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The Importance of Cultural Capital in Expanding Personal and National Wellbeing

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Policy makers wanting to expand personal and national wellbeing are paying attention to cultural values associated with diverse communities in their countries. New Zealand is currently developing its national wellbeing policy framework, known as the Living Standards Framework. The first section of the paper explains what is meant by a wellbeing framework drawing on the influential model produced by the OECD. The second section considers the concept of *cultural capital* in such a framework. The third section applies that concept to New Zealand in the context of a recent report that recommends against including cultural capital in the Living Standards Framework. The paper finishes with a brief conclusion that argues for the importance of cultural capital in expanding personal and national wellbeing.

Keywords: Wellbeing, cultural capital, inter-cultural exchange
JEL Codes: I31, Z10, Z18

Introduction

It is an honor to contribute this research article to the Festschrift for Professor Michio Yamaoka. Professor Yamaoka is a distinguished scholar in several fields of economics, but this article pays tribute to his enthusiastic support for inter-cultural exchange among countries, particularly between Japan and New Zealand. Professor Yamaoka is a leader in the Japan Society for New Zealand Studies, for example, having served on its Executive Board since 2001 and accepting the position of President between 2008 and 2012, and again since 2014. I recall Professor Yamaoka's success in organizing the International Symposium on *The Roles of New Zealand and Japan in the Asia-Pacific: From Standpoints of Security, Economy and Cultural Exchange* at Waseda University, 14–15 September 2008 (see his opening remarks in Yamaoka, 2009), which I was privileged to attend (Dalziel, Maclean and Saunders, 2009). I also recall his kind invitation to address the annual meeting of the Japan Society for New Zealand Studies, hosted by the New Zealand Embassy in Tokyo on 21 June 2014. On that occasion, I was very pleased to acknowledge the assistance that Japanese rescue workers had provided to my home city of Christchurch after the devastating earthquake of 22 February 2011 (Dalziel, 2014).

In 2018, issues around inter-cultural exchange between citizens of different countries are more important than ever. Modern communication technologies and global travel patterns mean that diverse intercultural experiences are accessible to large numbers of people, but the global human community is also grappling with the consequences of large-scale movements of migrants and refugees

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across international borders as well as attempting to resolve some bitter cultural conflicts between, and within, countries. In that context, policy makers wanting to expand personal and national wellbeing are paying attention to cultural values associated with diverse communities in their countries.

New Zealand is an interesting example. Its founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, was an agreement between Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom and the Native Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand signed on 6 February 1840. For more than a century after that date, the New Zealand Government failed to honor commitments made by the Crown in the Treaty. This was reflected in major reductions in land ownership by Māori tribes, from 66.4 million acres in 1840 to just 3.0 million acres in 1975 (Asher and Naulls, 1987, Appendix, pp. 97–101). This began to change after the Māori Land March, led by 79 year-old elder, Whina Cooper, walked the length of the North Island in 1975 to insist that 'not one more acre of Māori land' would be alienated (Walker, 1992, pp. 512–513; Dalziel, Matunga and Saunders, 2006). Parliament passed the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 to create a Tribunal empowered to consider historical grievances by Māori about prejudicial behavior by the Crown. For the last 40 years, successive governments have been required to give explicit attention to Māori values in creating and implementing policy, a practice that is typically termed *biculturalism* (Hayward, 2012).

New Zealand is also a country that continues to accept high levels of migration (Fry and Glass, 2016; Fry and Wilson, 2018). In the 2013 population census, for example, just over one-quarter (25.2 per cent) of people normally resident in New Zealand reported they had been born overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p. 19). The percentage of the population self-identifying in the 2013 census as Asian was 11.8 per cent, while those self-identifying as belonging to Pacific peoples was 7.4 per cent. Consequently, policy in New Zealand has been required to pay attention to diverse cultural values of migrant communities, a practice that is typically termed *multiculturalism* (Singham, 2006).

Reflecting on these features, a recent report commissioned by the New Zealand Treasury accurately observed (Smith, 2018, p. 14): "As both a bicultural country (reflecting the Treaty of Waitangi) and a multicultural country (with an immigrant background), issues of culture, belonging and identity are of fundamental importance if a wellbeing framework is to work in New Zealand." That observation is the motivation for this article. The first section explains what is meant by a wellbeing framework drawing on the author's recent research on wellbeing economics (Dalziel and Saunders, 2014; Dalziel, Saunders and Saunders, 2018). The second section then considers the concept of *cultural capital* that was the subject of the paper presented by Dalziel, Maclean and Saunders (2009) to the International Symposium convened by Professor Michio Yamaoka, mentioned above. This revisit is important because the report by Smith (2018, p. 15) explicitly recommends against including cultural capital in the New Zealand Treasury's wellbeing framework. That recommendation is considered in the third section below. The paper finishes with a brief conclusion that argues for the importance of cultural capital in expanding personal and national wellbeing.

