Including culture in sustainability: an assessment of Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

N. Duxbury[a*] and M.S. Jeannotte[b]

[a]Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal; [b]Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

Abstract

In Canada, a federally legislated requirement to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) based on a four-pillar model of sustainability provides a good example of a procedural and substantive policy effort to encourage local governments to integrate all pillars of sustainability into their long-term planning. It also provides an opportunity to explore the conceptual and governance challenges that cities and communities face in implementing this four-pillar framework for long-term community planning. Focusing on the linguistic framing of the cultural dimension of this sustainability framework, this paper explores the conceptual relationships between culture, nature and development, as well the governance issues they pose. Then, it assesses the pragmatic integration of culture in ICSP guides and in actual ICSPs developed by cities and communities across Canada. It concludes with an overall analysis of the current status of these efforts and the key conceptual and governance challenges that are evident.

Keywords: culture; cultural sustainability; community sustainability planning; governance; integrated community sustainability plans; local development

1. Introduction

The modern notion of sustainability, as originally 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. As the concept has matured, increasing emphasis has been placed on interconnections with social and economic dimensions of development, and space has opened up for debate with regard to culture, which was often treated as a minor subset of the social dimension. Since about 2000, a four-pillar model of sustainability has emerged internationally, rooted in ideas from a range of international agencies and researchers and encompassing four interconnected dimensions: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity and cultural vitality (Hawkes 2001). However, if the *social* dimension of sustainability has often been missing from sustainability discourse and practice, the inclusion of *culture* within conceptual and planning frameworks for long-term community well-being and sustainability has tended to be even more vague and fractured. As a result, cultural considerations tend not to be integrated into sustainability initiatives in a widespread or consistent way.

In the contemporary context where culture is increasingly viewed as a development catalyst (Evans 2005), local or regional 'identity' takes on greater importance in the face of homogenizing forces of globalization (Bhagat et al. 2005/2006; Isar and Anheier 2009), and creativity and resilience are often highlighted as key elements to promote economic vitality and urban sustainable development (e.g., Resilient Communities Dialogue 2010), the question of the place of culture and culture-related dynamics in sustainable development is rising to the fore.

The questions we explore in this article are threefold. First, how has culture traditionally been viewed in relation to sustainability and how is this relationship evolving? Second, how has culture's role in development and urban planning been framed and conceptualized and how has this role been linked to sustainability? Third, what forms of governance have been used to integrate culture into sustainability plans and development frameworks and how effective have they been?

Admittedly, these are huge and complicated questions, and we do not pretend to provide definitive answers. In this article, we have chosen to use a case study approach to explore these issues and to illustrate how conceptual ambiguity can lead to wide variations in practice. The cases we examine are from Canada, where a federally legislated requirement to develop Integrated

Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) based on a four-pillar model of sustainability kick-started a procedural and substantive policy effort to encourage local governments to integrate all pillars of sustainability into their long-term planning. Focusing on the cultural dimension of this sustainability framework, this paper begins by reviewing the origins and key concepts of the cultural dimension of sustainability, including its relationship to development, and the governance issues that arise from these relationships. Then, it assesses how the cultural dimension of sustainability has been described and pragmatically applied in ICSP guides and in actual ICSPs developed by cities and communities. It concludes by presenting an analysis of the current status of these efforts and the key conceptual and operational challenges and issues that are evident.

2. Culture, development and sustainability

2.1. Origins and key concepts

Raymond Williams (1976, 1980) has observed that *culture* and *nature* are two of the most complex words in the language – Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) documented 164 definitions of culture! Complicating matters even more is that fact that much of Western thought since the Enlightenment has viewed *culture* as separate from *nature*. As Soper (1995) observes, “there is perhaps something

inherently mistaken in the attempt to define what nature is, independently of how it is thought about, talked about and culturally represented" (p. 21). In medieval European theology, she notes, humanity had a place in the Great Chain of Being, somewhere between the angels and the beasts, but Enlightenment thinkers viewed *culture* as offering an essential corrective to *nature*, with *human 'nature'* as appropriately and fully reflected only in those achievements of 'civilization' that distance us from the sinfulness or naivety or crudity of 'nature' (pp. 28-29). For much of the period from the 18th century to the present, this view dominated Western societies' relationship with the environment. As Soper says, "one becomes a human (or 'cultural') being only insofar as one is subjected to a social and conventional set of norms and meanings and organizes one's identity in terms of it" (p. 55). How culture, including language, mediates discourse on nature and sustainability is therefore a key element in understanding the relationships among the various 'pillars' of sustainability.

However, the use of culture in discourse about development and sustainability is "vague, diverse, and sometimes also [used] in conflicting ways" (Birkeland and Soini 2010, p. 8). For instance, Birkeland and Soini's (2010) multidisciplinary review of scientific literature regarding 'cultural sustainability' finds seven different definitional streams for culture with respect

to development and sustainability – as cultural continuation (e.g., Short 2005/2006, Bekerman and Kopeloqitz 2008, Kennedy 2006), social sustainability (e.g., Chiu 2004, Vileniske 2008, Boogaard et al. 2008), locally based development (e.g., Doubleday et al. 2004, Radovic 2004), associated with economic viability (e.g., Askegaard and Kjeldegaard 2007, Bhagat et al. 2005/2006), inseparable from ecological sustainability (Decamps 2001, Nassauer 1997), highlighting eco-cultural justice (e.g., Martinez-Ballasté et al. 2006, Jarnal and Stronza 2009), and as socio-cultural evolution and change (e.g., Reisch 2006). Despite this conceptual plurality, thinking about the complex relationships between culture, development, and sustainability has also spilled over into the world of international policy discourse and development (Throsby 2008).

