OPUS
Journal of Society Research

Type: Research Article
Received Date: June 18, 2026
Accepted Date: September 2, 2026
Published: September 5, 2026
10.26466/opusjsr.1973723

Sustainability policies and the social function of theatre: A case study of the Almeida Theatre

Sürdürülebilirlik politikaları ve tiyatronun toplumsal işlevi: Almeida Theatre üzerine bir vaka çalışması

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Abstract

While sustainability has focused on ecological, economic, and social transformation; cultural institutions also need to reevaluate and restructure their practices, operational structures and ethical commitments. As an art form that engages directly with society, theatre functions as a social institution capable of enhancing environmental awareness, encouraging social responsibility, and supporting cultural continuity. In this context, the case study for this research-the Almeida Theatre-was selected through purposive sampling due to its institutional practices in the field of sustainability, its social mission, its win of the Best Cultural Venue award at the 2019 Creative Green Awards, and its consistent five-star rating from the environmental arts organization Julie's Bicycle. This study aims to explore whether sustainability in theater institutions can serve as a social model that transforms cultural behaviors, beyond a solely technical ecological transformation. Study employs the case study design, one of the qualitative research methods and the theatre's sustainability reports, corporate policy documents, and publicly available activity reports were examined using document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic categories based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and interpreted within the framework of David Throsby's theory of cultural values. The findings indicate that the Almeida integrates sustainability into its management and operational practices through a strategy to extend beyond environmental responsibility to encompass dimensions of social benefit, corporate governance, and cultural participation, demonstrating substantial consistency with the SDGs.

Keywords: *Theatre, sustainability, sustainable theatre, Almeida Theatre, society*

Öz

Sürdürülebilirlik öncelikle ekolojik, ekonomik ve sosyal alanlarda değişimi öngörse de her alanda olduğu gibi kültürel kurumlarda da uygulama ve etik yükümlülüklerin yeniden gözden geçirilmesi ve düzenlenmesi gerekmektedir. Tiyatro, toplumla doğrudan ilişki kuran bir sanat olarak, çevresel bilinci, bu konudaki toplumsal sorumluluğu, farkındalığı arttırabilecek ve kültürel sürekliliği teşvik edebilecek bir kurum niteliğindedir. Bu bağlamda araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturan Almeida Theatre, sürdürülebilirlik alanındaki kurumsal uygulamaları, toplumsal misyonu, 2019 yılında Creative Green Awards'da En İyi Kültürel Mekan ödülünü kazanmış olması ve çevreci sanat kuruluşu Julie's Bicycle'dan sürekli olarak beş yıldız alması nedeniyle amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiştir. Sürdürülebilirliğin tiyatro kurumlarında ekolojik açıdan salt teknik bir dönüşüm ötesinde, kültürel davranış biçimlerini dönüştüren toplumsal bir model olup olamayacağının araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden vaka çalışması deseni kullanılmış; tiyatronun sürdürülebilirlik raporları, kurumsal politika metinleri ve kamuya açık faaliyet raporları doküman analizi tekniği aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Veriler, Birleşmiş Milletler Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Amaçları temelinde oluşturulan tematik kategoriler doğrultusunda çözümlenmiş ve David Throsby'nin kültürel değer teorisi çerçevesinde yorumlanmıştır. Bulgular, Almeida Theatre'ın sürdürülebilirlik stratejilerini çevresel sorumluluğun ötesinde toplumsal fayda, kurumsal yönetişim ve kültürel katılım boyutlarını kapsayacak şekilde yapılandırdığını; yönetim ve uygulama pratiklerini SDG'ler ile uyumlu olarak topluma katkı odaklı bir yaklaşım çerçevesinde geliştirdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Tiyatro, sürdürülebilirlik, sürdürülebilir tiyatro, Almeida Theatre, toplum*

Citation:
Ersan Öztürk, I. (2026). Sustainability policies and the social function of theatre: A case study of the Almeida Theatre. *OPUS– Journal of Society Research, 23,* e1973723.
https://doi.org/10.26466/opusjsr.1973723

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Review Note:
Evaluated by Double-Blind Peer Review

Ethics Reporting:
To report potential ethical concerns, contact: editorialoffice@opusjournal.net

Similarity screening was conducted via intihal.net.

Introduction

Most contemporary understandings of sustainability originate from the work of United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly known as the Brundtland Commission (Brundtland, 1987). In its 1987 report *Our Common Future*, the Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as a concept consisting of three equally important components, each beginning with the letter "E" in English: environment, economy, and equity. According to this framework, sustainability can only be achieved through the simultaneous protection of the environment, the maintenance of economic growth and development, and the promotion of social equity. The central premise is that these three dimensions are interdependent and must be pursued in balance in order to ensure sustainable development (Portney, 2015, p. 6).

Since one of the global objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs- This abbreviation will be used throughout the text) is to enhance the sustainability capacities of all citizens, each new generation must participate in sustainable development processes and benefit from the latest scientific debates and advancements. Research by Wiek et al. (2012), Miller (2013), Ramos et al. (2015), and Mochizuki and Yarime (2016) demonstrates that public attention is often concentrated on media representations of climate change, environmental issues, and sustainability. At the same time, these studies identify a persistent gap in knowledge and competencies concerning the underlying causes of sustainability challenges.

Learning how to live and work sustainably, as well as reshaping everyday habits, requires both commitment and perseverance. A society that aspires to sustainability must expand its knowledge base in ecological, economic, and social domains while restructuring its practices and choices accordingly. Culture and the arts naturally constitute an integral part of this transformation.

