OFICINA DO CES

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CULTURE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND COMMUNITIES:
EXPLORING THE MYTHS

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Oficina do CES n.º 353
Setembro de 2010

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Culture, Sustainability, and Communities: Exploring the Myths[1]

Abstract: In the face of growing environmental and economic urgencies, issues of culture and sustainability are moving to the forefront of planning, policy, and programs in cities and communities of all sizes. This paper aims to advance this area of research by mapping the terrain of this emerging, disparate field within policy/planning contexts internationally. We examine the literature through three lenses: temporal, spatial and conceptual, which reveals rather weak linkages between the conceptual underpinnings of culture and sustainability and community planning praxis.

Introduction

In the face of growing environmental and economic urgencies, issues of sustainability and resiliency are moving to the forefront of planning, policy, and programs in cities and communities of all sizes. City planning paradigms are mutating from a focus on building *creative cities* to achieving *sustainable cities.* Internationally, this shift is evident among local governments adopting sustainability goals for individual communities and regions, with sustainability planning initiatives also "encouraged" (or imposed) by other government levels. Yet cultural considerations, while recognized in urban and community planning contexts, tend not to be integrated into sustainability planning in a widespread way in either Canada or Europe.

The inclusion of culture within sustainability dialogues is emergent and clustered around different foci. Growing attention and thinking about culture and sustainable communities is evident in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Europe; in writings from Asia on sustainable urbanization and culture; in European theorization on arts and sustainability; in Brazilian writing on cultural economies and sustainable development; and in papers from Africa and the Caribbean on cultural essentials of sustainable development. It is

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[1] This working paper was presented at the 6th International Conference on Cultural Policy Research, Jyväskylä, Finland, August 24-27, 2010.

also found in international movements, such as UNESCO's Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14), and *Agenda 21 for Culture*, promoted by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

This paper aims to advance this area of research, policy, and planning by mapping the terrain of this emerging, disparate field within policy/planning contexts internationally. This research has a broad scope, and this paper represents a "slice" of ongoing work focusing on the streams of discourse that deal with cultural policy, planning, and local development. Here, we examine the literature through three lenses: temporal, spatial and conceptual. In keeping with the theme of this year's International Conference on Cultural Policy Research, "Truths, Taboos and Myths of Cultural Policy," we address three primary myths:

- **Myth #1** (Time) – Culture and sustainability is a new concept/paradigm that has just recently emerged.

- **Myth #2** (Space) – Culture and sustainability are only the concerns of advanced, developed economies and societies.

- **Myth #3** (Concepts) – We understand what "culture and sustainability" means and how the concept can be incorporated into urban planning frameworks.

Myth #1 (Time) – Culture and sustainability is a new concept/paradigm that has just recently emerged.

Truth – There are at least three main phases of conceptual development in this area that stretch back over 12 years or more.

Sustainability, as defined at the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm (1972) and in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (1987), focuses on physical ecology, and environmental concerns continue to be the cornerstone of sustainable development. As the concept has matured, however, increasing emphasis has been placed on interconnections with social and economic dimensions of development, and space has opened up for debate and further reflection (Kadekodi, 1992; Nurse, 2006).

Culture has been the underdeveloped component of both conceptual and planning frameworks for long-term community well-being and sustainability. While conceptual work is ongoing, the inclusion of culture in policy and planning contexts has occurred in roughly

three phases, tentatively designated as: (1) 2000-02 – Initial initiatives to differentiate *culture* from *social* (Australia, New Zealand, Asia); (2) 2004-06 – Initiatives closely or directly informed by the earlier developments, primarily focusing on local development (Australia, New Zealand, Small Island Developing States, Canada, UNESCO); and (3) 2008-09 – Expanded actors and a new wave of attention to advancing the place of culture within sustainability, especially at national and transnational levels (Sweden, England, Canada – Quebec, UNESCO, UCLG). Given the number and diversity of developments, they cannot all be described here. This section aims to sketch the overall terrain, highlighting key features of selected initiatives.

Phase 1: 2000-02 – Differentiating "culture" from "social"

During this phase, the prevailing approach to cultural considerations (if included at all) was to slot them under the umbrella of *social sustainability*. For example, Stren and Polèse (2000) defined *social sustainability* as "fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population" (pp. 15-16). They also refer to "policies and institutions that have the overall effect of integrating diverse groups and cultural practices in a just and equitable fashion" (p. 3). Specific features and capabilities of cultures were rarely fleshed out in this context; culture's inclusion often felt like an "add on."