Hawkes (2001), in proposing that culture become the fourth pillar of sustainability within local planning, points to culture-and-development policy thinking emerging internationally. For example, the World Commission on Culture and Development's *Our Creative Diversity* report (WCCD 1996) ties culture tightly to development concerns. It defines *culture* as "ways of living together" and *development* as "the widening of human opportunities and choices" (p. 24). The WCCD views culture as embedded in social systems, as something that "connects [people] with one another and makes the development

of the individual possible," and as the key element that "defines how people relate to nature and their physical environment, to the earth and to the cosmos" (p. 24).

In a chapter on "Culture and the Environment," *Our Creative Diversity* takes a clear position against the separation of ecology from the cultural milieu, commenting that "ecology is not merely resource management but the calculus of power about who appropriates nature, both its physical resources and the cultural meaning associated with them" and that "the management of natural resources also depends on citizens' participation, policy decision-making and institutions" (p. 210). In the context of rapid urbanization, development challenges are couched in terms of both "individual and collective access to resources of urban life" and "cultural diversity" (p. 220). The WCCD argues that cultural diversity is "a major contribution to sustainability" (p. 226) and a cultural diversity approach to development would "open the world to more voices and products … with the multiplying effects of all the creative interactions that this would entail" (p. 220).

It is not possible to cover in detail here the continuing debates about the meaning of *sustainability* or its vexing linkage to the notion of *development*. As Redclift (2006), citing Herman Daly, observes, *sustainable development* is an oxymoron and consists of several different discourses, some of which are

mutually exclusive. Although the dominant discourse is that of capitalist ideology, privileging and legitimizing only one form of value – economic value, less dominant discourses are also in play (Nadarajah 2007). Robinson (2004) argues that sustainability is "an inherently normative concept, rooted in real world problems and very different sets of values and moral judgements" and is ultimately "an issue of human behavior, and negotiation over preferred futures" (pp. 379, 380). As Sneddon et al. (2006) note,

> Sustainability may yet be possible if sufficient numbers of scholars, practitioners and political actors embrace a plurality of approaches to and perspectives on sustainability, accept multiple interpretations and practices associated with an evolving concept of 'development', and support a further opening up of local-to-global public spaces to debate and enact a politics of sustainability (p. 254).

Robinson (2004) suggests that the substantive reconciliation of the ecological, economic and social dimensions of sustainability requires procedural attention to "a conversation about desired futures that is informed by some understanding of the ecological, social and economic consequences of different courses of action" (p. 381).

As sustainability became a more prominent issue in the late 1990s, concerns about the neglect of cultural considerations in planning and policy contexts

grew, with most of this concern focused, like WCCD's, on urban areas. Three parallel developments in the Pacific and Asian regions are notable. 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 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, p. 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). Secondly, in Australia, cultural experts and theorists began a campaign to have culture included as one of the pillars of community sustainability and well-being. The Cultural Development Network commissioned Hawkes' *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning* (2001), containing a model of sustainability that incorporated four interlinked dimensions: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity and cultural vitality. Thirdly, in New Zealand, a *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 2006, p. 1).[1]

A chorus of complementary voices from regions such as the Pacific Islands (Hooper 2005; Sahlins 2005; Kavaliku 2005), the Caribbean (Nurse 2006) and Africa (Edozien 2007) also addressed concerns about culture within sustainable development. Writings from Asian and developing countries are closely aligned in terms of reacting against Western development models and looking for more appropriate and culturally sensitive development paradigms (Duxbury and Jeannotte 2010).[2] Ultimately, as Choe et al. (2007) put it, culture in sustainable development is about "the need to advance development in ways that allow human groups to live together better, without losing their identity and sense of community, and without betraying their heritage, while improving the quality of life" (p. 202).

Parallel to these developments, discourse on the roles for culture in urban development in Western countries was advanced through literature and practices of cultural planning mainly in the context of urban culture-led

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[1] In part, the New Zealand legislation reflected ongoing efforts with aboriginal communities to consider and assess the full implications of proposed development projects in a holistic manner including environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions (P. Nuttall, sustainability planning and policy adviser, Kaikohe, New Zealand, personal communication, 11 May 2011).

[2] 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).

regeneration (e.g., Bianchini and Parkinson 1994; Grogan and Mercer 2002; Freestone and Gibson 2004; Mercer 2007; Young 2008) and community development through social cohesion (e.g. Duxbury 2002; Chiu 2004), among other arguments (see, e.g., Duxbury et al. 2003). A cursory review of developments in cities internationally shows that cultural activity and infrastructure are frequently used as levers or catalysts in urban redevelopment schemes, city branding strategies, and in initiatives to foster social cohesion and counter social exclusion. From this perspective, culture is no longer a stranger to planning and development. Furthermore, our awareness of this 'cultural turn' has never been greater. New initiatives and developments are promoted internationally, while impacts of culture-led urban development have been documented in numerous studies and a route towards the 'culturalization' of planning has been outlined (Young 2008).

