From the bottom-up: culture in community sustainability planning

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ABSTRACT

Emerging conceptualizations of a 'four pillar' model of sustainability, which include cultural vitality, environmental responsibility, economic health, and social equity as the basis of community resiliency (Hawkes 2001), have influenced a variety of local planning initiatives in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, and Europe. Focusing on the cultural dimension of this sustainability framework, this paper explores the conceptual and operational challenges and gaps that are highlighted as the model is applied in community sustainability planning contexts. Methodologically, the paper is primarily based on a review and analysis of strategic approaches to conceptually and operationally integrate culture within community sustainability planning in Canada, located within two sources: (1) the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) guides developed by provinces and municipal associations, and (2) a selection of ICSPs developed by individual communities. In closing, the paper reflects on the process of migration or adaptation of community planning paradigms to the community sustainability framework as observed in these ICSP materials and other initiatives.

Keywords: sustainability, cultural planning, cultural policy, urban planning, community development

> Culture is not a pile of artefacts—it is us; the living, breathing sum of us. A sustainable society depends upon a sustainable culture. If a society's culture disintegrates, so will everything else. Vitality is the single most important characteristic ...
> — Jon Hawkes, 2006

INTRODUCTION

As Tony Fry (2009) notes in *Design Futuring: Sustainability, Ethics, and New Practice*, we are now living in a new epoch of 'Sustainment' with pressing environmental concerns and a growing imperative to rethink how we live together on this planet and the future we are designing and creating. The framework for *sustainable development*, while inheriting historical baggage of *development*, is in the process of being reconstructed as discussions widen and become more inclusive, and as sustainability considerations spread across intellectual spheres and professional practices. This reframing process has the potential for 'greater coherence' with goals and values such as social justice, self-reliance, and ecological balance (Nurse 2006: 45). It introduces the challenge of intergenerational equity to ongoing discussions and practices of multicultural relations, dialogue, and social cohesion (among other topics). And it encourages holistic and integrative ways of thinking in community planning practice, emphasizing interconnectedness, cross-sectoral collaborations, and plural perspectives that encompass both the community's physical form and its people.

Internationally, city planning paradigms are mutating from building 'creative cities' to achieving 'sustainable cities'. Local sustainability planning is often 'encouraged'/imposed by other government levels, particularly in Canada where the federal government requires local governments to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) to access gas tax monies. The ICSPs, longer-term planning documents tied to federal–provincial agreements, are based on a model of sustainability incorporating four interlinked dimensions: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality (Government of Canada 2005). The Province of Quebec´s recent provincial initiative to make culture a cornerstone of sustainable development policy has provided a further incentive for municipalities to adopt this model of sustainability planning (QMCCSW 2009).

A number of guidance documents and templates have been developed by provincial governments and various municipal associations to guide municipalities in the creation of these ICSPs. Regarding the culture pillar of community sustainability, however, the guides contain many gaps and omissions. Thus, with scant guidance from above, cities/communities are taking the lead in defining the parameters of culture within community sustainability planning frameworks.

The paper takes as its theoretical framework the 'four pillar' model of sustainability, which includes cultural vitality, environmental responsibility, economic health, and social equity as the basis of community resiliency (Hawkes 2001). This model has been instrumental in including an explicit consideration of culture as part of public sustainability discussions and community plans. Methodologically, the paper is primarily based on a review and analysis of strategic approaches to conceptually and operationally include and integrate culture within community sustainability planning within two major sources: (1) the ICSP guides developed by provinces and municipal associations, and (2) a selection of ICSP plans developed by individual communities. Through this analysis, the paper identifies key themes, issues, divergences, and conceptual and operational gaps in linking culture with sustainability. In closing, it reflects on the process of migration or adaptation of community planning paradigms to the community sustainability framework as observed in these ICSP materials as well as some of the international initiatives in this area.

First, however, it is useful to begin with a brief 'broad stroke' contextualization of the involvement of municipalities in planning for and supporting culture, and the ways in which this interest, though not legislated as a municipal responsibility, becomes gradually enmeshed within city planning and operations in Canada.