Theatre is an art form that consists representation, action, and collective participation, bringing together actors, directors, playwrights, dramaturgs, designers, and backstage personnel in a collaborative process that ultimately presents a narrative experience to audiences. Owing both to its inherently collective mode of production and to its direct engagement with society through performance, theatre possesses significant potential to play a leading role in the implementation and dissemination of sustainability principles. Theatre can play a pioneering role in attracting attention to sustainability issues, raising awareness, disseminating knowledge, and serving as a model of practice through its production processes, audience engagement, and the lasting impact it leaves on society.

Sustainability is generally associated only with the environment and ecology and is often narrowed down to recycling and upcycling. However, sustainability also encompasses equally important dimensions such as the economy and equality. In light of the information above, this study aims to answer the following research question: Can sustainability serve as a social model-beyond merely facilitating a technical ecological transformation-to transform cultural behaviors within theatre institutions and set an example for society? To address this question, a qualitative research method was employed to examine the Almeida Theatre in the United Kingdom and explore its sustainability strategies within the context of the theatre's social function. Almeida Theater stands out as a notable example among similar institutions worldwide, with all its operations and administrative units.

The aim of this study is to highlight the potential of theatre to convey the aspects of sustainability could improve society-such as education, employment, inclusivity, and equality-through its ability to reach broad audiences directly and without intermediaries. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the possibility of theatre serving as a social model within this framework and the potential for their social function to evolve in the context of sustainability. In conclusion, study tries to provide a clear and replicable framework for examining sustainability in theatre organizations, thereby establishing a useful model for future qualitative research in the performing arts.

The article is an expanded English-language version of the author's conference paper, *Almeida Theatre: A Case Study on Balancing Tradition and Sustainability in Theatre Production*, presented at the 2nd UTAD International Theatre Research Conference held at Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul, between September 5–7th, 2024 which published only in abstract form. In this article, the theoretical framework has been expanded, with a focus on the social dimension of sustainability. Unlike the source paper, while the environmental focus has been excluded from the discussion, the operational and behavioral implications of ecological sustainability have been examined within the context of theater's role in influencing society. For this reason, practices and solutions aimed at ecological sustainability in the processes of production, scenographic design, and realization have also been excluded from the scope of this article. The article argues that art and culture possess a significant role in advancing the SDGs and that this role can be effectively mobilized not only in theatre but also across other performing arts disciplines.

Methodology

This study is a structured single-case study conducted within the framework of a qualitative research approach. The case study approach is a qualitative research method that aims to present new findings and innovative practices by examining situations, phenomena, individuals, or events in all their aspects and analyzing their relationship with social factors in detail (Yüksel, Mil & Bilim, 2007). In this study, which seeks to reveal how sustainability can be institutionalized in theater organizations and to highlight the social function of a cultural medium in this regard, priority was given to the single-case study method; since a structuralist approach was adopted, no comparative analysis was conducted.

The dataset that consists of comprising publicly available sustainability reports, corporate policy documents, mission and vision statements, accessibility and equity policies, activity reports on education and community projects, and guidelines and implementation documents on the official website, was compiled using document analysis techniques. Document analysis, a systematic procedure for examining and evaluating both printed and electronic materials related to the subject of the research (Bowen, 2009,) was used as the primary data collection technique.

To establish the theoretical framework of the study, key texts on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and David Throsby's approach to cultural sustainability were examined; however, these texts were not evaluated as part of the data analysis; rather, they were used to interpret the findings.

Table 1. Code-theme relationships in the thematic analysis.

Themes	Codes	Code-Theme Association
Raising Awareness and Advocacy	Environmental awareness Cultural responsibility *Corporate governance*	*The organization's efforts to highlight its sustainability practices, raise awareness of environmental and social issues, and promote this approach through its corporate messaging and practices can be evaluated under this theme.*
Community Engagement and Empowerment	Community participation Accessibility Equality Corporate Governance	The theater's efforts to facilitate access for different social groups, expand opportunities for participation, and develop inclusive institutional practices provide models that support communities' participation in and empowerment through cultural life.
Cultural Transformation and Social Change	Cultural responsibility Cultural heritage Equality Environmental awareness	The reshaping of corporate values in line with cultural responsibility, equality, and sustainability; as well as initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and transforming cultural behaviors can be associated with this theme.
Educational Impact and Capacity Development	Education Environmental awareness Community participation Cultural heritage Accessibility	Educational activities, the promotion of environmental awareness, the sharing of cultural knowledge and experiences, and the development of the capacity for cultural participation among different social groups represent the key patterns associated with this theme.

A descriptive analysis was employed in alignment with thematic categories based on the research question and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Clarke & Braun, 2017), and the findings were interpreted within the framework of David Throsby's theory of cultural values. This method makes it possible to comprehensively examine how sustainability is implemented and integrated within the organizational structure of theatre organizations.

To identify recurring meaningful patterns in the thematic analysis, documents were searched to identify meaningful statements regarding sustainability practices. While identifying recurring patterns related to organizational values, cultural responsibility, sustainability practices, and the social functions of theater, this process also provided a foundation for interpretations within a broader framework, such as cultural policy and environmental sustainability. As initial codes, recurring concepts such as *community participation, cultural heritage, equality, accessibility, education, environmental awareness*, and *corporate governance* emerged. Themes were identified by grouping similar codes based on shared meanings. The consistency of the content was verified by comparing the identified themes with the dataset; the themes were then redefined in light of the social and cultural functions of sustainability. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the codes and the themes. As a result, four core themes were identified: *Raising awareness and advocacy; community participation and empowerment; cultural transformation and social change; and education and capacity building*. These themes were interpreted within the framework of the SDGs and Throsby's principles of cultural sustainability.