As sustainability became the prevailing framework for both local and more macro planning and policy contexts in the late 1990s, concerns about the relative neglect of cultural considerations in sustainability discourses and conventions grew. This discomfort gave impetus to grassroots thinking that fuelled the development of a four-pillar model of sustainability. Three parallel developments in the Pacific and Asian regions marked the beginning of more focused policy and planning attention to culture within initiatives on sustainable cities/communities.[2]

First, a major Asian research project (2000-02), the Kanazawa Initiative, highlighted the neglect of cultural considerations in sustainability and city-planning literatures, and examined the place of culture in building sustainable Asian cities. The project consolidated

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[2] The *Tutzinger Manifesto* in Germany (2001) also reacted to this neglect, advocating for attention to the development potential of the "cultural-aesthetic dimensions" of sustainability. The Manifesto was directed to UNESCO Johannesburg conference participants, and did not reference other cultural policy/planning domains.

and strengthened the movement for "culturally oriented sustainable urbanization" and provided "starting points for initiating discussions and debates on an alternative urban theory and future: a 'cultural theory of sustainable urbanization'" (Nadarajah and Yamamoto, 2007: 11). It articulated a three-dimension view of sustainability involving environmental, economic, and socio-cultural domains, the latter defined as a system that "seeks to enrich the human dimension by harmonizing social relations and cultural pluralism" (p. 21). The project also developed the Kanazawa Resolutions, a political praxis integral to the initiative.

Secondly, in Australia, cultural experts and theorists, recognizing culture's importance in community sustainability and well-being, began waging a campaign to have it included as one of the pillars of sustainability. The Cultural Development Network commissioned Jon Hawkes' *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning* (2001). Rooted in ideas from a range of international agencies and researchers, the model of sustainability it outlined incorporated four interlinked dimensions: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality.

Thirdly, in New Zealand, a new *Local Government Act* was adopted (2002) which stated that local government was responsible for promoting "the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future" (NZMCH, 2006a: 1).

Phase 2: 2004-06 – Focusing on local development

This phase featured a series of initiatives informed by the 2000-02 developments, incorporating a four-dimension framework within an overarching umbrella of *sustainability* or *well-being*. The Australia Council for the Arts' *Arts and Wellbeing* (2004) included a section on ecologically sustainable development. The New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage published arrays of indicators on the four well-beings of communities, including indicators relating to culture (2006a). Canadian federal policy encouraging the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans for cities and communities, based on a four-pillar framework, was introduced (2005-06). Nurse (2006) adopted and extended the four-pillar model of sustainability, applying it to the development situation and policy concerns of Small Island Developing States. In England, the *Sustainable Culture, Sustainable Communities* toolkit was developed for the Thames Gateway North Kent region (2006).

At the international level, UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) mentioned the relation between culture and sustainable development in two articles:

> Article 2, paragraph 6, Principle of sustainable development: The protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are an essential requirement for sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.
>
> Article 13, Integration of culture in sustainable development: Parties shall endeavour to integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

This period also saw the launch of UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14) which referenced environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability.

Phase 3: 2008-09 – Rearticulating culture within sustainability at national and transnational levels

Recently, a third wave of initiatives aimed at further conceptualizing and advocating for culture within sustainability at international and transnational levels has emerged. Three UNESCO-related initiatives are notable: the development and approval of operational guidelines for Article 13 of UNESCO's 2005 Convention; a UNESCO Experts Meeting that considered the four-pillar model of sustainability in developing a new cultural policy profile; and the publication of a related report by the UCLG Culture Committee. Also at an international level, the Asia-Europe Foundation launched a series of initiatives focusing on culture and sustainability with an emphasis on artistic inquiry and practices (2008-09). At a national or subnational level, initiatives included: the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) position paper on *Culture in the Sustainable Society*, and a provincial sustainability action plan based on a four-pillar model (*Notre culture, au coeur du développement durable: plan d'action de développement durable 2009-2013*), developed by the Province of Quebec, Canada.

Myth #2 (Space) – Culture and sustainability are only the concerns of advanced, developed economies and societies.

Truth – The concept has emerged in a number of places globally – places that are at various stages of development and that are experiencing a variety of pressures with regard to culture.

We sketch here, in very preliminary strokes, how a cross-section of societies in all parts of the world and in various development situations have interpreted the complex interactions among culture, urban/community planning, and sustainable development and reacted to the perceived challenges.

Asia

The Kanazawa project examined the role of culture in sustainable urbanism, reacting to five interrelated elements: the problematic application of Western planning models to Asian cities; the environmental unsustainability of emulating American lifestyles and development patterns in the context of rapid Asian urbanization; concern about the impact of current urbanization and economic practices on local culture and heritage; conceptual confusion as to what constitutes "sustainable cities"; and the lack of a cultural dimension in the literature on sustainable urbanism. The project examined indigenous Asian patterns of development that provided culturally sensitive alternatives to Western models.