CULTURE IN CITY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

The challenge of planning for culture

Cultural planning has been described as an inclusive, multi-stakeholder consultation and decision-making process to think strategically about how collective actions can encourage cultural vibrancy, and how culture can contribute to civic goals and be integrated into a wide range of municipal actions (Russo and Butler 2007). It is concerned with sustaining traditions and heritage as well as making room for spontaneous cultural expression and evolution.

Integrating cultural considerations into traditional planning paradigms has been challenging on two fronts – the nature of 'culture' and the 'voluntary' (unlegislated) adoption of municipal roles in cultural development. First, 'culture' has multiple definitions and understandings; is diverse, fluid, and dynamically changing in nature; contains both intangible and tangible components; and makes multidimensional impacts and contributions – these attributes challenge planning systems more accustomed to land use and hard service provision (Russo and Butler 2007).

Secondly, municipal support for culture is typically not mandated through legislation. In Canada, the jurisdictional circumstances are particularly murky, with the provinces having responsibility for municipalities, but the federal government having the power to intervene in such 'urban' issues as public transportation, housing and cultural infrastructure (Gattinger 2008). With culture considered a 'shared' jurisdiction and sustainability not mentioned at all in the Canadian constitution, these jurisdictional ambiguities have opened the door to policy and planning innovations. Politically, there has been a growing recognition of the need to respond to global, environmental and demographic challenges through actions that are 'local and shaped by a strong sense of place' (External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities 2006: 10). However, without formal institutions to foster collaboration and coordination in these areas, increasing reliance has had to be placed on non-structural factors such as cultures of collaboration, local leadership, and partnerships (Gattinger 2008).

In Canada, as cities have become more involved in the 'softer' aspects and issues of community development, a variety of municipal roles relating to culture have evolved within city processes and structures. Yet because it is not a legislated responsibility, municipal action in culture is generally propelled by and reliant on a combination of public demand, political will, and demonstrated impact (Duxbury and Russo, forthcoming). Despite a growing *appreciation* for the value of arts and culture, the reality in most communities is challenging and emergent. Consequently, from a pragmatic perspective, conceptual 'bridges' and opportunistic 'pathways' play important roles in integrating cultural considerations into city planning and operations.

Evolving city roles[1]

Despite this uncertain and challenging context, municipalities of all sizes increasingly tend to recognize and support cultural activities and development in their communities in various ways. Contextualized within the past decade, a general evolutionary trajectory can be observed by size of cities. In very small communities (but not exclusively), the City role is primarily to support the community's proactive agents. As the community grows in size, the City's role tends to become more active, facilitating, strategically positioning and planning, aligning diverse forces and resources, and generally working in partnerships with community organizations. Soon, there is a track record of municipal action in the area of culture and many municipalities have adopted arts policies and/or cultural strategies. (In some cities, there is much support and activity but no cultural plan as yet.) In general, 'larger' small cities take on even more proactive roles to develop cultural facilities and a mature, more comprehensive approach to cultural development and planning. Partnerships (with private developers, community groups) are increasingly common. More emphasis is placed on integrating culture in broader city planning, although a separate cultural plan may not be in place prior to its inclusion in these plans. In part, these developments have been influenced by the rise in importance of 'place', pervasive public discourse on the attraction of the 'creative class' for economic competitiveness, and a generally heightened awareness of the culture-related initiatives of other cities.

As the municipality's involvement in culture grows more complex, a leadership function emerges, with the municipality supplying infrastructure and resources, branding particular areas of the city as 'cultural districts', facilitating the capacity development and growth of community organizations, and shaping the broader contours of cultural development in the city through enabling policies, plans, and strategies. This greater complexity and institutionalization introduces new structures and processes into government and may introduce new hierarchies in governance processes, both in terms of working with the community and within municipal government systems. This process of institutionalization may also broaden municipal perspectives on culture, moving beyond a traditional recreational function to involve all

[1] This section is based on an analysis of the inclusion of cultural considerations in broader city plans of a selection of small cities in Canada (10,000-125,000 population) in Duxbury (forthcoming).

bureaucratic actors (from finance to bylaws to planning departments) who increasingly consider community cultural implications in their own areas of city management.