The SDGs were used as a reference point to link the findings that is, the Almeida Theatre's institutional practices to the international sustainability framework. The principles outlined by Throsby under his approach to cultural sustainability (intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity, the preservation of cultural diversity, the precautionary principle, and the principle of the interdependence of economic, social, and cultural systems) were used as analytical criteria in the interpretation process.

Research Limitations

The fact that the research design is a single-case study, one of the qualitative research methods, and that the research data are based on institutional reports and official website content can be regarded as limitations of the study.

Literature Review

The literature review considered studies not only emphasizing the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability but also addressing sustainability within cultural and creative industries, with particular attention to theatre. Theories examining the role of culture in sustainable development generally assume that culture, its expressions, and its modes of operation can function as instruments for achieving sustainability goals (Clincu & Bănică, 2024; Dessein et al., 2015; Ferran Vila, 2021; Hoşkara et al., 2021; Portolés & Dragicevic, 2018; Rodighiero et.al., 2025; Osadci-Baciu & Zbuchea, 2025; Salvador & Comunian, 2023; Throsby, 2019; Türkoğlu, 2020; Wróblewski et al., 2019).

Studies focusing on theatre institutions emphasize the critical role theatres play in fostering resilience and sustainability (Çevikayak & Ersan Öztürk, 2022; Taxopoulou, 2023; Urrutiaguer, 2021) and examine local theatre ecosystems as significant sites of sustainable cultural practice (Esposito et al., 2024). Current studies in the field of theatre related to sustainability also either focus on environmental sustainability by using forum theatre as a tool (Mancilla García et.al., 2025) or examine the role of theatre as an artistic practice that facilitates intergenerational relationships in more local communities, such as community theatre (Killick, 2020), and an article addressing the sustainability of theatre examining how technological development rather than the SDGs might affect theatre (Boh & Adoka, 2023). Other studies examine the adaptability of ecological sustainability principles

to practice through the lens of a single play production (Beer & Hes, 2017; Zezulka, 2024). In the Turkish context, research on the cultural dimension of local development, includes an arts academy encompassing theatre, also highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement in sustainable cultural development (Tekgül & Canlı, 2023).

In conclusion, this study stands out for its effort to directly demonstrate how social sustainability policies are reflected in and impact society within theatre organizations. While other studies address only one aspect of sustainability or a single level of theatre practice, this study examines sustainability as a holistic institutional approach within a professional theatre organization. Through a qualitative case study of Almeida Theatre, the study illustrates how sustainability may be integrated into organizational management, creative programming, audience engagement, governance, and community collaborations while working within the limitations of a historic theatre facility. By utilizing David Throsby's cultural value framework in conjunction with the SDGs, the research additionally adds to the body of literature by establishing a connection between sustainability practice in the performing arts and cultural value theory.

Sample

With an international reputation, Almeida Theatre has operated from a historic building situated on Almeida Street in Islington, a district of North London that was traditionally working-class but has since undergone significant gentrification (Hornby, 2000). The theatre has developed a range of initiatives directly linked to social sustainability, adopting an approach that extends the institution itself to its immediate surroundings and, subsequently, to a wider community through partnerships with local schools and community organizations. Its receipt of the Best Cultural Venue Award at the Creative Green Awards in 2019, together with its consistent five-star environmental ratings from the non-profit sustainability organization Julie's Bicycle, further strengthens its suitability as the focal case study of this research. Using a purposive sampling method which narrows the range of variation, focuses on similarities, designed to identify cases that meet predetermined criteria and to ensure that the research question can be fully answered (Denieffe, 2020), Almeida represents a comprehensive sample that meets these predetermined criteria.

Designed in the Ancient Greek style, the history of the building dates back to the Islington Literary and Scientific Society, founded in 1833. Following a series of ownership changes in 1872, 1885, 1890, and 1956, the building served a variety of cultural and non-cultural functions before eventually falling into disuse. It remained vacant until a campaign was launched in 1978 advocating for its conversion into a theatre (Baggs et al., 1985; Pinkowicz, 1990) when the Lebanese-born opera and theatre director Pierre Audi and his associates recognized its potential as a performance venue. After undertaking extensive renovations, they opened the building as Almeida Theatre in 1980. Today, the theatre welcomes audiences in a 325-seat auditorium (Almeida Theatre, 2008a, 2008b). Since its inception, Almeida Theatre has welcomed distinguished artists including John Cage, Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, and many other influential directors and performers.



Figure 1. Almeida Theatre (Source: https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/)

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study to provide an analytical foundation for the research is based on the SDGs agreed upon by member states of United Nations and David Throsby's theory of cultural values.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

According to the Report of the World Commission *Our Common Future* (Brundtland, 1987, p. 39), there can be no single blueprint for sustainability, as economic and social systems, as well as ecological conditions, vary significantly across nations. Nevertheless, both the report and SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, emphasize that sustainable development remains a global objective regardless of these differences.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015. This agenda provides a common roadmap for ensuring peace and prosperity for people and our planet, both today and in the future. 17 SDGs serve as an urgent call to action for all countries to achieve them through global partnership. These goals, which came into effect on January 1, 2016, are as follows: (1) no poverty, (2) zero hunger, (3) good health and well-being, (4) quality education, (5) gender equality, (6) clean water and sanitation, (7) affordable and clean energy, (8) decent work and economic growth, (9) industry, innovation, and infrastructure, (10) reduced inequalities, (11) sustainable cities and communities, (12) responsible consumption and production, (13) climate action, (14) life below water, (15) life on land, (16) peace, justice, and strong institutions, (17) partnerships for the goals (United Nations, n.d.b).