Rooted in detailed case studies of cities in Nepal, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan, four alternate approaches towards "culturally sensitive sustainable urbanism" were put forward:

1. *Internal cultural transformation* – Based on 1500 years of urban history and cultural practices in Patan, Nepal, Tiwari (2007) defined sustainability as a dialogical equilibrium maintained in three sets of relationships: between *man and economy* (economic pursuits), between *man and man* (social heterogeneity); and between *man and nature* (environment and ecology). Culture is the active process that balances these relationships to achieve sustainability.

2. *Multiculturalism and enlightened localism* – Based on an examination of planning and socio-cultural challenges in Penang, Malaysia, Nadarajah (2007) articulated eight integrated principles to guide sustainable and culturally informed city-building, giving

prominence to multicultural diversity and "enlightened localism" as pathways towards sustainable urbanism.

3. *Urban cultural identity* – In light of cultural identity challenges in the rapidly growing city of Cheongju, Korea, Choe (2007) concluded that the "urban cultural system" is not sufficient to bring about a culturally-sensitive sustainable urbanism. Thus, he placed his focus on integrating culture within five sectoral/functional systems or domains of action: governance, economy, environment, spatio-physical (urban structure and development patterns), and societal systems.

4. *Cultural mode of production* – In the pursuit of a "true globalization with harmony and moderation," Sasaki's study of Kanazawa, Japan, focused on the operationalization of local distinctiveness through a new "global yet varied" social and production system model (2007: 174). From a sustainable city perspective, three decisive factors were: (1) unique character and specialities, based on a city's traditions and culture; (2) creativity and the ability to adjust to new circumstances; and (3) cooperation between residents and the local government.

Developing societies

A chorus of complementary voices from regions such as the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean, and Africa are addressing concerns of culture within sustainable development. In general, writings from Asian and developing countries are closely aligned in terms of being situated in "culture and development" foundations, reacting against Western development models, and looking for more appropriate culturally sensitive development models.[3] They also advocate for cross-cultural knowledge sharing about sustainability to counter-balance the dominance of Western sustainable development information dissemination.

Pacific Islands

The "opposition" between ideas and practices of development/economic rationality/progress and culture/custom/tradition/identity was a central concern of the *Vaka Moana* program (1991-97), the Pacific's response to UNESCO's World Decade for Cultural Development. The program initiated projects to demonstrate the importance of "taking account of cultural

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[3] This perspective is also reflected in international academic and activist critiques of the "linear reductionist model" (Neace, 1997) and capitalist systems of "moderisation" (Davies and Brown, 2006).

dimension" in development (Hooper, 2005: xiii). A process of "indigenisation of modernity" (Sahlins, 2005) and modernization of "the local scheme of things" (Kavaliku, 2005) framed the conceptualization of locally differentiated responses to global homogeneity and "a disabling westernisation" (Hooper, 2005: 12). One proposal emerging from the initiative was mandatory cultural impact assessments for development projects, similar to the social impact studies of industrial ventures, which echoed Hawkes (2001) advocacy for the inclusion of a cultural lens in all community development decision-making processes.

Caribbean / Small Island Developing States

At the Mauritius International Meeting for Small Island Developing States, culture was one of a number of emerging issues that SIDS identified as "indispensable to their sustainable development" (Nurse, 2006: 33). From this perspective, Nurse argued that culture should be considered as the "fourth but central pillar" of sustainable development, and "fully integrated" into the economic, social, and ecological pillars (p. 38). This recognizes that "people's identities, signifying systems, cosmologies and epistemic frameworks shape how the environment is viewed and lived in" (p. 37).

Nurse contextualized the model within a rising wave of discontent with conventional development theory and practice and emphasized *cultural diversity* as an equivalent to genetic diversity in the sustainable development debate. This approach to sustainable development prioritized cultural identity, self-reliance, social justice, and ecological balance. The cultural identity pillar incorporated five topics: cultural identities, tangible and intangible heritage, cultural industries, cultural pluralism, and geocultures.

Africa

Drawing from African experience, Edozien (2007) expressed concern that the domineering paradigms of Western societies hamper knowledge transfer about sustainable development across (other) cultures. She advocated for "integral development and knowledge transfer across cultures for a more sustainable human environment for all people," and for African cultural values to inform local sustainability models: "The balanced interplay between the individual and the community; between the sacred and the secular; between the present and the future gives room for continuity." She noted that building a "truly sustainable way of life" requires integration of action in three key areas: economic growth and equity, conserving

natural resources and the environment, and social development (including respect for "the rich fabric of cultural and social diversity"). From Edozien's perspective, the transmission of value-infused knowledge based on local wisdom is at the heart of culturally informed education and actions for a sustainable society.