These changes are occurring within a broader trend of municipalities (of all sizes) gradually shifting from 'planner-provider-deliverer' roles to 'enabler-convener-catalyst-broker' ones (Duxbury and Russo, forthcoming). This perspective emphasizes partnerships, collaboration in governance, and addressing public issues and goals through joint initiatives. It makes municipal involvement in culture more necessary (to leverage resources and public amenities through partnerships and development processes) and influences how this involvement is organized and plays out. Greater community involvement and responsibility for engagement in planning and decision-making processes is evident in the formation of citizen-volunteer cultural committees and advisory groups as part of the governance structure; in an array of partnerships, facilities provision, and supportive arrangements with community non-profit cultural organizations; and in a growing emphasis on community capacity building.

The rise of sustainability

The rise of a sustainability paradigm in planning heavily informs and shapes the nature of recent community planning initiatives across Canada and in Europe. Many emphasize holistic thinking, interconnectedness, and integrated planning, encompassing both the community's physical form and its people (e.g., SALAR 2008; Thames Gateway North Kent 2006; Focus Kingston 2009; Alred 2008; City of Ottawa et al. 2010). In Canada, the emergence of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) reinforces this approach. This four-pillar model has been instrumental in including an explicit consideration of culture as part of public sustainability discussions and community plans. In the absence of an existing Cultural Master Plan, sustainability-influenced city planning paradigms can serve to introduce a framework for nurturing cultural development within a comprehensive, holistic, and interconnected view of community dynamics and challenges. Within the sustainability context, however, the role or place of culture is still uncertain, and is being worked out through community dialogues within community planning processes. As well, *integrated* pragmatic approaches in implementing and acting on the plans and ideas are often challenging in practice. Thus, the major trajectories of this integration in the longer-term are not yet clear.

CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY: EVOLVING CONCEPTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Within writings on community development and sustainability, thinking about culture as a significant aspect of sustainable development has been thinly distributed but pervasive in at both macro/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) and culture has typically been the underdeveloped component of both conceptual and planning frameworks for long-term community well-being and sustainability. In many cases, cultural considerations are considered under the umbrella of *social sustainability* (e.g., Stren and Polèse 2000).

The inclusion of culture within public sustainability dialogues is emergent and, in general, fractured through clustering around different foci. For example, Duxbury, Gillette and Pepper (2007) observed ten different areas in which culture-related discussions could be found: the culture of sustainability (changing behaviour, consumption patterns, and ways of thinking); globalization and local cultures; heritage conservation; sense of place; indigenous knowledge and traditional practices; community cultural development as a tool of civic engagement; arts, education, and youth; sustainable design; planning paradigms; and cultural policy and local government. In a review of scientific literature, Soini and Birkeland (2009) found that 'the concept of cultural sustainability has … been described in vague, diverse, and sometimes also in conflicting ways' and identified seven ways in which the term is used: as more or less identical to social sustainability; to promote cultural continuation; associated with economic viability; to

mean locally-based (anti-globalist) development; inseparable from ecological sustainability; to highlight eco-cultural justice; and as cultural change and socio-cultural evolution (in Birkeland and Soini 2010: 8). The emergent nature and wide scope of these literatures and discourses challenge synthesis, with no consensus on how these terms might be linked or how they intersect with policy and planning contexts.

Nonetheless, within the international context, four main dimensions within public discourse on *culture in sustainability* are prominent[2]:

1. Sustainability of economic development (or economic dimensions of sustainability), where cultural organizations can play an important role. This approach is frequently linked to the sustainability of cultural heritage sites as well as the long-term survival of certain cultural institutions.
2. Strategies and means to reduce the environmental footprint of the arts/cultural sector (e.g., Hartley 2009) and the environmental benefits of conserving and reusing heritage buildings.
3. Sustainability as a message which culture and the arts can convey to others and build awareness through public campaigns and project development. This reflects the involvement of artists and cultural institutions in overall sustainable development through enhancing public knowledge and awareness, purveying information and influencing values and behaviours (e.g., Kagan and Kirchberg 2008).
4. A 'systematic approach' towards sustainability where the cultural dimension is integrated together with others – social, economic, environmental – in a holistic conceptualization of sustainable development which can be rooted in policy and planning frameworks (Varbanova 2008).