The SDGs emphasize the importance of partnerships among governments, businesses, civil society, and the international community to mobilize resources and achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, collaborative efforts on a broader scale among schools, community-based organizations, vocational education and training institutions, international NGOs, and the private businesses are expected to contribute to a broader understanding and implementation of sustainability goals (Ramos, 2015). In short, building strong, dynamic, and long-lasting ecological, economic, and social systems is the aim of the modern sustainability movement.

As an institution theater is a component of this movement because the idea of *sustainable theater* can focus on how theaters should run more sustainably to protect the environment, society, and their own establishments. Number of SDGs can be achieved whether in terms of production processes, content of plays, internal operations or interactions with audiences, alongside to theatre's capacity for freedom of speech and outreach. As will be discussed under the *Findings* section, it is evident that the Almeida Theatre's current practices are consistent with with SDG's that theaters can contribute to in their operations.

Theory of Cultural Value

Although culture was not initially a priority within the framework of SDGs, academics and institutions emphasize its critical importance in the context of its role that generate social benefits. Various studies on culture and sustainability argue that culture serves as a key instrument and foundation for ensuring the economic, social, and ecological sustainability (Brennert et al., 2023; Dessein et al., 2015; Duxbury et al., 2017). As emphasized in the 2012 UNESCO report: "As a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, culture frames the conditions for a genuinely human-centered approach to development" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 77). *Culture: Key to Sustainable Development* (Bogyay, K., 2013), the final document of UNESCO's international congress as well as the report titled *Culture: A Driver and an Enabler of Sustainable Development* (UNESCO, 2012) also highlight the relationship between culture and concepts such as integration, sustainability, peace, and security, emphasizing its transformative potential in supporting social, cultural, and economic growth. Furthermore, the latter text presents key recommendations to enhance culture's contribution to sustainable development.

As one of the most influential figures in the field of cultural economics, David Throsby has also explored the applicability of sustainability concepts to cultural capital in his works on culture and sustainability (2001; 2010). Throsby argues that culture is a key actor in sustainability, in addition to the

pillars of economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice which form the foundation of SDGs and are consistently emphasized in relevant documents.

Throsby (2001), noting that if economic and cultural values are recognized as equal components of a development model, long-term benefits can be achieved by governments and capital owners within the framework of sustainability criteria, has opened the discussion on the relationship between culture and sustainability in three contexts. Under the headings *Cultural Capital as a Sustainable Resource*, *Interaction Between Environment and Culture*, and *Sustainability of Urban Cultural Heritage* (Throsby, 2017), he explains the mutual beneficial relationship between sustainability and culture.

Throsby argues that cultural heritage constitutes a form of cultural capital comprising two types: tangible elements such as works of art, historical structures, and archives and intangible elements such as traditions, language, and rituals that must be passed on to future generations. Cultural capital creates long-term economic and cultural added value, and sustainability concepts have the potential to provide an integrative framework in this context (Throsby, 2001, p. 87). According to Throsby (2017), culture and the environment are interrelated, and people's attitudes toward nature, consumption habits, and environmental behaviors are shaped by cultural values. Therefore, Throsby argues that the success of environmental policies depends on cultural acceptance; art and cultural production can foster environmental awareness, and local cultural knowledge can contribute to the preservation of sustainable lifestyles. Throsby's (2001, p. 89) third context focuses on the preservation of historical structures, cultural areas, and elements of local identity, which may be lost under the pressures of economic development, particularly in urban settings, as part of cultural heritage.

In the development model he formulated in relation to cultural sustainability, Throsby (2001, p. 69) emphasized the principles of intergenerational and intragenerational equity, the preservation of diversity, precautionary principle and the recognition of interdependence of economic and cultural systems. Intergenerational equity can be achieved by passing on cultural resources to future generations; ensuring access to cultural life for all segments of society will lead to intragenerational equity. Cultural diversity is as valuable as biodiversity and must also be protected. When discussing the precautionary principle, Throsby emphasizes the need to avoid practices that could harm cultural heritage. The principle of interdependence, meanwhile, expresses that cultural, economic, social, and environmental systems are interconnected.

Findings and Discussion

As stated under the *Methodology* section, the dataset was obtained through document analysis of organizational records. The presentation of the findings under the *Findings and Discussion* section is linked to the relevant SDGs. Four themes describing the Almeida Theatre's operations in the context of cultural and social sustainability were identified through a thematic analysis of the data. The key themes that emerged in this context are: *Raising Awareness and Advocacy, Community Engagement and Empowerment, Cultural Transformation and Social Change, and Educational Impact and Capacity Development*. The themes are presented in tabular form within the framework of the SDGs associated with the findings and Throsby's principles of cultural sustainability. Each theme is interpreted in light of data aligned with the SDGs and Throsby's principles of sustainability.