Initial policy and planning documents from Western countries explaining the role of culture in sustainable development typically advance arguments that echo these foundations (see, e.g., SALAR 2008; UKDCMS 2006). However, moving from *development* to *sustainable development* implies a qualitative change in mindset and strategy. As Martens (2006) cautions, "sustainable development is a complex idea that can neither be unequivocally described nor simply applied" (p. 36). He characterizes it as being intergenerational, played

out at several levels (global, regional and local), within multiple domains, and subject to multiple interpretations. Viewed through this lens, holistic models can serve as integrative tools. We believe that efforts to reinstate culture into governance models for sustainability have been inspired (consciously or not) by older holistic models, such as the traditional medicine wheel of Aboriginal peoples and the Buddhist Dharma-Chakra or 'wheel of righteousness'[3], which situate culture within a unified worldview. The Aboriginal medicine wheel, for example, is a holistic approach to thinking, organizing, planning and healing. It is a four-dimensional framework embracing a complex view of life and depicting four traditional directions – north (environmental), south (social), west (economic) and east (cultural) – crosscut by four key segments of Aboriginal society: male, female, children and youth, and adults and elders (see, e.g., Cardinal and Adin 2005). These four segments represent different groups and viewpoints, and each is considered to be critical to the Aboriginal community's overall well-being. Such frameworks are holistic and recursive ways of viewing and understanding the various aspects of the community and represent a re-emerging alternative to linear, positivist descriptions of reality, but they have not yet penetrated very far into either everyday social discourse

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[3] For further information on the application of this model to urban planning, see Tiwari (2007) and Nagara Sutta (2010).

or the policy and planning discourses that are required to translate them into development practices.

2.2. What culture brings to sustainability debates

Sustainability models and worldviews must be mediated by what Martens calls “truth machines” or heuristic instruments that help bring better insight into complex problems of sustainability, namely, analytic methods, participative methods and managerial methods. We would suggest a fourth that is a fundamental characteristic of the cultural pillar: *linguistic framing*. By this we refer to cultural narratives and language structures, in order to draw attention to the ways in which these frameworks for expression, communication, and understanding shape the way we think and act.

Redclift (2006), among others, has called for new discourses or narrative frames around sustainability – discourses that recognize that development needs are defined differently by different generations and cultures. The development of new discourses or narratives will require two fundamental elements: the articulation of new metaphors of sustainability that describe more holistic ways of viewing the world and the participation of those who can create and tell stories based on these new metaphors.

Articulation, Stuart Hall notes, is “both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects” (in Grossberg 1986, p. 53). This double meaning is key: “It is not the individual elements of a discourse that have political or ideological connotations, it is the ways those elements are organized together in a new discursive formation” (p. 55). Or as Princen (2010) writes, “cultural change occurs not when people argue well but when they speak differently” (p. 60).

The ‘individual elements of a discourse’ need not always be ideologies. Recent work in cognitive linguistics suggests that metaphors may make up a good deal of the non-scientific discourse about sustainability, that these metaphors are key to structuring our understanding of the world and the phenomena within it, and that they acquire their power through linguistic framing. For example, basic metaphors for consumption in Western society involve destruction (like a fire burning) or eating (like a hunger or appetite) (Wilk 2010). Constant growth in consumption is viewed as increased wealth or ‘moving up’, while a decrease in consumption is viewed as poverty or ‘falling down.’ Seldom is consumption framed in terms of less linear or economic concepts, such as *fairness* or *sharing* or *human security*.

Soper characterizes language as “a social system not an individual property” (p. 54). Within most social systems storytellers, creators, and artists play a central role in the crafting of new metaphors to frame both general understanding and public policy debates about sustainability and to articulate or join together these metaphors into new discourses. Creators, working with communities, policymakers, and practitioners, can help connect these metaphors into new narratives that can inform sustainability discourses. Bachmann (2008) suggests that “arts for sustainability means involving people and providing room for them to rethink [the] future. We have to allow for ordinary people to become part of the action” (p. 10). New discourses and new metaphors emerge through continued conversations within society. These conversations are already taking place in many communities and are mediated by and through culture and language, as a supplement to conventional planning methodologies. The cultural pillar can be the catalyst that brings about new ways of thinking about the troublesome relationship that has existed thus far between *sustainability* and *development*. This will require, however, that culture forms a part of governance experiments that explore different ways of configuring this relationship.

2.3. Culture, governance and sustainability

Governance, another highly contested term, figures prominently in discussions of culture's role in development and sustainability. Jordan (2008) refers to three modes of governance – hierarchies, markets and networks – that are currently in a state of flux and often work in isolation from each other, making it extremely difficult to develop a centrally determined blueprint for sustainable development. Therefore, he suggests, the "practical meaning will necessarily have to emerge out of an interactive *process* of social dialogue and reflection" (p. 18) where "the role played by governance in any long-term transition to sustainable development is that of steering an interactive and reflexive process of debate and dialogue" (p. 25). Negotiations and discussions about sustainable development certainly take place at the national and transnational levels, but after the inconclusive results of such high-profile initiatives as the Copenhagen Accord (2009) and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun (2010), effective social dialogue and reflection appear to be occurring primarily at the sub-national level.

Local governments have taken the lead in seeking new approaches to incorporate culture into sustainability practices. In countries such as the Netherlands (Voβ et al. 2009; Loorbach and Rotmans 2009), the United Kingdom (UKDCMS 2004, 2005), New Zealand and Canada considerable time

and resources have been invested to develop local plans that incorporate culture as a key element of sustainability. Many of these efforts attempt to integrate existing practices, such as cultural planning, with emerging sustainability policy design techniques, such as transition management. Cultural planning is defined as "a process of inclusive community consultation and decision-making that helps local government identify cultural resources and think strategically about how these resources can help a community to achieve its civic goals" (Russo and Butler 2007, p. 1). Transition management is a technique that "combines an orientation toward a long-term vision of 'sustainable development' with short-term experimental learning to probe options and find pathways to realise the vision" (Voβ et al. 2009, p. 277). The marriage of these two processes is a response to "the limits to rational steering" in governance for sustainable development (Newig et al. 2007, p. 185). These limits recognize that goals within each pillar of sustainability are contested; that knowledge of the complex dynamics among society, technology and nature is limited; and that power to shape change is distributed across a multitude of actors and systems (Newig et al. 2007).