Western societies

Examples from Western societies also address the neglect of culture in traditional planning frameworks, an oversight that has contributed to inappropriate or damaging development practices in many locales. These efforts also reflect an emerging openness to the "softer" social and cultural aspects of city/community development and intercity competitiveness. Overall, efforts to explicitly include culture as a core element of sustainability in policy development and planning have both conceptual and political dimensions.
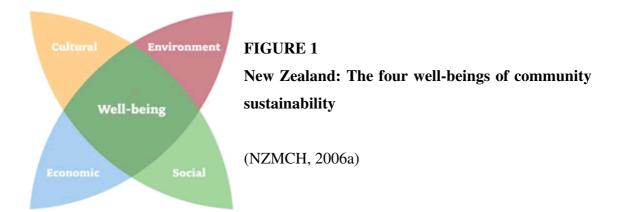
Australia

In *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, Hawkes (2001) addressed the need for a cultural perspective in public planning and policy, pragmatically promoting a cultural lens in evaluating the impacts of environmental, economic, and social initiatives planned and implemented in communities. In a follow-up work, Hawkes (2006) argued that for public planning to be more effective, its methodology should include "an integrated framework of cultural evaluation along similar lines to those being developed for social, environmental and economic impact assessment" (p. 3).

New Zealand

As part of the Pacific Island geopolitical region, New Zealand's advocacy for culturally sensitive development places it in a particularly interesting position, bridging Western and alternative paradigms. In this context and in response to the new *Local Government Act* of 2002, New Zealand's Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2006a) created a *community well-being* model with four interconnected and interdependent dimensions: cultural, environmental, social, and economic (Figure 1). Through this model, the Ministry encouraged councils to deal with all four types of well-being to achieve sustainable development. Cultural well-being was defined as the vitality, enjoyed by communities and

individuals, arising from "participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities; and the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage and traditions" (p. 1).

FIGURE 1

New Zealand: The four well-beings of community sustainability

(NZMCH, 2006a)

Canada

The Canadian government's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (2006) put forward a vision and approach to sustainable development for Canadian cities and communities that was also based on a four-pillar model of sustainability. In line with the work of this task force, Infrastructure Canada developed a policy that required municipalities to develop long-term Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) reflecting this model, which was tied to Gas Tax Fund Agreements signed in 2005-06 with provinces and territories. Since then, many local governments have developed ICSPs to guide the long-term sustainable development of their communities. Figure 2 presents an example of a graphical representation of this model found in a local sustainability plan.
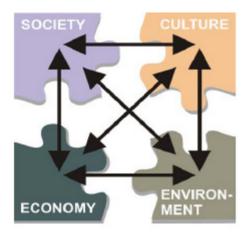

FIGURE 2

Canada: The four pillars of sustainability, viewed as pieces of a puzzle

(District of Chester, 2009: 2)

South America

Writing from Brazil, Reis (2006) considered the link between the cultural economy and sustainable development with a "plural" vision, evoking the image of a kaleidoscope, and presented three premises: (1) we must be more aware of the strategic dimension of our cultural landscapes/identity, (2) cultural, economic, and social dimensions converge into a kaleidoscope to form various possible images of development, and (3) these paths are not linear – concepts meet, diverge, and merge and partnerships between sectors reveal paths not previously visible. In 2007, Reis focused on culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability, referencing Hawkes (2001) and observing that the theme consequently took shape through the 2002 speech of then French President Jacques Chirac during the Global Forum on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg[4] and the meeting agenda of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Mauritius in January 2005.

Myth #3 (Concepts) – We understand what "culture and sustainability" means and how the concept can be incorporated into urban planning frameworks.

Truth – There are many ways of understanding and interpreting the linkages between the two terms, and we are only beginning the process of developing an accurate conceptual map that can be usefully bridged with urban cultural planning processes.

Looking at the concepts of culture, cities, and sustainable development together is a "work in progress." As Nadarajah and Yamamoto (2007) note, "there is a dearth of studies and writing that articulate a cultural theory of a sustainable city in which (local) culture becomes a value of its own, not something merely seen as opposite to globalization and responding to it, or something of economic value, or treated as postmodern reading of a text" (p. 9). A further challenge is the lack of a clear conceptualization of sustainable urban development. A recent literature survey revealed no clear understanding of "sustainable cities," continued emphasis on economic growth; differing perspectives of sustainability between cities in industrialized and in developing countries, and peripheral treatment of culture in terms of social development (Rana and Piracha, 2007: 35). Despite these shortcomings, we plunge into this *terra incognito* to develop the beginnings of a map and to illustrate, in a preliminary way, the

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[4] Chirac said "cultural diversity ... should be acknowledged as the fourth pillar of sustainable development ... next to economic, environmental and social concerns."

many difficulties that face decision-makers and planners who try to link these concepts in practice.

Origins

The roots of including cultural considerations within sustainability can be traced back to two main sources: (1) holistic approaches found in the traditional medicine wheel of Aboriginal peoples and the Buddhist Dharma-Chakra or "wheel of righteousness" and (2) several seminal UNESCO policy documents from the 1990s.