Almeida Theatre has not pursued a clear artistic stance or operational policy that took sustainability or SDGs into account from its inception; however, it is now part of a shared framework that are consistent with SDGs. Theatre's mission and vision statements on the website demonstrate that they can be linked to the United Nations' "Education for Sustainable Development" goals for the previous decade (2005–2014) and the 15-year goals for 2015–2030. The relevant mission and vision statements include "developing sustainable, close, collaborative relationships with local schools and groups through the Almeida Projects initiative,"

"being as inclusive and accessible as possible to attract the widest possible audience," and "having and fostering a happy, thriving, and fully motivated staff." (Almeida Theatre, 2008c), which are consistent with both the UN's previous decade's goals and its current goals.

Theatre can contribute to global awareness and policy advocacy on climate change by promoting the SDGs related to climate action and sustainable development (Demos et al., 2021; Finley, 2012; Woynarski, 2020). In the theme of *Raising Awareness and Advocacy*, theater stands out as a powerful tool for engaging audiences emotionally and intellectually; it informs people about sustainability and, in this context, helps transform Goal 4 and 8, and to turn this into a recurring social benefit, it is also consistent with Goal 11, as well as Goal 13. and 16.

The statement "To be as inclusive and accessible as possible to attract the widest possible audience," included in the theater's mission and vision, also appears to be consistent with SDG Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 10 (Reducing inequalities), and Goal 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions).

The theater's mission to "have and foster a happy, thriving, and fully motivated staff" is consistent with Goal 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions as well as Sub-Goal 8.5 of Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. "By 2030, ensure that all women and men, including youth and persons with disabilities, have access to full and productive employment and decent work, and fully implement the principle of equal pay for equal work," and 8.8. "Protecting the rights of workers and developing safe working environments for all workers, including migrant workers-particularly women-and those in precarious employment" (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.). This commitment to equality, inclusivity, and satisfaction, which began within the organization, is also reflected in Almeida's relationships and interactions with its audience and the community through the local partnerships it has established.

"Almeida argues that theater is an indispensable force in an increasingly fragmented society" (Almeida Theatre, n.d.). Perhaps because of this vision the theater has turned its focus to young people. Almeida Theatre (2008d) has been conducting theater projects with young people under the *Projects* initiative since 2003, collaborating with state secondary schools in the Islington area. The theater, which carries out a significant portion of its work in partnership with partner schools, colleges, and community organizations, collaborates on in-depth, long-term programs or short-term projects that may draw inspiration from productions staged at Almeida or from important issues relevant to the participating student and teacher groups. To promote and sustain these projects, evening meetings are held with teachers to maintain communication.

Theater-based arts education can contribute to critical thinking and capacity building for sustainable development (Conrad, 2020; Conrad & Rip, 2022). Within the context of the *Educational Impact and Capacity Building* theme, Almeida's educational work and contributions to society can also be reviewed. Theater projects can support harmony and well-being by fostering dialogue on human rights and social justice and by contributing to Goal 10 (Reducing Inequalities) through performances that address Goals 4, 11 and 16, as well as mental health and social inclusion. Theater stands out as a cultural element and a transformative tool in sustainable development at the local, national, and global levels, within the context of the pillars of equality, economy, and ecology.

Theatre have identified the fact that Islington is a complex, culturally diverse, yet socially and economically deprived borough, and that young people in Islington face difficulties in easily accessing high-quality arts experiences due to their financial, social, and ethnic backgrounds, as key reasons for undertaking these projects. To attract young people to the theatre, Almeida also offers discounts for tickets and the theatre café, organizing a quick stage performance linked to a Saturday show once a month, offering backstage experiences, and hosting forums where young people can meet the creative team behind the plays (Almeida Theatre, 2008d). The theatre continues this policy today by offering discounted tickets to those under 25 and

a 20% discount at the café (Almeida Theatre, 2024a).

The vision of developing sustainable, close, and collaborative relationships with local schools and groups may be consistent with the UN's 11th Goal (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and with Throsby's principle of the interdependence of economic and cultural systems. The mission and vision statement of the aforementioned theater regarding schools can be linked to Goal 11.4: "Strengthen efforts to protect and preserve the world's cultural and natural heritage." Under Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) specifically Sub-Goal 16.7, "Establish responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making mechanisms at all levels," and Sub-Goal 16.b, "Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development," the theater's mission and vision, along with its institutional practices that encourage participation, demonstrate conceptual alignment with these provisions in terms of the principles of inclusivity. Furthermore, this can also be linked to Goal 4 (Quality Education) of SDG's,: "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education and vocational training at all levels for all, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable children." It can be seen that theatre demonstrates practices consistent with sub-goals 4.a and 4.7 of the same goal, as it fosters knowledge of sustainable development, cultural diversity, and inclusive learning environments: "To create and develop gender-sensitive educational opportunities for children and people with disabilities, and to establish safe, violence-free, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all" and "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to support sustainable development by 2030 through education and other means in the areas of sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development" (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.).

As Artistic Director Michael Attenborough has emphasized the importance of *Projects* initiative (Maxwell, 2011) as Almeida's view of young people not only as spectators but also as potential future contributors to theatre-and thus positioning them as part of the creative process-creates a mechanism that supports the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and artistic experience. In this way, theatre preserves cultural capital not as a passive process of preservation, but as a process of reproduction and transmission, which are consistent with Throsby's (2001; 2010) view that cultural capital consists not only of physical heritage but also of cultural practices such as artwork, tradition, knowledge, and skills.