The implementation of such approaches is often experimental and can spur innovative thinking and planning initiatives. In the next section, we examine one such effort – Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs)

– that has attempted to work through these conceptual, linguistic, and governance complexities and to link culture to sustainability planning in a more comprehensive and effective way.

3. Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

3.1. Background

Canada is a federal state comprising ten provinces and three territories. Jurisdictional relationships are complex: provinces have responsibility for municipalities, but the federal (national) government has the power to intervene in 'urban' issues such as public transportation, housing and infrastructure (Gattinger 2008). Politically, there is 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" (EACCC 2006, p. 10). However, without formal institutions to foster collaboration and coordination in these areas, increasing reliance must be placed on non-structural factors such as cultures of collaboration, local leadership and partnerships (Gattinger 2008). With culture considered a 'shared' jurisdiction and sustainability not mentioned in the constitution, these jurisdictional ambiguities have opened the door to policy and planning innovations.

In 2006, the federal government's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities put forward a vision and approach to sustainable development for cities and communities that was based on a four-pillar model of sustainability (EACCC 2006). In a background paper intended to furnish both provinces and municipalities with information on ICSPs, the federal government clearly stated its intentions with regard to this process:

> The requirement for municipalities to develop ICSPs was designed to accelerate the shift in local planning and decision making toward a more **long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieve sustainable communities.** ICSPs have been identified as a means to help cities, communities and First Nations … to effectively plan and manage their resources to achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address priorities within an integrated framework encompassing the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions of community sustainability. (bold in original).

The paper emphasized the participatory and civic elements of sustainability planning, stressing that "it is essential that respective stakeholders from different sectors of society actively participate in reaching a basic consensus on the path to take towards sustainability" (p. 41). Infrastructure Canada (responsible for cities and communities) introduced a policy requiring municipalities to develop long-term Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

(ICSPs) reflecting this model, which were tied to Gas Tax Fund (GTF) Agreements signed in 2005-06 with each province and territory. Municipalities can use a portion of the GTF funds to undertake community-based sustainability planning, which has helped finance these processes.

3.2. The ICSP development process

Since GTF Agreements differ among the provinces and territories, and the process was completely new, each jurisdiction scrambled to produce guides to help municipalities develop ICSPs. Often this task was undertaken fairly rapidly by provincial associations of municipalities, parallel to efforts of provincial municipal relations departments. Provinces and territories drew upon whatever sustainability planning expertise existed in their jurisdictions, and borrowed from each other. Because the notion of a cultural pillar of sustainability was generally unfamiliar, we were interested in investigating how it was interpreted and narratively framed within ICSP planning guides and individual municipal ICSPs.

Most of the ICSP guides borrow heavily from standard sustainability planning methodologies, such as those advocated by The Natural Step and the Sustainable Cities PLUS Planning Cycle, to structure their advice. The Natural Step, for example, advocates a five-phase process:

1. Structuring the planning process, which may include establishing a citizens advisory group to assist councillors and municipal staff;
2. Creating a shared understanding of sustainable community success, often through citizen engagement processes intended to develop sustainability principles and a shared vision based on community values and goals;
3. Determining and analyzing strategy areas for community success, which includes identification of strategy areas that must be addressed to achieve the community's vision, often in partnership with citizen task forces or committees;
4. Identifying initiatives to move from current reality toward success, which prioritizes the initiatives and investments needed to move forward in each strategy area and compiles them in an ICSP;
5. Ongoing monitoring and implementation of the ICSP, often with the assistance of citizen groups. (Baxter & Purcell 2007, pp. 36-7)

All guides, following federal direction, emphasize that the process must be embedded in extensive community participation. Overall, they tend to emphasize procedural aspects, with only passing attention to conceptual issues and to culture's role in sustainability planning and discourses.

3.3. Methodology for this study

We adopted a two-part methodology for our investigation. First, we examined 17 ICSP guides developed for and widely used by municipalities (listed at the

end of this article), which represent all Canadian ICSP guides available up to 2009. The guides were identified by searching the websites of Infrastructure Canada (which offers an ICSP resource directory), provincial and territorial governments and provincial and territorial associations of municipalities. Three can be considered ‘national’ and are not associated with a particular jurisdiction; the remainder are specific to a provincial or territorial jurisdiction.

To guide our analysis of these documents, we developed an analytical grid that focused on understanding (a) how linkages between culture and sustainability are conceptualized and (b) what governance mechanisms are recommended to help communities integrate culture into their ICSPs. Five questions framed this inquiry:

(1) How is culture defined?

(2) Why is culture considered a pillar of sustainability and what is the argument or rationale used to include it in the sustainability planning framework?

(3) Are any aspects of culture identified in the guide as potentially key to the community’s sustainability plans, or are any notable aspects of the community’s, region’s, or province’s cultural context highlighted?

(4) What guidance is provided for the integration of cultural considerations within the overall approach to sustainability planning?

(5) Are any key governance mechanisms recommended to assist in the integration of culture within the community's sustainability policies, plans and processes?