Re-emergence of traditional holistic models

The Aboriginal medicine wheel is a holistic approach to thinking, organizing, planning, and healing. It is a four-dimensional framework embracing a multidimensional, complex and rich view of life. The medicine wheel depicts four traditional directions: north (environmental), south (social), west (economic), and east (cultural). Four key segments of Aboriginal society – male, female, children and youth, and adults and elders – crosscut the four elements. These four segments represent different groups and viewpoints, and each is considered to be critical to the Aboriginal community's overall well-being.

This model is used in a variety of contexts within Aboriginal societies. For example, an exercise to document the quality of life among Aboriginal people living in the Greater Vancouver region (Cardinal and Adin, 2005) used a medicine wheel as a framework to determine categories and indicators (Figure 3). The cultural component related to the vibrancy and prevalence of participation in traditional activities and the speaking of traditional languages.
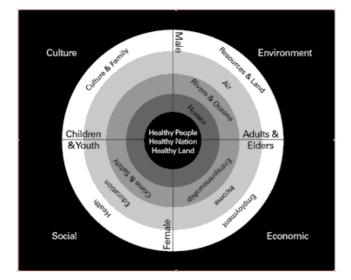

FIGURE 3

Medicine wheel framework for assessing quality of life and well-being of Aboriginal population in Vancouver

(Cardinal and Adin, 2005)

There is evidence that such ancient holistic conceptual frameworks have been applied literally to the physical layout of settlements in Asia. In his study of Patan in Nepal, Tiwari (2007) referred to four mounds (known as Ashoka Stupas) that define the perimeter of the city: "The main arterial streets of Patan link the two pairs of *stupas* (east-west and north-south) and intersect at Durbar Square, the city core of Patan, echoing the Dharma-Chakra layout" (p. 72). Later, when Patan fell under Hindu influence, the city was resectored to correspond with the nine-square diagram of the mandala, with eight *astamatrikas* or mother goddesses added to the perimeter. The ninth or central square was occupied by the palace, main streets were redefined, and sectors of the city were assigned, in a process of "social zoning," to various professions. These changes were reinforced by cultural means, as the new streets were used as the common route for all city festivals, thus integrating both new and old practices on common physical ground.

The Aboriginal medicine wheel, the Dharma-Chakra, and the mandala are all intended to be holistic and recursive representations of the cosmos, and it is significant that they are re-emerging in culture and sustainability literature as alternatives to linear, positivist descriptions of reality. Although not directly acknowledged in national policy initiatives, these foundations may have underlain and informed "four pillar" developments in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

UNESCO

A variety of statements from UNESCO informed the development of the seminal work, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability,* as well as later initiatives. UNESCO's initiatives and reports have led international public debates on development, culture in development, and sustainable development. Rana and Piracha (2007) reference the 1982 decision of UNESCO to launch the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-97) and the 1995 report *Our Creative Diversity* as foundational developments. In 1998, the World Bank joined UNESCO in promoting culture in sustainable development (World Bank/UNESCO, 1998, 1999). Nonetheless, as Kavaliku (2005) noted,

> The interrelationship between culture and sustainable development seems to be a matter of common sense. However, even though the UN system (and especially UNESCO) is pushing for recognition of it, the UN system has not in fact been very supportive. If we study the major global conferences of the 1990s–from Rio de Janeiro to Barbados,

Cairo, Beijing, Copenhagen and Harare–their plans of action were concerned with sustainable development, but there was hardly a mention, even in dispatches, of culture. (p. 24)

The UNESCO Johannesburg summit (2002) also did not include much cultural content. Although there was noticeable progress during the 1992-2002 decade, the summit results did not reflect a full understanding of the values that culture brings to a society and tended to focus on culture as a tool for social cohesion or as an instrument for economic development (Pascual, 2009; Tutzinger Manifesto, 2001). UNESCO continues to play a role in advancing culture within sustainable development, working on making connections between culture, sustainability, biodiversity, and sustainable development, with notable developments in 2005 and 2009.

Conceptual evolution

Within writings on community development and sustainability, thinking about culture as a significant aspect of sustainable development has been thinly distributed but pervasive at both global and local levels (Duxbury and Gillette, 2007). Rana and Piracha (2007) refer to the gradual consideration of cultural elements in the sustainable development paradigm as "a sideline" to this point (p. 21).

Four conceptual threads have been brought forward to understand and position culture within community sustainability plans: (1) culture as capital, (2) culture as process and way of life, interacting with an environment, (3) culture as a central binding element providing the values underlying sustainable (or unsustainable) actions, and (4) culture as creative expression providing insights on environmental/sustainability concerns. Among research literatures, various views of culture within sustainability have been taken up within a diversifying range of contexts, such as sociology of art (Kagan and Kirchberg, 2008),[5] design theory and practice (*e.g.*, Thorpe, 2007), socio-cultural community revitalization and adaptive change (Fry, 2008), and cultural diversity (Holthaus, 2008). The emergent nature and wide scope of these literatures challenge synthesis, with no consensus on how these terms might be linked or how they intersect with policy and planning contexts.