On culture and sustainability, Throsby (2017) emphasized that people's attitudes toward nature, consumption habits, and environmental behaviors are shaped by cultural values, and that the success of environmental policies also depends on cultural acceptance. SDG Goal 12, under the sub-goal of responsible production and consumption (12.8), aims to "ensure that by 2030 everyone, everywhere, has access to information and awareness regarding sustainable development and is able to live in harmony with nature" (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.). Almeida achieves this through the eco-friendly practices it implements in public spaces open to the audience and within their knowledge such as the lobby and the theater café. For example, it is publicly declared that suppliers from organizations with eco-friendly and clean production policies is selected for theater café. The café uses recycled cups, composts waste, and strives to recycle all possible waste (Almeida, 2024c). All of these can be linked to Goal 13.3 under the SDGs: "Enhancing education, raising awareness, and building human and institutional capacity in the areas of climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning" (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.).

In addition, it encourages the use of digital tickets to reduce paper consumption and recommends public transportation for both staff and audience members when traveling to the venue. In

collaboration with the municipality, it facilitates bicycle services (Citizens Information, 2023), particularly for travel to the theater (Almeida, 2024c). In this context, it can contribute to the environmental goals of the SDGs and, in line with Throsby's ideas on the interaction between culture and the environment, contributes to the formation and reinforcement of a culture of environmental awareness among the audience.

Under the theme of Community Engagement and Empowerment, the theater's role in addressing local sustainability issues-can be linked to Goal 5, 8, and 10- plays a key role in reaching audiences, fostering dialogue on these issues, and mobilizing communities to find solutions.

Fischer-Lichte & Jain (2008) examine the performing arts from a broader sociocultural perspective, discussing how theater can contribute to cultural transformation by challenging norms and promoting values aligned with sustainability. Therefore, within the theme of *Cultural Transformation and Social Change*, theater performances can inspire social change toward Goal 12 and 13, thereby encouraging a shift toward more sustainable lifestyles and practices. In addition, Goal 1, 4, 11, and Goal 16 are also linked to this theme and can inspire social change.

The findings also reveal that social participation begins within the institution and expands from the center to the periphery. Almeida usually sources its social and financial partners and stakeholders from the local area- schools, the municipality, and suppliers etc.- which is also advocated by the SDGs. According to Throsby, indicators such as income, employment, production, and economic growth can be more easily tracked within a defined, closed area, and their relationship with the broader economy can be measured (Throsby, 2010: 132). While this cultural capital approach provides a theoretical framework for evaluating the environmental impacts of the cultural value and social function of theater, the importance of collaborations is underlined. Taxopoulou (2023, 37) also emphasizes the necessity of stakeholder support and collaborations for change in the performing arts regarding the climate crisis and sustainability; she argues that comprehensive support, legal frameworks, and the restructuring of public and private investments are particularly necessary during systemic transformation. In this way, while mutual benefits are achieved, such collaborations acquire a quality that can support both economic and cultural sustainability which is also Almeida's priority.

Almeida gives priority to local students in Islington when hiring outside its permanent staff. However, in accordance with the theatre's Child Protection Policy of 2004 and in line with the International Labour Organization's (2017) emphasis that poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon resulting in consequences such as child labour in report, titled *Universal Social Protection*, it does not accept applications from individuals under the age of 16 (Almeida Theatre, 2008c). SDGs aim to ensure more effective legal protection for children by classifying them as a vulnerable group. The theatre's child protection policy is consistent with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which outline that social protection systems play a crucial role not only in reducing inequalities in access to health and education, but also in addressing non-income inequalities, thus ensuring that children are not targets of such inequalities (Goal 1: End poverty, sub-goal 1.3; Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth, sub-goal 8.7; and Goal 10: Reduced inequalities, sub-goal 10.4).

As clearly stated on their website, the Almeida Board of Directors has a clear commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and specifically to be an anti-racist organization. This ongoing organizational priority, artistic policy, and business strategy company culture commits to treat staff, freelance artists, and audiences equally and fairly. Moreover, these are fundamental responsibilities expected from all members of staff (Almeida Theatre, 2024a). An example of this approach's reflection on stage was highlighted in a review of a 2016 production of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Neil Forsyth (2016, 3) writes: "Dionysus's ten ethnically diverse followers entered one by one and rummaged through their bags to remove their old clothes and don their roles. As the sense of the Bacchic community gradually absorbed their individuality, they

wrapped themselves in deer skins, wild ivy entwined in their hair, and paint smeared across their faces," thereby noting that the play featured actors of diverse ethnic backgrounds and that this brief scene underscored the message that, beyond their differences, everyone is equal. It is experienced by the staff and presented to the audience.

The theater's support for its policies on equality, diversity, and inclusion through mechanisms for continuous monitoring, evaluation, and reporting at the institutional level -by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, reporting to the Board of Directors and Arts Council England-and its transparent presentation of these to the public, not only strengthens its accountability but also directly reflects Throsby's (2010, 151–153) idea that cultural sustainability entails not only the preservation of cultural values but also the structuring of the institutions that carry them in a way that ensures their long-term viability.

Through its inclusive practices targeting diverse socioeconomic groups, people with disabilities, young people, and ethnic diversity, Almeida Theatre reduces structural barriers to cultural participation. Therefore, Almeida's policies on accessibility, inclusion, and equality are consistent with Throsby's (2017) view that people's behaviors toward both the environment and society are shaped by cultural values.

The theater's mission of inclusivity and accessibility may contribute to SDG Goal 10: Reducing Inequalities. The theater provides discounted tickets for individuals with special needs, as well as for the companions they require. Under the *Access for All* heading, the theater provides solutions tailored to the needs of individuals with visual or hearing impairments, as well as those with various physical or intellectual disabilities. For those with visual impairments, audio description is available during performances. Additionally, for audiences who require it, pre-booked *touch tours* are organized, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the theater space, touch the sets, costumes, and props, and hear the actors' voices in advance based on their roles. Furthermore, trained service dogs are permitted inside the auditorium. The theater's website also features an audio recording providing directions on how to get to the theater.