Second, we examined some of the 'end results' (i.e. actual ICSPs) to determine how individual communities incorporate cultural considerations in their sustainability plans. Through Internet searches and email queries to Infrastructure Canada and to municipalities in the Creative City Network of Canada, over 60 ICSPs or closely related sustainability plans were identified, in draft form, fully approved, or under development. There are wide variations in the type and size of communities developing these plans, with over half of these ICSPs elaborated by small communities or rural areas under 15,000 population.[4] Many ICSPs reference the provincial or municipal resource guides in their introductions, indicating that the guides were influential in structuring the ICSP development process and content frameworks.

The plans were individually reviewed to classify definitions of culture, rationales for including culture within sustainability plans, how cultural

[4] We surmised this was because the incentive to receive federal money to support sustainability-related infrastructure development is particularly powerful in communities with limited alternative sources of support.

considerations were integrated and conceptual frameworks or 'operational innovations' developed at the local level.[5] A full analysis of these plans is beyond the purview of this article and investigation is ongoing.

3.4. Analysis of ICSP guides

Although new ways of framing sustainability discourses are central to building consensus and preparing the ground for action, procedural issues tend to be the central preoccupation of the guides that we studied. Most ICSP guides accept culture as constituting the fourth pillar of sustainability, cite a rationale for including it and make suggestions about how culture might be integrated into ICSPs, despite an overall scarceness of definitions and a general vagueness about the conceptual relationship between culture and sustainability (see Table 1). Very few guides mention local/regional socio-cultural contexts that might influence how communities deal with culture in their plans. Three aspects of the conceptualization of culture in the ICSP guides and plans were investigated: definitions, rationalization, and contextualization (or localizing).

Table 1. Overview of the inclusion of culture in national and provincial ICSP guides

[5] Content-analysis software was not used due to inconsistency in terminologies used and a desire to analyze first-hand the narratives and linguistic framing approaches contextualizing the inclusion of cultural elements.

	No. of guides mentioning (n=17)
Definitions of culture	9
Rationale for inclusion of culture	15
Key aspects/notable contexts of culture	6
Guidance on integration of culture	16
Key mechanisms for integrating culture	13

3.4.1. *Definitions*

Both a general lack of definitions and the variety in definitional attempts are notable. The majority of the guides lack a definition of culture or advice on how a community should go about defining its culture. The nine planning guides that do offer a definition of culture provide a broad range of interpretations: from the *anthropological*, focusing on community identity and values [NV1, NV2, YK1, YK2]; to the *expressive*, including heritage infrastructure and a range of arts and culture activities and resources [NS1, NS2, ON1, ON2]; to a *combination* of the two, incorporating both anthropological aspects (language, beliefs and ways of living together) and the ways that society expresses itself through the arts and letters [QC]. The guides including a definition of culture tend to focus attention on heritage aspects, such as historical/heritage sites and

conservation of the built environment, and tourism-related festivals and events. *Cultural diversity* is mentioned explicitly in only one province [ON1, ON2], although [QC] includes "tolerance of others" in its definition of culture. Only [Natural Step] suggests that arts, culture and heritage be understood as a key community *system.*

3.4.2. *Rationales for including culture*

Rationalizing the inclusion of culture in the guides and the ICSPs takes two main paths. On the first path, culture is linked to the community's economic sustainability as an asset to be exploited in tourism-related economic development, community attractiveness and identity, and downtown revitalization. A few guides draw on creative economy theory to emphasize the need for amenities and certain community characteristics to attract creative talent.[6]

The second path justifies the inclusion of culture in terms of its contribution to the community's social life, emphasizing the community's quality of life, community engagement and social cohesion, collective identity and social issues such as youth engagement and cultural diversity. Two examples: [NS2]

[6] For example, [ON2] stated that "Affordable housing, creative design, energy and transportation efficiency, rich cultural expression and tolerance, recreational and green spaces and stakeholder inclusion are among the ingredients that will enable urban areas to compete successfully for the highly desirable creative class and for investment capital" (p. 21 and 35).

focuses on the role played by cultural facilities and centres “to create, share, present, communicate, learn, socialize and build community” (p. 15); [QC] notes that “Culture and heritage play a fundamental role in contributing to the preservation of memory, the development of a sense of belonging, the reinforcement of identity” (p. 1).

In general, the guides tend to be silent or vague about a conceptual relationship between culture and sustainability. Some guides attempt a holistic rationale for including culture, although they seldom go beyond generalities. For example, [Royal Roads] includes “the provision of historic, spiritual, religious, aesthetic, educational and scientific information, cultural and artistic inspiration” within a group of “essential ecological services” (p. 2). Others simply make a general statement (e.g., “Consider culture as part of the ‘sustainability lens’” [BC3]), providing little or no explanation as to why this is important.

3.4.3. *Contextualization/localization*

Most guides lack local contextualization and few suggest that key aspects of the local, regional, or provincial culture might have an impact on decisions taken with regard to culture. This may be a consequence of the failure to define *culture* or the assumption of a generic definition, which consequently under-

emphasizes the value of discussing unique cultural aspects of a locality. Only the guides from northern jurisdictions, which have large indigenous populations, unequivocally tie sustainability to culture. [YK1] notes that northern communities "are always at risk of losing capacity, cultural depth and self-reliance" (p. 15), a concern that [NV1] incorporates into its definition of culture: "A more self-reliant community (one that is not losing capacity and culture)." The Yukon's distinctive cultural context is also evident in the list of cultural programs mentioned, including items such as "subsistence food preparation" and "spirit camps" ([YK2], p. 15).

