465	.812	.745	.946	.901		.005	.646	.842	.583	.438	.875	.096	.838	.780	.064	.240	.815	.435	.012	.690	.822	.933	.924	.505	.580
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Q15	Pear	.108	.083	-.047	-.080	-.166	-.167	.028	.311	1	.388	-.158	-.222	-.081	.214	.254	-.105	-.019	.050	-.031	-.151	-.076	.175	.156	-.097	-.155	-.101	-.197	-
	Sig.	.333	.459	.675	.474	.137	.134	.803	.005		.000	.157	.045	.472	.053	.021	.346	.866	.654	.785	.177	.500	.117	.162	.388	.163	.369	.077	.020
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82

	Pear	-	-.039	.026	.008	-.008	.082	-.020	.051	.390	1	-.051	-.274	.024	.336	-.103	-.030	.019	-.055	.115	-.138	-.043	.120	.120	-.114	.086	-.145	-.097	-
Q16	Sig.	.928	.727	.818	.940	.941	.466	.859	.646	.000		.651	.013	.830	.002	.355	.789	.866	.624	.304	.217	.701	.284	.282	.308	.444	.194	.386	.758
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.025	-.028	.229	.237	-.125	.046	.006	.022	-.158	-.051	1	.272	.004	-.091	.213	.165	-.020	-.039	-.029	.124	.065	-.002	-.041	-.014	.144	.054	.211	.059
Q17	Sig.	.823	.803	.039	.032	.265	.681	.960	.842	.157	.651		.013	.970	.419	.054	.139	.860	.729	.799	.269	.001	.986	.717	.904	.197	.632	.057	.599
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.105	-.094	.274	.450	.157	.254	.272	.062	-.222	-.274	.272	1	.152	-.141	.520	.149	-.001	-.063	-.140	.068	.072	-.047	-.014	.045	.081	.279	.454	.307
Q18	Sig.	.349	.399	.013	.000	.158	.021	.013	.583	.045	.013	.013		.173	.207	.000	.182	.995	.577	.210	.542	.520	.672	.901	.687	.469	.011	.000	.005
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.107	.211	.085	.182	.295	.285	.119	.087	-.081	.024	.004	.152	1	.132	.014	.180	.224	.054	.055	.072	.142	.202	.194	.228	.229	.229	.158	.186
Q19	Sig.	.339	.057	.447	.101	.007	.009	.286	.438	.472	.830	.970	.173		.237	.898	.106	.043	.632	.621	.519	.202	.069	.081	.040	.038	.038	.155	.094
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.135	-.078	.044	-.111	-.023	.115	-.124	-.018	.214	.335	-.091	-.141	.132	1	-.079	.039	.109	.083	.010	.052	.055	.243	.091	.077	.070	-.120	-.045	-.025
Q20	Sig.	.225	.489	.692	.321	.839	.305	.265	.875	.053	.002	.419	.207	.237		.478	.731	.331	.460	.929	.642	.623	.028	.417	.494	.534	.285	.688	.821
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.117	-.147	.177	.281	.205	.139	.177	-.185	.254	-.103	.213	.520	.014	-.079	1	.219	-.102	-.155	-.055	-.005	.051	-.039	-.127	.129	.125	.234	.383	.197
Q21	Sig.	.295	.187	.112	.010	.064	.213	.111	.096	.021	.355	.054	.000	.898	.478		.048	.363	.166	.622	.961	.647	.731	.255	.246	.262	.034	.000	.076
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.021	-.043	.333	.231	.131	.218	.240	-.023	-.105	-.030	.165	.149	.180	.039	.219	1	.535	.201	-.022	.293	.316	.167	-.127	.394	.312	.331	.299	.432
Q22	Sig.	.852	.698	.002	.037	.241	.049	.030	.838	.346	.789	.139	.182	.106	.731	.048		.000	.070	.847	.008	.004	.134	.255	.000	.004	.002	.006	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.188	.182	.128	.082	.074	.145	.211	-.031	-.019	.019	-.020	-.001	.224	.109	-.102	.535	1	.232	.217	.376	.143	.257	-.050	.285	.178	.293	.170	.379
Q23	Sig.	.090	.101	.253	.462	.507	.195	.057	.780	.866	.866	.860	.995	.043	.331	.363	.000		.036	.051	.000	.199	.020	.656	.009	.110	.008	.127	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.083	.141	.086	.153	.047	.027	-.092	.206	.050	-.055	-.039	-.063	.054	.083	-.155	.201	.232	1	.144	-.046	-.084	.087	-.143	.127	-.068	-.097	.079	.073
Q24	Sig.	.460	.207	.444	.170	.672	.809	.411	.064	.654	.624	.729	.577	.632	.460	.166	.070	.036		.197	.680	.453	.438	.199	.254	.547	.387	.483	.513
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
	Pear	.242	.259	-.046	.106	.319	.163	.060	.131	-.031	.115	-.029	-.140	.055	.010	-.055	-.022	.217	.144	1	.207	-.020	.129	.155	-.048	.181	.190	.230	.107
Q25	Sig.	.028	.019	.680	.344	.004	.143	.592	.240	.785	.304	.799	.210	.621	.929	.622	.847	.051	.197		.062	.857	.249	.163	.669	.104	.088	.038	.340





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