For those with hearing impairments, subtitles, audio description, and headphone support are provided. The theater also recommends subtitles for those who speak English as a second language. Under the heading "Accessible Performances," individuals with special needs are permitted to make noise and move around the auditorium, exit and reenter the auditorium when necessary. While this performance format is particularly suitable for anyone, a warning is also issued that it may not be suitable for audience members with sensory sensitivities. A *Comfort Environment Package* is also provided for those who wish to have it, which includes a scene-by-scene summary of the plot and highlights sensory triggers such as loud sounds (Almeida Theatre, 2024b). *Production Content Guide* provides a general overview of thematic and technical triggers in plays and offers links to other websites that can serve as a guide for dealing with certain triggers (Almeida Theatre, 2024d).

A certain number of seats in the auditorium are reserved for audience members with wheelchairs. (Almeida Theatre, 2024b). However, for all needs, the theater recommends contacting the box office when purchasing tickets and providing information about specific requirements. Through all these accessibility measures, the theatre appears to contribute to SDG Goal 10 (Reducing inequalities), specifically under sub-goal 10.2: "By 2030, empower and support the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, economic or other status," and 10.3. "Eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and promote equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through appropriate legislation, policies, and actions" (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.). It is an example of an application that could fall under Community Engagement and Empowerment theme.

Table 2. An analytical view of the themes, Almeida Theatre practice and organizations, SDGs and Throsby's cultural sustainability principles

Almeida Theatre	SDGs	Throsby's cultural sustainability principles	Theme
Mission and vision: Almeida Projects and partnerships	*Goal 4* Quality Education *Goal 11* Sustainable Cities and Communities *Goal 16* Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Principle of intergenerational and intragenerational equity The principle of interdependence of economic and cultural systems	-Raising Awareness and Advocacy -Community engagement and empowerment -Cultural Transformation and Social Change -Impact of Education and Capacity Development
Theatre café: Local partnerships and ecological choices	*Goal 12* Responsible Consumption and Production *Goal 13* Climate Action	The principle of interdependence of economic and cultural systems	-Raising Awareness and Advocacy -Cultural Transformation and Social Change
Transportation and theatre tickets: Local partnerships and ecological choices	*Goal 12* Responsible Consumption and Production *Goal 13* Climate Action *Goal 15* Life on Land	The principle of interdependence of economic and cultural systems	-Raising Awareness and Advocacy -Cultural Transformation and Social Change
Child Protection Policy (2004)	*Goal 1* End Poverty *Goal 8* Decent Work and Economic Growth *Goal 10* Reduced Inequalities	Principle of intergenerational equity Precautionary principle	-Community engagement and empowerment -Cultural Transformation and Social Change
Special privileges for the 15–21 age group	*Goal 4* Quality Education Sub-goals 4.5 and 4.a	Principle of intergenerational and intragenerational equity	-Community engagement and empowerment
Equality, diversity, and inclusion, and a commitment to being an anti-racist organization- An accountable and transparent structure	*Goal 10* Reduced Inequalities	Principle of intergenerational and intragenerational equity Preservation of diversity The principle of interdependence of economic and cultural systems	-Community engagement and empowerment -Cultural Transformation and Social Change
Accessibility for All: Assistive technologies tailored to all disability groups.	*Goal 10* Reduced Inequalities Sub-goals 10.2 and 10.3	Principle of intergenerational and intragenerational equity Preservation of diversity	-Community engagement and empowerment

Table 2 summarizes the practices of the Almeida Theatre and highlights commonalities by comparing them with the four principles of the SDGs and Throsby's theory of cultural capital, as well as with the four themes that emerged in the study. The cultural capital emphasized by Throsby, as exemplified by the Almeida, encompasses the transmission of both theater as a phenomenon and the institution's own tradition, beginning with the theater's historic building. The production, enhancement, and preservation of cultural value are crucial for both intangible and tangible cultural assets, as demonstrated by the Almeida Theatre example.

Furthermore, although not included in the table, Throsby (2001, p. 89) establishes a context regarding the preservation of historical structures, cultural areas, and elements of local identity that might otherwise be lost. It is evident that preservation and transformation of the Almeida's historic building can be linked to this context.

After serving as a literary and scientific institution, a concert and public assembly hall, Salvation Army barracks, a factory, and even a venue for variety performances, the structure was ultimately transformed into one of Britain's most respected producing theatres. This continuity of cultural use, combined with the preservation and reinvention of a historic building, provides a significant example of the intersection between cultural heritage, institutional resilience, and sustainable cultural management.

In evaluating the Almeida Theatre's sustainability practices, it is important to consider that the fact that the organization operates within a historic building may impose various operational and financial constraints. Physical interventions in historic buildings may be restricted due to preservation laws and regulations regarding the protection of cultural heritage. This situation can make the processes more costly and technically complex, as achieving sustainability goals may require significant financial investments compared to modern theater buildings. The Almeida Theatre's funding

structure, donation system, and public subsidies may set its sustainability practices apart from those of smaller theaters or theaters with different funding models. Therefore, it is important to take these factors into account when making generalizations or defining samples for further research. Considering that the Almeida maintains a well-established institutional tradition within a historic building, it can be argued that the findings could be generalized to theater institutions with similar physical and institutional characteristics if the study were replicated with different samples.