3.4.4. *Conceptual analysis of selected ICSPs*

Within this diverse and somewhat vague guidance framework, a few municipalities/communities are emerging as 'conceptual leaders.' In the communities that we describe below, significant efforts were made to engage citizens in a discussion of the contents of the ICSPs, which gave a good deal of local resonance to the plans. Each community described a comprehensive, holistic view of a sustainable community and put forward its own distinct view on culture and sustainability, explicitly highlighting culture in the ICSPs and attempting to conceptualize this inclusion. The three examples we highlight are

Kingston, Ontario; Powell River, British Columbia; and the Ottawa-Gatineau Region, straddling the Ontario/Quebec border.

Kingston, Ontario (population 117,000) – Kingston's ICSP stresses the integrated nature of the four pillars of sustainability, seeing sustainability as a process of "continuous renewal through balance and interconnectedness across the four dimensions of sustainability – cultural vitality, economic health, environmental responsibility, and social equity" (Kingston Sustainability Summit 2009, p. 1). Regarding the *Cultural Vitality* pillar, the ICSP acknowledges that the role of culture in sustainable development is less clear than the other areas but stresses that it is necessary to involve culture at the same level as other dimensions as it is closely related to a community's vitality and quality of life, and is a strategic tool to foster social inclusion, cultural diversity, rural revitalization, public housing, health and ecological preservation. The focus of the Cultural Pillar is defined as "the promotion of human well-being through enhancing both Quality of Life and Quality of Place" (p. 12) and includes four themes: arts, creativity and entertainment; history and heritage; active citizenship; and diversity in ethnicity and beliefs. Beyond the "basic role" of art, culture and heritage "to bring beauty into our daily lives" (p. 12), the report outlines social contributions (nurturing community and individual identity, promoting social cohesion, and contributing

to the creation of "social capital") and economic contributions. Environmental health and responsibility is explicitly linked to reusing heritage buildings and, more generally, to culture as an important aspect of holistic approaches to environmental challenges.

Powell River, British Columbia (population 20,000) – The Powell River *Sustainability Charter* defines *cultural sustainability* as "developing, renewing and maintaining human cultures that create positive, enduring relationships with other peoples and the natural world" (Powell River 2008, p. 20). Cultural considerations are linked tightly with social dimensions.[7] The Charter Principles explicitly acknowledge the Aboriginal origins of the territory: "Recognize and respect Tla'amin aboriginal rights, title and cultural history" (2010, p. 1) Among seven socio-cultural priorities that "define the future to which the community aspires" (p. 14), three are cultural: *transfer of knowledge and history* held by community elders to youth; *maintaining the community's connection to its cultural heritage* by identifying, protecting and celebrating archaeological and historical sites important to the Tla'amin First Nation and other community ethnic groups; and *"cultural connection,"* using cultural

[7] The *Sustainability Charter* (2010) states: "A community's vitality and quality of life is closely related to the vitality and quality of its cultural engagement, expression, dialogue, and celebration - building lively connected communities where people want to live and work. The social /cultural aspect of sustainability encompasses the human aspect of sustainability. It means ensuring that basic conditions are met for human life to flourish, e.g. adequate health care, safety, recreational programs, and cultural events – supporting social cohesion and diversity, and appealing to the human need for belonging."

events to express pride in the community's cultural diversity and arts *and* as important points of social connection "where neighbours meet, new connections are made and people are able to express themselves" (p. 14). (The remaining social priorities are: social cohesion, social inclusion, civic empowerment and lifelong learning.)

Ottawa-Gatineau Region, Ontario/Quebec (population 1,130,000) – The *Choosing our Future* initiative (in process[8]) is comprehensive and inclusive of culture, with cultural considerations explicit and prominent. One of six overarching principles is *Diversity and Creativity*: "We recognize the inherent value of every person and the value of diverse perspectives. We will support opportunities for all residents to lead healthy, creative, and fulfilled lives."[9] One of its 12 sustainability goals is *Culture and Identity*: "Ethnic diversity, artistic expression, and distinctive cultural heritage are supported and valued, contributing to a strong sense of place, identity, inclusivity and meaning. The culture of the region reflects a strong ethic of community and sustainability." A Foundation Paper on *Culture and Identity* defines culture in two related and mutually reinforcing ways: (1) small-c *culture*, relating to "the set of shared behaviours, goals, and attitudes that are manifested in a group ... [and] form the

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[8] As of 2011, the initial three phases of the initiative (Defining Sustainability Challenge, Establishing Vision, and Understanding Options) are complete, Phase 4 (Choosing Path Forward) is underway, and Phase 5 (Creating Plan for Action) will occur soon.

[9] Quotes from the *Choosing our Future* website: www.choosingourfuture.ca

basis for how we, as members of a society, make sense of the world" and (2) big-C *Culture*, which relates to "symbols and forms of creative expression ... the tangible products of culture, ... often referred to as 'arts and heritage'" (p. 4). Both definitions emphasize holistic perspectives and processes with regard to tangible products, art forms and underlying infrastructure. The document also addresses aspects of cultural identity of place.

Due to the influence of intermunicipal networks that facilitate and encourage learning from one another's experiences, these types of bottom-up conceptual contributions should be influential in helping shape the next wave of ICSPs and similar plans. They may also inform the next wave of provincial and national guides for municipalities, when/if these are redeveloped.