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[5] *Sustainability: A New Frontier for the Arts and Cultures* foregrounds artistic perspectives and a variety of academic lines of thought in the 'sociology of art' field.

Culture as capital

Within the sustainability field, culture has often been discussed in terms of *cultural capital,* defined as "traditions and values, heritage and place, the arts, diversity and social history" (Roseland *et al.*, 2005: 12). We inherit this stock of tangible and intangible cultural capital from past generations and pass it onto future generations. This view is prominent in discussions of built heritage within the context of sustainable development planning (*e.g.*, Gražulevičiūtė, 2006). Although the value of cultural capital may not always be measurable in terms of money, both tangible and intangible cultural assets are considered as capital that has value. As Throsby (1999) argued, cultural capital is situated within "cultural 'ecosystems' [that] underpin the operations of the real economy" and "neglect of cultural capital … will likewise cause cultural systems to break down, with consequent loss of welfare and economic output" (p. 9).

Culture as process and way of life

Both Hawkes and Nurse argue that it is critical to move beyond talking only about "the arts," "heritage," and "cultural industries" and to include broader notions of culture as a "whole way of life" in discussions of sustainability. Hawkes (2006) described culture as the ways that "we make sense of our lives together, or in more formal terms, as the social production of meaning" (p. 2). By "moving beyond a focus on professional arts production, this view allows the cultural perspective to facilitate the democratic generation and expression of society's values and aspirations through creative participation" (p. 9).

Doubleday, Mackenzie, and Dalby (2004) argued that discussions of sustainability must include dynamic understandings of the particular complexities of culture as well as of the place in which it occurs, so that community and geographic contexts are fully incorporated. Complementary to this perspective, culture is viewed as an adaptive and iterative process "born wherever humans had to work out a relationship with nature and themselves" (Nadarajah, 2000); a "formalization of practices by individuals and/or communities as they adjust to, survive, and prosper in special contexts" (Rana and Piracha, 2007: 22).

Along these lines, and overlapping with the next category, many researchers are exploring how ideas of sustainable living and development are embodied in cultural and moral values and practices of societies (past and present) (*e.g.*, Davies and Brown, 2006; Paliwal, 2005; Tiwari, 2007; Yan *et al.*, 2008).

Culture as a vehicle for sustainable values

The elements of our *habitus* – how people view the world around them, their philosophy and ethics, traditional knowledge, and symbolic relationships with each other and their environment – have been found to be critical factors in the sustainability of individual communities (Berkes, 1998). Rana and Piracha, (2007) positioned culture as "the glue that binds together all other concerns": "culture provides the building blocks of identity and ethnic allegiances and moulds attitudes to work. It underlies political and economic behaviour. Most importantly, it builds the values that can drive collective action for a sustainable future in the new global context" (p. 21). The development of "cultures of sustainability" is the focus of a wide spectrum of academic and activist efforts. For example, Brocchi (2008) identifies "ways of thinking" and a range of "capabilities" that support a more sustainable approach to the environmental crisis.

Culture as creative expression

Related to "culture as a vehicle for sustainable values," this category focuses primarily on art practices and works addressing environmental and sustainability-related themes and concerns, and highlights art as a vehicle for transmission of observations, insights, and knowledge. For example, EcoART collaborations merge comprehensive research with visual art and ecological interventions that aim to restore relationships between "the physical ground and the humans inhabiting that ground" (Carruthers, 2006: 7). Themes of community engagement and awareness, education, preservation, and conservation are common. The field of ecocriticism, with "one foot in literature and the other on land" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996: xix), aims to "bring "literary insight to nature and ecological insight to cultural production" (York University, 2010).

Within the policy domain, the Asia-Europe Foundation initiated a series of projects in 2008-09 focusing on culture and sustainability with an emphasis on artistic inquiry and practices. These included: Asia-European Dialogue on Arts, Culture and Climate Change; Mapping of Best Practices: Linking the Arts to Environment and Sustainable Development Issues; Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Building Synergies between Asia and Europe; Culture|Futures conference; collaborative programs linking arts, culture and environment, and www.Culture360.org.

Operationalizing culture and sustainability

Governments and organizations in a variety of jurisdictions have been attempting to bridge the gap between theories and practice with regard to culture and sustainability. This section provides an overview of several of these initiatives, as well as a tentative critique of the approaches and frameworks used to guide actions in this area.