1. National Wellbeing Frameworks

The first explicit wellbeing framework created for national policy advice was developed in Australia by its Treasury (Treasury, 2004; Henry, 2006; Gorecki and Kelly, 2012). For many years, the mission of the Australian Treasury had been, and continues to be, "to improve the wellbeing of the Australian people" through some specific responsibilities (see, for example, Treasury, 2003, p. 7). Consistent with that mission, the Treasury developed a wellbeing framework that focused on five dimensions contributing to wellbeing (Treasury, 2004, p. 2):

(i) the level of opportunity and freedom that people enjoy;
(ii) the level of consumption possibilities;
(iii) the distribution of those consumption possibilities;
(iv) the level of risk that people are required to bear; and
(v) the level of complexity that people are required to deal with.

Internationally, the move towards wellbeing frameworks accelerated in 2008, when the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, created a commission headed by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi to examine the measurement of economic performance and social progress. The Commission's report was published the following year. It described its unifying theme in the following terms: "the time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being" (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009, p. 12). That report was enormously influential, and many countries subsequently launched programs to create national wellbeing frameworks.

In the United Kingdom, for example, the British Government launched its Measuring National Wellbeing program on 25 November 2010. Italy similarly launched its *benessere equo e sostenibile* program in the same year, involving multi-dimensional measures of equitable and sustainable wellbeing. The German Parliament created an Enquete Commission on *Growth*, *Prosperity and Quality of Life* in 2011, which developed a set of broad indicators to measure and monitor social wealth and wellbeing. That exercise was followed by a six-month National Dialogue in 2015 on *Wellbeing in Germany – what matters to us*, which resulted in a wellbeing framework comprised of 12 dimensions supported by 46 statistical indicators and two placeholders where suitable statistics do not yet exist (Federal Government of Germany, 2017). The 12 dimensions in the German wellbeing framework are (idem, pp. 16–17):

- Healthy throughout life;
- Good work and equitable participation;
- Equal educational opportunities for all;
- Having time for family and work;
- A secure income;
- Living a life in security and freedom;
- At home in urban and rural areas;

・Standing together in family and society;
・Strengthening the economy, investing in the future;
・Preserving nature, protecting the environment;
・Living freely and equal before the law;
・Acting with global responsibility and securing peace.

Another influential program has been the Better Life Index created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; see www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/). Figure 1 reproduces the OECD wellbeing framework developed for the index, which has three key features. First, it identifies factors related to material conditions that are important for current wellbeing. These factors are related to the traditional focus of economic policy on gross domestic product: income and wealth; jobs and earnings; and housing. Second, the framework adds eight further factors relating to a person's quality of life: health status; work-life balance; education and skills; social connections; civic engagement and governance; environmental quality; personal security; and subjective well-being. The OECD reports regularly on trends in all eleven indicators, including commentaries on differences between countries and among different groups within each country (see OECD, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017).

The third feature of the OECD framework is emphasis on the need to monitor resources required for future wellbeing. This recognizes that sustained wellbeing requires certain capital stocks to be preserved. The OECD lists four types of capital stock in Figure 1. Natural capital refers to the state of the environment and its ability to sustain human experiences of wellbeing. Human capital refers to education, experience and good health that are needed to sustain a person's capability for wellbeing. Economic capital refers to produced assets like buildings, machinery, vehicles and the like, as well as

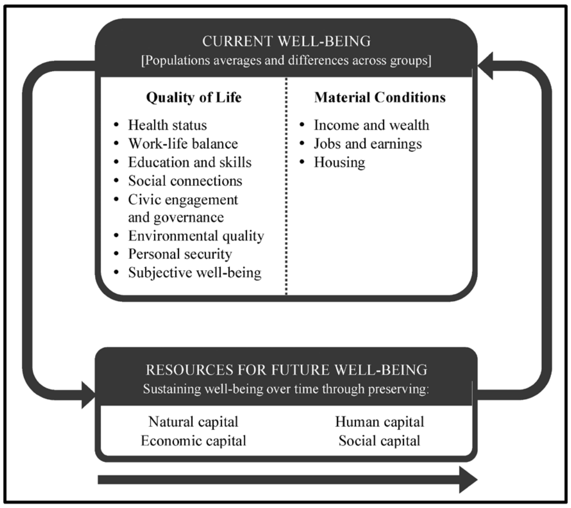

Figure 1. The OECD well-being framework
Source: OECD (2017, Figure 1.1, p. 22).

financial assets like bonds, shares and other forms of savings. Social capital refers to the networks and shared norms that facilitate collaboration for wellbeing within and between community groups.