3.5. Analysis of governance, implementation and the cultural dimension in ICSP guides

Although most guides are vague about conceptual aspects, they tend to be clearer about mechanisms to integrate culture into sustainability plans, policies and processes. The majority of suggestions about governance mechanisms concern the *public engagement process* used to scope, vision and explore community sustainability issues. Almost all guides explicitly state that cultural representatives and issues should be part of the public consultation and

engagement process – [NS1], for example, explains that this is important "to gain broader understanding of the values that have weight in the community – in other words what should be protected and preserved in the culture" (p. 5).

Only a few guides [Natural Step, Sustainable Cities+, YK1, YK2, NF1, NF2, QC] mention including cultural considerations in the community's *vision statement* and *sustainability principles.* This high-level component frames and guides the more detailed aspects of the plan, yet cultural considerations are overlooked in most jurisdictions.

From a more detailed perspective, the need for *checklists* of sustainability goals incorporating cultural elements such as "heritage buildings preserved" are frequently mentioned. [NV1] and [NV2] suggest that community overviews and inventories include cultural services. Inventories, together with heritage designation powers, policies protecting cultural property and Heritage Advisory Committees, are suggested as tools to further community sustainability by retaining and enhancing heritage buildings and streetscapes ([NS1], [QC]).

Most guides lack advice on the *implementation and evaluation* of culture within the sustainability planning cycle, reflecting, perhaps, the conceptual vagueness about what might be measured or tracked.

3.6. Analysis of selected ISCPs – Governance leaders at the local level

The review of ICSPs indicates that many communities are enthusiastically adopting various techniques to involve citizens in discussions of sustainability – a key aspect of governance for sustainable communities. A few communities are also experimenting with a variety of planning processes to include culture within municipal and community systems. Two examples are Calgary, Alberta, and Port Moody, British Columbia.

Calgary, Alberta (population 1,065,000) – an example of public involvement. Calgary residents were asked to help develop a 100-year sustainability vision for the city by answering five questions: (1) What do you value about Calgary?, (2) What is it like for you to live here?, (3) What changes would you most like to see?, (4) What are your hopes and dreams for the next 100 years? and (5) How can you make this happen? Over a period of eight months, 18,000 people responded to these questions (in nine languages) at the imagineCALGARY website and at booths at over 300 festivals and community events. In addition, over 40 youth volunteers interviewed 150 community leaders and visioning sessions were held with over 60 groups from a range of diverse communities and with 70 youth groups. Other citizen engagement mechanisms included a Mayor's Panel on Urban Sustainability, the imagineCALGARY Round Table (consisting of citizens from all sectors of society) and imagineCALGARY Working Groups of experts on community

systems. In the final documents, culture is linked to fostering *creativity and* is subsumed within the social and, to a lesser extent, economic systems (*imagineCALGARY* 2006).

Port Moody, British Columbia (population 33,000) – an example of sustainability checklists. As a means to distinguish the community from neighbouring municipalities in the region Port Moody branded itself "City of the Arts" in 2001, backed by a series of cultural and economic development strategic plans. Instead of a high-level ICSP, the City developed a Sustainability Checklist to assess new development proposals. The Checklist guides the City's planning department and private developers to incorporate "sustainable elements, including cultural vitality," into future projects: "Based on a four-pillar model of sustainability, applicants outline how their development meets environmental, economic, social and cultural goals.... From revitalizing heritage buildings to incorporating public art, the cultural pillar pushes developers to think about the 'City of the Arts'" (Port Moody 2009a, no page). The cultural section of the Checklist includes items referencing street and neighbourhood character; design elements and public art promoting community values, identity and its multicultural nature; opportunities for cultural awareness and exchange; "flexible creative space for residents to work" (Port Moody 2009b, p. 15); sensitive heritage revitalization; outstanding architectural design; and

promotion and contribution to the community's "City of the Arts" reputation. More recently, the City of Kelowna has also developed a sustainable development checklist with a cultural component (Stanborough 2011).

4. Culture, sustainability, and ICSPs – a preliminary assessment

4.1 Culture and a new narrative of sustainability

Culture's inclusion in sustainability discussions can be viewed as an attempt to repair the rupture that occurred during the Enlightenment, when nature and society were separated within a capitalist modernity. The ICSP process, in part, represents both a conceptual effort to reintegrate a holistic view of community into planning processes and a governance effort to return some power back to local residents through direct participation.

ICSPs encourage an explicit consideration of culture as part of public sustainability discussions and community planning. However, the role of culture is still uncertain and community dialogues do not always result in new community narratives, linguistic frames, or governance mechanisms that integrate cultural resources into broader plans. This study suggests that thinking about culture in a community sustainability context is emergent, and that the linguistic frames used by both experts and planners do not discuss resiliency

and change, nor the need for a systems approach that links past, present and future.

The use of cultural narrative as a discursive lens on nature and sustainability is a neglected element within the ICSP initiative. Our research suggests that more consideration should be given to the unique role that cultural creators can play in developing new visions, linguistic frames and narratives of sustainability at the local level. Cultural change occurs when we think and speak differently and, as we have noted, linguistic framing should be added to the array of heuristic ‘truth machines’ – analysis, participation and managerial methods – that have been identified by others as necessary to untangle the complexities of sustainability.