Although the various paths overlap, this section focuses on the last dimension, especially as it has emerged though policy- and planning-related literature internationally. Within this context, four conceptual threads have been brought forward to understand and position culture within community sustainability: (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.[3]

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. This cultural capital, as Throsby (1999) argued, is situated within 'cultural "ecosystems" [that] underpin the operations of the real economy' (p. 9).

Culture as process and way of life

Both Hawkes (2006) and Nurse (2006) argued that it is critical to move beyond talking only about 'the arts', 'heritage', and 'cultural industries' and to include broader notions of culture as

[2] This list is adapted and extended from an earlier observation of prominent discourses on culture and sustainable development in Varbanova (2008).

[3] This discussion is based on a section of Duxbury and Jeannotte (2010) which explores the conceptual underpinnings of international policy discourses concerning culture and sustainability.

a 'whole way of life' in discussions of sustainability. Hawkes 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 for a broader considerations of the potential of 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) identified '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; see also Glotfelty and Fromm 1996). Themes of community engagement and awareness, education, preservation, and conservation are common.

OPERATIONALIZING 'CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY'

Governments and organizations in a variety of jurisdictions have been attempting to bridge the gap between theory and practice with regard to culture and sustainability. At the international level, UNESCO (e.g., World Bank/UNESCO 1998, 1999; UNESCO 2005) and the United Cities and Local Government NGO (see, e.g., Pascual 2009) have played prominent roles (Duxbury and Jeannotte 2010). At the national and subnational levels, a variety of initiatives can be observed internationally, including: Canada's introduction of ICSP requirements; the Province of Quebec's provincial sustainability action plan based on a four-pillar model (QMCCSW 2009); New Zealand's 'four well-beings of communities' model and its requirement for local authorities to produce Long-Term Council-Community Plans (LTCCP) that integrate and interconnect cultural, social, economic, and environmental well-being (NZMCH 2006a, 2006b); Sweden's national municipal association's position paper, *Culture in the Sustainable Society* (SALAR 2008); the development of a *Sustainable Development and Culture Charter* in Lille, France (Cullen 2009); and various U.K. community planning

initiatives, in particular the operational guide, *Sustainable Culture, Sustainable Communities,* produced for the Thames Gateway North Kent region (2006).

Each initiative struggles with defining culture and sustainability in both locally resonant and policy-relevant ways, and in operationalizing what are inherently 'slippery' concepts within an evolving field. As instrumentally policy and planning reports, they exist in a grey area between conceptual development and articulation, and political operationalization. They tend to encompass the essences of past discussions about the roles of culture in community development, social cohesion, economic development, and so forth. Due to the contextual nexus of these documents, there is a very fine line between articulating rationales for the inclusion of cultural considerations within a sustainable development context and conceptually demonstrating or advancing this inclusion.

Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

In 2005, Canada's federal government introduced Gas Tax Fund Agreements, signed in 2005-06 with the provinces and territories, in support of community infrastructure investment, under which the federal government began to share with municipalities a portion of the federal tax on gasoline.[4] 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 (Baxter and Purcell 2007). The GTF agreements allow municipalities to use a portion of gas tax funds to increase local capacity to undertake community-based planning, which has helped fund these processes. Since the GTF agreements differ from province to province or territory, several provinces, territories, and provincial associations of municipalities have developed guides to aid municipalities in developing ICSPs.

In an analysis of 17 ICSP guides that have been widely used by cities and communities to determine how the cultural pillar of sustainability has been incorporated into the overall framework (Duxbury and Jeannotte, forthcoming), we found that only about half of the guides defined what they meant when they discussed the inclusion of culture or integration of culture within community sustainability plans. Even fewer mentioned key aspects or notable local contexts of culture that might influence how communities deal with the fourth pillar in their plans. Most of the plans accepted the now-common-within-Canada advice that culture constitutes the fourth pillar of sustainability (as demonstrated in the fact that most of them cited a rationale for including it). However, the assumption that everyone agrees on what constitutes 'culture' in a community may, in fact, lead to ambiguity in terms of integration and mechanisms. Nonetheless, it is interesting to recognize the 'speculative' variety inherent in these early attempts, and the conceptual frameworks and gaps they reveal.

