

# Culture, Society, and Praxis

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## Sustainability

Culture, Society and Praxis

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## In This Issue

*Sustainability – The concept of alienation is often related to Marxist theory, but the historical record enable us to trace it back to the teachings of Agustin, Seneca, and of course the Greeks. It is a concept that for the most part relates to the idea of something that has been separated from its very nature or meaning.*

If the permanence of life is ultimately and fundamentally our nature, we can talk about our time as a time of alienation as actions driven by need, or will, greed or relentless pursuit of profit has driven our relation with our environment to an unstable and unsustainable state. In light of this, the reflection about the environment in the last few years has moved from a romanticized perspective of the few who wish for Eden on earth into a major most important concern for the survival of our species in all corners of the planet. The images of reckless destruction and misuse of resources multiply: conspicuous consumption, waste and pollution of non-renewable resources, encroachment of agricultural land, uneven demographic growth, endangerment of biogenetic diversity. On the other hand we are also witnessing like never before the creation of new technologies and processes that bring solutions to many of these problems: new energy technologies, advances in genetics, a slow but steady decline in growth and fertility rates. The question remains as to whether destiny will reach us before we can strike the balance, keeping us from the alienation inherent in the irrational and obstinate use and misuse of the resources of the planet. In this sense, there is an inescapable moral dimension to the issue of environmental balance. Environmental Justice, the fundamental human dimension of natural

resources management, permeates as a key commonality in the reflections included in this issue.

We dedicate this issue to the reflection on sustainability. The word sustainability itself has different sometimes paradoxically opposed meanings. Sustainability urges conservation, while the prevalent economic systems reward utilization and transformation. The word sustainability implies global responsibility while societies continue entrenched in local and national views of use of resources. These articles are a reflection from young scholars as they explore some of the salient issues of concern at different levels such as housing, agriculture, community and human organization. The reflection goes from the local to the global and back, and it is ultimately narrated in the conversation that was generated around this issue and captured in the proceedings of the **CSUMB Community Sustainability Colloquium** also included in this issue. The colloquium takes us from the reflection about critical issues on sustainability into local action.

We asked young artists to express the concept of sustainability. The submissions for this issue were phenomenal, and the selection committee had a difficult time making a final decision.

The selection of the committee was for a piece called *Beginning and*

*End* by Anna Falcon, that explored the intricate web of feelings and ideas around sustainability. The piece juxtaposes a dramatic human figure assailed by the massive structure of a derelict building. As we see the transformation of the former Fort Ord and its old buildings giving way to a new and vibrant institution. We carefully chose our words and actions as we modify the grounds of the old Fort under the watchful eye of the Reuse Authority. At the same time we feel strongly motivated to create a new place where

waste and hazard are no longer something deemed necessary, and while we try and accomplish a global view of our local space, framed in the concepts of social responsibility and environmental justice. We dedicate, hence, this issue to those who are investing so much of their time and energy to the recreation, literally the rebirth of this incredible patch of the Central Californian Coast. Certainly, and incredible patch of the tapestry of our planet.