Multilateral initiatives

In June 2009, the Intergovernmental Committee of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions approved operational guidelines for Article 13. Eight measures related to integrating a diversity of cultural expressions into sustainable development were outlined. They tended to focus on developing countries, the economic aspects of cultural industries, general facilitating conditions, optimal features for policy development processes, and values of diversity and inclusiveness. The guidelines provided conceptual advocacy for inclusion of a cultural dimension in sustainable development but were not fully explained, and remained silent on more organic, underlying cultural ecosystems (Jeannotte and Andrew, 2008). In terms of understanding culture's role in sustainability and implementing it in praxis, the operational guidelines seem weak, but may serve as important stepping stones for further developments.

A UNESCO Experts Meeting, "Towards a New Cultural Policy Framework" (2009) aimed to explore and advance the connections among cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development. The meeting considered the four-pillar model of sustainability and its emerging variations in different parts of the world. Later, the UCLG Culture Committee released a report consolidating international policy antecedents and advocating for a fuller recognition of culture within sustainability (Pascual, 2009).

The background paper to the Culture|Futures conference, held in conjunction with the Copenhagen climate change discussions, focused on the need to transform actions to more sustainable ones within a generation (Gerlach-Hansen, Hartley and Lam, 2009). It discussed the "cultural challenge" in changing current unsustainable behaviours, illustrated how cultural activity is bringing about some of the changes necessary, and outlined an action plan, emphasizing cultural action as both a prioritized independent domain and "a cross-cutting approach to development of society at large" (p. 8). While it admirably presented leading

cultural projects and organizational resources, its references to urban/regional (cultural) planning and policy were sparse.

National and subnational initiatives

Canada. In 2005 Canada's federal government introduced Gas Tax Agreements in support of community infrastructure investment, under which the federal government began to share with municipalities a portion of the federal tax on gasoline. The Agreements were conditional upon preparation of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) – overarching documents, informed by sustainability principles, intended to align municipal plans and policies under one integrated decision-making framework (Hawke-Baxter and Purcell, 2007). Several provinces, territories, and non-profit organizations developed guides to aid municipalities in developing ICSPs, which provide interesting perspectives on how culture might be incorporated into sustainability planning at the local level.
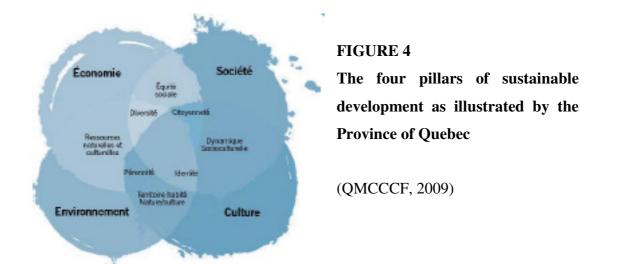
We examined 17 guides for producing local community sustainability plans to determine if and how the fourth pillar of sustainability – culture – was integrated into the overall framework. A simple examination of the number of guides that touched upon each of our five analytical categories revealed the following:

Definitions of culture – 9

Rationale for inclusion of culture – 15

Guidance on integration of culture – 16

Key mechanisms for integrating culture – 13

Key aspects/notable contexts of culture – 6

These data indicated that only about half the guides defined what they meant when they discussed inclusion or integration of culture within community sustainability plans. Even fewer mentioned key aspects or notable local cultural contexts that might influence how communities deal with culture in their plans. Those planning guides offering a definition of culture provided a broad range of interpretations, from the anthropological (focused on community identity and values) to the expressive (focused on both heritage infrastructure and a range of arts and culture activities and resources) to a combination of the two (focused on both anthropological aspects, such as language, beliefs, and ways of living together, and ways that society expresses itself through the arts and letters).

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Most ICSPs developed by individual communities accepted the now-common advice that culture constitutes the fourth pillar of sustainability (and most of them cited a rationale for including it). However, the inclusion of cultural considerations was typically less developed than the other domains and varied widely in conceptualization and scope. The conceptual "unsettledness" in this area tends to lead to further ambiguity in terms of its integration into overall community planning.

Quebec, Canada. In 2009, the Province of Quebec developed a provincial sustainability action plan based on a four-pillar model. *Notre culture, au coeur du développement durable* set out in graphic form yet another variation of the familiar four-dimensional model (Figure 4) and established several priorities for the Province's cultural ministry over the 2009-13 period. One priority is the development of an Agenda 21 for Culture based on the UCLG model. Related to this, the Ministry intends to elaborate tools to assist municipalities to develop and implement sustainability action plans, and to develop strategic directions based on sustainability principles to guide its own regional cultural development initiatives. While the plan is comprehensive and includes priorities of relevance to local jurisdictions, such as improved conservation and restoration services for heritage properties, detailed operational guidelines for these initiatives were not available at the time of writing (May 2010).

FIGURE 4

The four pillars of sustainable development as illustrated by the Province of Quebec

(QMCCCF, 2009)

New Zealand. New Zealand was one of the earliest jurisdictions to adopt the four-pillar model and to apply it to community sustainability/well-being. Like Canada, it has attempted to operationalize its well-being model by requiring local authorities to produce Long-Term

Council-Community Plans (LTCCP) that integrate and interconnect cultural, social, economic, and environmental well-being. This planning effort is notable in that it provided some guidance to local governments on how cultural well-being interacts with the other three dimensions, and an overview of resources to assist local governments in the development of their LTCCPs (NZMCH, 2006a, 2006b).