Overall, among the guidance materials developed to lead municipalities through the ICSP development processes, four major gaps are notable:

1. **Definitions of culture.** The majority of the community sustainability plan guides lack a definition of culture or advice on how a community should go about defining its own culture. Without such a definition, it has been difficult for some communities to follow through on the various steps needed to integrate culture into sustainability plans. The nine planning guides offering a definition of culture provided a broad range of

[4] This initiative and the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities were established within the political context of developing a New Deal for Cities and Communities in Canada. By the time the Committee delivered its final report, the federal ruling party had changed, and the New Deal ceased to be a policy priority. However, the ICSP requirement was set into programs developed under the previous government, and they continue in force to the current day.

interpretations ranging from the *anthropological* (i.e., focused on community identity and values) to the *expressive* (i.e., focusing on heritage buildings and arts and culture activities and resources) to a *combination* of the two. The issue of cultural diversity was mentioned explicitly only by one guide, while another included 'tolerance of others' in its definition of culture.

2. **How to incorporate culture.** Most guides failed to discuss the incorporation of culture into community vision statements or sustainability principles. This may be implied or even expected by the guides' authors in their advice on public consultation and engagement, but given the fact that many Canadian community ICSPs are driven by gas tax agreements and focused on obtaining infrastructure funds for environmental purposes, it cannot be assumed that culture will be included. Ironically, although most guides were vague about the definition of culture or the need to incorporate it at a high strategic level, they tended to be very clear about the need to integrate it into overall community planning policies and processes, usually accompanied by pragmatic references to the public engagement process.

3. **A lack of local contextualization.** Very few of the guides suggested that key aspects of the local, regional, or provincial culture might have an impact on decisions taken with regard to culture and sustainability. This may be a consequence of the failure to define what is meant by culture – if a generic definition is assumed, those who drafted the guides may have under-emphasized the need to discuss the unique cultural aspects of a locality. Nevertheless, reading between the lines, one can discern (for example), a deep concern about heritage in Nova Scotia, a preoccupation with identity and the preservation of memory in Quebec, and some unease about industrial decline and increasing diversity in Ontario.

4. **A lack of attention to the implementation and evaluation stages of the sustainability planning cycle.** Again, part of the reason may be that the ICSP process in Canada has been linked so closely to non-cultural infrastructure aspects of sustainability. As no funding was directly allocated for cultural infrastructure, there may have been little incentive to suggest that communities develop indicators of cultural sustainability or to provide benchmarks of success. Another part of the reason for this gap may go back to the lack of a definition of culture in most of the guides. Without a definition of this feature of the sustainability landscape, it becomes very difficult to develop indicators for it and, hence, to measure success or failure in integrating culture into sustainability frameworks.

On the positive side, this 'fuzzy' guidance structure has led to innovations in municipalities particularly eager to include the cultural dimension in its detailed sustainability planning frameworks. On the negative side (and more commonly) continued uncertainty appears to have contributed to an underdeveloped attention to the cultural fourth pillar.

Highlights from an analysis of a sample of ICSPs

As seen in the analysis of the guides, within the community sustainability context, the role and placement of culture is still uncertain, and thus must be worked out through community dialogues within individual community planning processes. Through Internet searches and email inquiries, 62 ICSPs or closely related city sustainability plans were identified, in draft form, fully approved, or under development. The majority of these plans were developed by small communities or mostly-rural areas.

Among a sample of ICSPs and related sustainability documents developed by small communities, a few were conceptually holistic in their approach: for example, the Powell River *Sustainability Charter* (launched in 2007) defines *cultural sustainability* as 'developing, renewing and maintaining human cultures that create positive, enduring relationships with other

peoples and the natural world' (Alred 2008: 20). More commonly, however, cultural considerations in ICSPs are linked to (a) community identity, distinctiveness, attractiveness, and 'sense of place'; and (b) sociability, public participation and voluntarism, social networks, or 'community based support systems' in the community (Yarmouth 2009: 17). Identity is closely associated with architectural character, heritage buildings and other historic resources, and public spaces, with direct operational links to heritage stewardship as well as the recognition and celebration of rich community histories, multi-cultural origins, and evolving character.