The examples cited indicate that some communities are beginning to, as Princen puts it, “speak differently” about sustainability using a linguistic frame that integrates culture into the discourse. As Sneddon et al. (2006) note, sustainability, by its nature and to be successful, must embrace a plurality of approaches and perspectives, accept multiple interpretations and ‘development’ practices, and open up public spaces of exchange. However, the involvement of creators and artists appears to be less widespread in practice. An inclusive and plural vision of sustainability enables locally and culturally particular linguistic frames and expressions to become a significant dimension of these discourses

and potentially inform and inspire innovative ways of living and working in particular environments. However, an openness to these perspectives and knowledges as well as spaces for expression, sharing and dialogue does not always occur. When it does, the result is, as demonstrated in Kingston, Powell River and Ottawa-Gatineau, an ICSP that looks at sustainability in a comprehensive and compelling way.

While the explicit adoption of a four-pillar model of sustainability has been a major step toward an integrated approach, its contribution to a more holistic understanding of the place of culture in sustainable development is less clear. This research suggests that while the inclusion of culture within city planning is gradually advancing, *integration* of cultural considerations within a holistic sustainability planning paradigm has not yet been achieved. In this regard, 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 sustainability plans.

4.2 Culture, governance, and community sustainability

One of the governance challenges in any long-term transition to sustainable development is that of steering an interactive and reflexive process of debate and dialogue across a multitude of actors and systems. This "reconstructive

exercise” is dependent upon notions of citizenship, participation and deliberative democracy, and the presence of forums in which negotiations and discussions can take place (Sneddon 2006). Although framed by a national initiative, in Canada these forums have been constructed by local governments, which have taken the lead in seeking new approaches to incorporate culture into sustainability planning. Despite the complexity and contested nature of sustainability goals, in many locales the ICSP governance exercise has succeeded in bringing together diverse knowledge, perspectives and actors to envision and plan a more sustainable community.

ICSPs provide a long-term, ‘joined up’ planning framework for a community to envision and decide on strategic directions for its development, an approach that aims to both *reflect* and *integrate* four dimensions of sustainability: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity and cultural vitality. In the context of limited conceptual guidance from the ICSP guides and flexibility in the development of the documents, our review of ICSPs reveals a diversity and richness of grassroots approaches emerging through local processes. It also reveals, however, a second governance challenge: a pervasive difficulty to think in holistic, cyclical ways and to resist the organizational tendency to silo and divide.

From a planning perspective, while we found several exemplary governance/operational innovations, the degree to which culture is integrated within them varies widely, reflecting the generally vague and fractured inclusion of culture in public sustainability discourse and the lack of conceptual guidance discussed previously. Despite the general willingness to include culture as part of the ICSP *development* phase, our review found that ICSP *action plans* prioritize environmental/infrastructure investments and economic development strategies, especially related to tourism. Moreover, most documents do not explicitly discuss how the various elements of governance – hierarchies, markets and networks – could work together to incorporate culture within a vision of sustainability.

In general, concrete actions seem disconnected from holistic definitions of sustainability or cultural sustainability, the action plans do not prioritize cultural items, and culture-related items within economic and social sustainability contexts appear to be ‘minor’ suggestions. When overall ICSP implementation schedules are provided, actions on the cultural component are usually delayed. In many small communities, culture-specific actions seem rudimentary and preliminary, often focusing on developing inventories of heritage and arts resources and public awareness-raising. Further, the culture-related visions and

plans resulting from the ICSP process often seem ‘moderated’ by limited municipal resources and action commitments.

Lack of integration with other domains is both a conceptual and an operational issue, requiring ‘solutions’ addressing both areas. On the conceptual side, further research attention to the cultural dimensions of sustainability and sustainable development is needed, together with the development of bridges linking the research literature to policy and practice to help frame these public discussions and plans. On the pragmatic side, more holistic planning tools, frameworks and organizational structures would help facilitate cross-departmental/professional field dialogue, planning collaborations and implementation practices. Both cultural planning and transition management, as noted in sub-section 2.3, are promising techniques for fostering the dialogue, strategic thinking and experiential learning needed to move toward more sustainable communities. Based on our analysis, we suggest that these techniques will have to be supplemented by closer attention to cultural indicators, based on community priorities, to help monitor progress to a sustainable future.

Thinking of culture in terms of *development* is itself a fairly recent concept. It is therefore not surprising that thinking about it in terms of *sustainable development* is an even more daunting conceptual leap. Nevertheless, we are

convinced that it is a leap worth taking and are hopeful that the ICSP process will move Canada toward a more robust understanding of the relationship among the various pillars of sustainability and a more robust set of planning tools to integrate culture into a community's vision for sustainability.

Notes on contributors

Dr. Nancy Duxbury is a senior researcher and co-coordinator of the Cities, Cultures and Architecture research group of the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra. She is chair of the working group on policies within the European COST Action project on 'Investigating Cultural Sustainability' and lead researcher in the project 'Culture in Sustainable Communities: Improving the Integration of Culture in Community Sustainability Policy and Planning in Canada and Europe', funded by the Government of Canada. She is also an adjunct professor of the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her current research focuses on culture and sustainable development, cultural planning and policy, and the integration of cultural considerations within broader planning initiatives.

M. Sharon Jeannotte is a research fellow and expert in cultural policy. Her recent research has focused on social cohesion as a horizontal public policy issue affecting Canadian society and the intersections between culture and sustainability in planning and policy, with particular attention to the inclusion of culture in Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans. She has published research on a variety of subjects, including the impact of value change on Canadian society, international definitions of social cohesion, the points of intersection between cultural policy and social cohesion, the role of cultural participation and cultural capital in

building sustainable communities, culture and volunteering, and immigration and cultural citizenship.

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