Despite this support, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's 2005 scan of LTCCPs found – as we did in our assessment of Canadian ICSPs – a variety of inconsistencies and ambiguities with regard to the treatment of cultural well-being. For example, many councils mixed discussions of social and cultural well-being and appeared to have difficulties in capturing cultural well-being objectives and outcomes (NZMCH, 2006a), suggesting that a clear path between conceptual clarity and strategic sustainability planning had not yet been achieved.

Sweden. The 2008 SALAR position paper, *Culture in the Sustainable Society,* took a broad approach to the topic of sustainability, and discussed the importance of culture for local and regional growth, social sustainability, and the creation of an attractive and sustainable living environment. It also addressed governance and educational issues related to culture and sustainability, suggesting that "national cultural policy must be created by municipalities, county councils and central government together" (p. 17) and recommending that Regional Development Plans become the vehicles for negotiations and agreements with the central government on cultural support to the regions. Like Quebec's action plan on sustainable development, the Swedish document is intended as a blueprint for political action at the national and regional level. It advocates for culture's role in long-term sustainable development, but does not provide details that could guide local planners in operationalizing that role.

United Kingdom. In 2004, the U.K. Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a document entitled *Leading the Good Life – Guidance on Integrating Cultural and Community Strategies* in response to changes to the planning framework in the U.K. *Local Government Act* of 2002, which eliminated the requirement that local authorities produce a Local Cultural Strategy and directed them to subsume cultural strategies within a Community Plan. *Leading the Good Life* provided a blueprint for integrating community and cultural

planning. This was supplemented by an initiative called "Where we live!", launched in 2006 "to articulate the value of culture to sustainable community planning and devise strategies to provide the full range of cultural benefits for as many communities as possible over the long term" (UKDCMS, 2006). As with the Canadian ICSPs, supporting documentation provided some guidance on definitions of *culture* and *sustainable communities*. However, the documents do not furnish a great deal of information to assist local authorities in integrating culture within sustainability plans.

In 2006, a more detailed operational guide, *Sustainable Culture, Sustainable Communities,* was produced for the Thames Gateway North Kent region. The document provided rationales for investing in culture, an assessment of the local cultural sector, a vision and 24 principles to guide future cultural development, and a set of recommendations for strategic planning. The guiding principles were intended as a checklist to help planners "understand and assess cultural projects with a view to maximising cultural value, and maximising the benefits of public investment" (p. viii). Sustainability was primarily tied to cultural infrastructure development, with a secondary emphasis on developing "successful communities where bonds between people are forged and strengthened" (p. viii).

Conclusions

As our analysis indicates, the relationships among culture, sustainability and communities (particularly community planning initiatives) is still very much a work in progress. Therefore, our conclusions are tentative and couched in provisional terms.

We have examined writings on culture and sustainability since 2000 from around the world and have been struck by their diversity and complexity. There is value in bringing these perspectives and initiatives together and in recognizing and highlighting cross-threads of common concerns. Despite our focus in this paper on the elements of planning and development, we believe that there is a need to dig deeper into the research emanating from a variety of disciplines and locales and to develop more cross-disciplinary and transnational linkages so that these perspectives can better inform each other. While cross-threads and common concerns can provide valuable insights, the possibility exists that the "shock of the new" can also usefully inform our ideas about culture and sustainability. Ironically, this shock can also come when we discover that some elements of our emerging conceptual framework for culture and sustainability are rooted in the very old – traditional holistic

models that the modern world has almost forgotten but that were central to the sustainability of ancient cultures and societies.

We are also painfully aware that most of the work that we have highlighted emanates from English-speaking countries. Therefore we believe that it will be important to investigate more of the literature from Latin America, which appears to focus on "culture in development" and "cultural/biological diversity linkages" discourses, and from francophone countries, which appears to be more closely linked to Agenda 21 for Culture.

With regard to the pragmatic aspects of this topic, our preliminary research has revealed rather weak linkages between the conceptual underpinnings of culture and sustainability and community planning praxis. This unevenness reflects a two-fold gap in research and conceptualization to date. First, connections between culture-related planning and policy contexts and cultural practices have been slow to develop. Second, culture-related planning and policy practices are as yet only weakly situated within a sustainability context. In our own research, we are committed to an in-depth review of the ICSPs developed in Canadian communities, and intend to pursue a parallel scan and analysis of urban sustainability plans, policies, guides, and related initiatives developed by European cities and city-networks. We are hopeful that further work in this area will be forthcoming, and welcome both suggestions and collaborative initiatives.

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