Contextualizing or rationalizing the inclusion of culture in the ICSPs is also two-fold in nature: the first path emphasizes culture as assets to be exploited in tourism-related economic development, community attractiveness, downtown revitalization, and the town's regional role; the second emphasizes the social or quality of life aspects of the community, community engagement and social cohesion, collective identity, and may also address social issues and challenges such as youth engagement/advancements and cultural diversity.

Overall, the ICSPs feel appropriate and tailored to each community's priority environmental and other issues and concerns, but also seemed to be a 'missed opportunity' for integrating cultural (and social) aspects into both short- and long-term plans and actions. Concrete actions seem disconnected from holistic definitions of sustainability or cultural sustainability, action plans do not tend to prioritize cultural items (if included, they often are listed at a low priority level), and culture-related items within economic and social sustainability contexts appear to be 'minor' suggestions in these areas. When overall ICSP implementation schedules are outlined, concrete actions on the cultural component are delayed when, for example, Years 1 and 2 of 'ICSP Implementation' are earmarked as 'planning years' for the social and cultural pillars (e.g., Chester 2009). Further, culture-specific actions often seem rudimentary, reflecting very early steps in engaging with the cultural aspects and assets of the community in any planning context. For example, recommended actions often focus on inventorying the heritage and arts resources, public awareness-raising, and occasionally the provision of coordinated support. Finally, the culture-related ideas, visions, and plans brought forth through the ICSP process also seem undermined or 'moderated' by very limited municipal resources and action commitments.

Larger cities

In larger cities, sustainability planning initiatives are more likely to focus on environmental challenges (only), reinforced by being explicitly tied to a municipal Sustainability Office. Thus, policy development is tightly linked to operational programs and lines of responsibility, which tends to work against holistic, multidimensional, intertwined conceptualizations. Among larger cities that acknowledge culture within a sustainability framework, four types of situations are generally observed, roughly delineated by the extent to which culture is integrated into the overall view of community sustainability:

- Cultural considerations are explicitly but tangentially integrated (e.g., cultural development or 'cultural legacies' are presented as part of the holistic view of a sustainable city, but not conceptually integrated with other sustainability initiatives).
- Culture is included under a 'social' umbrella, with references to cultural diversity and cultural expressions as part of the community's social dimensions.
- Culture is included as a separate pillar of sustainability and there are some cultural references within the economic and social pillars, but the overall 'integrated' nature of the plan has not 'gelled' and a holistic interconnected vision does not resonate throughout the plan.
- A comprehensive, holistic view of a sustainable community explicitly highlights culture and attempts to conceptualize this inclusion (e.g., Ottawa, Calgary, Kingston, Port Moody).

(SNAPSHOTS OF SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE FOURTH CATEGORY WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE PRESENTATION)

Overall, preliminary analyses indicate that the size of the communities, dynamics and pressures related to population growth or shrinkage, and regional specificities tend to influence the content of the plan, community views about its culture, and the roles that cultural assets and characteristics are perceived to play in community (sustainable) development more broadly. Furthermore, current community development priorities, issues, and gaps understandably tend to overshadow conceptual frameworks of sustainability at the operationalization or action plan stage of the ICSP development process. Funding available for 'green infrastructure' and environmental remediation projects also plays a role in the types of elements that are prioritized in the follow-up action plans.

Integrated community sustainability plans provide a long-term, 'joined up' planning framework for a community to collectively envision and decide on strategic directions for its development, a 'coordinated approach' that both *reflects* and *integrates* four dimensions of sustainability. On the basis of the current research, while the inclusion of culture within small city planning is gradually advancing, *integration* of cultural considerations within a holistic planning paradigm has not yet been achieved.

REFLECTIONS

While the explicit adoption of a four-pillar model of sustainability in Canada has been an important step in recognizing the importance of culture and the multifaceted contributions it makes and, potentially, in launching more holistic ways of thinking about and planning communities, the impact on understanding the place of culture in sustainable development is less clear.

Conceptual issues and avenues

At present, thinking about culture in a community sustainability context is emergent, diversely conceived, overly focused on the concrete, tends to overstress (heritage) preservation and not discuss (future) resiliency and change, and is generally missing a systems approach that holistically links past, present, and future, and links culture with other domains.