Although established institutions may appear to secure financial support more easily than new ones, change within existing institutions can be more challenging because it requires breaking with established traditions, unlike in new structures designed from the ground up. For this reason, the aspects of these findings that should serve as examples for both existing and new theatre organizations should focus on operational choices centered on social impact rather than on funding sources. This is because the consistency of Almeida's operations with SDG and Throsby's theory of cultural capital and principles of cultural sustainability, while seemingly linked to its historical character, is not the sole determining factor. Even though funding is important for sustainability, it does not provide a singular or fundamental solution. Educational partnerships with environmental schools, ethnic, cultural, and gender equality in the governance structure, and the implementation of inclusive and integrative policies are not related to Almeida's long-standing institutional history, its funding sources, or the historical significance of its building.

Although the study is primarily based on institutional reports and publicly available documents, it should be noted that these documents may tend to highlight institutional achievements. However, the fact that the theatre as an independent, nonprofit organization, has been recognized by authorities such as Julie's Bicycle and the Creative Green Awards for its compliance with sustainability criteria may dispel any debates or doubts regarding potential "document bias."

Conclusion

Theatre, alongside all other stakeholders identified by the United Nations, can contribute to promoting action toward sustainable development thanks to its structure, which fosters awareness, builds dialogue, promotes inclusion through participation, and facilitates social and cultural change through education. Current practices in theater, while establishing a deep connection among the three pillars of sustainability-ecology, economy, and equity-require rethinking and reimagining in practice.

Almeida Theatre, remaining true to the essence of theatrical tradition, presents matinee and evening performances in a permanent theater venue for live audiences on weekdays and weekends; while tickets, programs, and posters are available for purchase online, it continues to offer on-site box office services and welcomes its audience with a lobby and café. What sets the theater apart in terms of sustainability is its commitment to making simple yet thoughtful choices that are consistent with the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals-even if it does not explicitly highlight its SDGs-and its determination to maintain these practices. Furthermore, what sets the Almeida apart from its peers is the exemplary nature of its organizational structure and communication established with internal stakeholders at the institutional level.

In summary, it appears that the Almeida Theatre has practices and operational strategies that may contribute to SDGs (1) No Poverty, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation, (8) decent work and economic growth, (10) reduced inequalities, (11) sustainable cities and communities, (12) responsible consumption and production, (13) climate action, (14) life below water, (15) life on land, (16) peace, justice, and strong institutions. The theater does not have a specific implementation or commitment directly addressing Goal 5 Gender equality. However, with 53 female staff members among its 87-person team-which spans all levels from management to café

staff-it can be said that they already have a structure can be linked to this goal. While certain goals-such as Goal 2 End Hunger, Goal 3 Good Health and Well-being, and Goal 6 Clean Water and Sanitation-are implemented within the theater's lobby and café, they could also be integrated into the content of plays to inform the public. Goals 7, 9, and 17 appear to fall outside the scope of the list, as their content pertains to the responsibilities of governments toward their citizens on a large scale or to their relationships with one another.

The Almeida Theatre's approach to sustainability not only are consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals but also demonstrates that it significantly fulfills the objectives of preserving cultural capital within the framework of the principles of intergenerational and intragenerational equity, the preservation of diversity, the precautionary principle, and the interdependence of economic and cultural systems-as highlighted in Throsby's theory of cultural sustainability- transmission to future generations, the expansion of cultural participation, and the long-term resilience of cultural institutions. Furthermore, particularly through its school partnerships and educational, internship, and employment programs for young people, its inclusive access policies that invite all segments of society, the solutions it offers to meet every need regarding accessibility, and its equality-based organizational structure, it demonstrates that cultural sustainability is achieved not merely through economic benefits but through the production of social and cultural values. The Almeida Theatre can be linked to Throsby's approach, which centers culture as a fundamental and key component of sustainable development, thereby supporting the view that sustainability can be conveyed to society through the principles of cultural development.

In conclusion, this study aims to serve as a guide designed to provide insight and motivation for not only theatre people but performing arts professionals in general who are striving to balance the tradition of the performing arts with the necessity of social sustainability in a constantly changing world. The Almeida Theatre initiates change from within the organization regarding its sustainability policies. Additionally, it implements practices that encourage audiences to rethink their daily habits and foster awareness throughout their entire experience from the moment they purchase tickets, and their time in the lobby and café, to entering the theater and leaving it. The Almeida Theatre's initiatives, which could serve as examples for other organizations, demonstrate how theaters can act as catalysts for fostering social thought, discussion, and action regarding sustainability.

Declarations

Funding: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and / or publication of this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this study.

Declaration of Previous Presentation and Publication: An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at 2nd UTAD International Theatre Research Conference on September 7, 2024 at/in Istanbul, Bahçeşehir University. This manuscript has not been previously published in any journal or book.

Ethical Approval: Ethics committee approval was not required for this study because it did not involve human participants or the collection of personal data.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in The Almeida Theatre's website at https://almeida.co.uk/ .

AI Disclosure: Deep L, Chat GPT was used for only to translate the document. The author declares that no artificial intelligence–based tools or applications were used in the conception, analysis, writing, or preparation of this manuscript. The study was conducted entirely by the author in accordance with academic research and publication ethics. AI-based tools were strictly not used in this

study for the purposes of data collection or generation, statistical analysis, or citation/reference generation. The author reviewed, edited, and verified all AI-assisted outputs and takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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