Communities on the edge – such as those in Canada's North – may serve as particularly instructive and insightful cases. Described as being 'always at risk of losing capacity, cultural depth, and self-reliance' (Yukon, *Part 1*: 15), cultural sustainability goals look to 'a more self-reliant community (one that is not losing capacity and culture)' and 'enhanced community identity' where development is respectful of the community's cultural identity, landmarks are preserved, cultural values are recognized as part of the planning process, and 'infrastructure development is culturally appropriate in design, placement, and approach' and thus enhances the community's cultural identity (p. 15). Similarly, Quebec's long-standing attention to its cultural and linguistic identity tends to underlie a comprehensive view of culture, much more holistic than in other cases, encompassing multiple definitions.

Overall, based on the array of plans and guides reviewed, it appears that the development of conceptual frameworks for considering culture should be systems-based and threefold in nature, encompassing and balancing notions of:

1. Historical/heritage vitality including preservation of intangible and physical assets and their integration into the community's life both in the present and the future;
2. 'Cultural vitality' including dynamic contemporary processes and opportunities to engage in a variety of ways through multiple channels; and

3. Culture as values and that which is valued, shaping a way of life and interactions with an environment.

Further, it seems that the model of a cultural *lens* on all matters may be more fruitful as an analogy than that of a *pillar*, which tends to atomize and silo cultural considerations into a separate chapter in the plans.

Applied fields ... in transition

Individual communities form the terrain for working out conceptual frameworks and ideas about a healthy, vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community. From this perspective, the text that is worked out in the ICSPs (usually a collaboration between the local government and its community, with consultant-led facilitation and expertise also inserted) involves a process of adopting resonating paradigms about the 'good community' while also learning to adopt a systems-based manner of thinking. In shifting to a 'sustainability' mindset, it is clear that this process of transition is also enmeshed in issues of 'continuity' as understood by the community, including recognition and remediation of neglect or damage conducted to date. Explicit linkages with scientific literature are rare.

As an applied field, the planning processes entailed in sustainable community planning require that conceptual thinking about sustainability be linked with ideas about community development. In the process of developing the ICSPs, prevailing discourses that link across departments and sectors, and resonate with political decision-makers and other community leaders, are shifting to a more long-term, holistic, systems-based, and environmentally-minded manner of thinking and planning. Multiple conceptual frameworks feed into this arena, including ideas about 'healthy communities', 'vibrant communities', 'creative cities', community (economic) development, 'complete communities', 'resilient communities', and 'sustainable communities'. Two commonly reoccurring grounding references found in the plans are to the Melbourne Principles and the Natural Step Framework. Thinking about this may also be enriched by encompassing models such as the nine fundamental human needs and 12 key community systems (Park et al. 2009). Linking the emerging sustainability paradigm with existing thematic plans and strategies (each created according to the norms and paradigms of the individual fields) is a necessary but complicating process of moving forward.

Use-contexts – political, bureaucratic, and in the community – are shaped in part by these discursive flows and dictate what is possible in official documents and plans. Local specificities define the evolving terrain and, amidst an array of interests, ideas, opportunities, and challenges, determine how best to proceed at the time. Culture – to put a spotlight on the central concern of this paper – is the social product of an assembly of many small organizations, entrepreneurial and activist individuals, other residents, and visitors, and must be collectively nurtured, developed, and sustained over time. The specificities of individual communities – geographic location, environmental features, and economic resources; historic roles, heritage, and contemporary mix of cultures; community activism, entrepreneurialism, and identity – provide a diversity of fields of action to actively create and recreate each city's distinct sense of place and ways of being. Culture plays an important role in the dynamic process of balancing these myriad interests and actors as part of the community's 'continuous renewal through balance and interconnectedness' (Kingston 2009: 1).

The four-pillar model of sustainability represents an in-process paradigm shift for both the discipline of sustainability and the community and cultural planning fields. The struggles evident in organizing the ICSP planning processes and documents and, especially, in operationalizing an integrated view of community sustainability reflects Western society's tendency to silo and divide rather than think in holistic, cyclical manners. Difficult as the transition to a more holistic perspective may be, it would appear necessary if culture is to be integrated effectively into local dialogues about sustainability.

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