The OECD wellbeing framework has been influential in New Zealand. A recent overview of Treasury's Living Standards Framework (LSF), for example, explains that the OECD Better Life Index was the starting point of the Treasury's analysis of current wellbeing in New Zealand (Burton, Morrissey and Ng, 2017, p. 4), although further work has subsequently recommended that cultural identity should be added to the OECD domains of current wellbeing to reflect New Zealand values (King, Huseynli and MacGibbon, 2018; Smith, 2018), as discussed later in this paper. The LSF also incorporates the OECD distinction between current wellbeing and the need to invest in the four capital stocks for future wellbeing, since "intergenerational wellbeing depends on the sustainable growth and distribution of the four capitals, which together represent the comprehensive wealth of New Zealand" (idem, p. 2). This was elaborated in a later Treasury discussion paper (Frieling, 2018b, p. 1):

> The work on current wellbeing captures people's quality of life and their ability to live a life they have reason to value in the present. It covers a wide range of financial and non-financial wellbeing outcomes, such as jobs, income and wealth, health and education outcomes, social connections and environmental quality. In contrast, the four capitals represent the key productive resources that are required to "produce" human wellbeing. The four capital stocks thereby focus our attention on our ability to sustain current wellbeing levels into the future, emphasising the Treasury's longer-term perspective on managing New Zealand's assets.

The distinction between current wellbeing and resources for future wellbeing is important for the Treasury's policy advice: "The underlying principle of the capitals framework is that good public policy enhances the capacity of natural, social, human and financial/physical capital to improve wellbeing for New Zealanders" (ibid). This principle has implications, however, if cultural identity is added as a significant domain of current wellbeing. In particular, it raises the possibility that the framework of four capitals should be extended to include *cultural capital* as a fifth capital stock. This possibility was recognized by Frieling (2018a, footnote 1, p. 1), who commented: "The overarching question about where cultural capital is best placed within the Treasury Capitals framework (i.e., as a separate capital or integrated across the other four capitals), is currently left unanswered and requires further work" (ibid). The following section therefore draws on previous analysis by the author to explain the connection between cultural capital and wellbeing.

2. Cultural Capital and Wellbeing

The use of the metaphor 'capital' in modern economic analysis began with the concept of 'physical capital' to describe produced assets such as buildings, machinery, vehicles, roads and communications infrastructure that expand a country's capacity for production. This concept entered into mathematical modelling of production through contributions by Harrod (1939), Domar (1946), Swan (1956) and Solow (1956). Sixty years later, it is easy to forget how contested some of these early developments were (see, for example, the surveys by Harcourt, 1972, and Stiglitz, 1974, of the capital controversies in the 1960s). This is because Solow (1956) has come to be "among the most influential and revered articles in economic theory" (McAdam and Allsopp, 2007, p. 1). It introduced the neoclassical growth model into the literature, demonstrating that an economy's average living standards is influenced by the proportion of its production that is devoted to physical capital rather than to consumption goods and services.

Since then, scholars have used the capital metaphor to describe other long-lasting assets that expand a country's productive capacity. An early example was the analysis of Mincer (1958), Shultz (1960, 1961) and Becker (1962, 1964) which introduced the term 'human capital' to recognize that participation in formal education can produce skills that increase labor productivity. Knowles and Owen (1995) added that investment in improved health also enhances human capital. Coleman (1986) introduced the idea that 'social capital' influences the creation of human capital, where social capital can be defined as "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (OECD, 2001, p. 41). Schumacher (1973, p. 2) was among the first to use the term 'natural capital' to describe the importance of the natural environment in sustaining economic production. This concept continues to be used in economic analysis (Jansson *et al.*, 1994; Cochrane, 2006; Helm, 2015), although there are criticisms of this practice (Batavia and Nelson, 2017; Piccolo, 2017).

This literature has given rise to the four capitals that have become standard in wellbeing conceptual frameworks such as the OECD (2017) model reproduced in Figure 1 above. Economic capital is used to describe physical capital as well as its ownership in the form of financial capital, with attention paid also to human capital, social capital and natural capital.

The literature has proposed a fifth type of capital known as *cultural capital*. Pierre Bourdieu (1973, 1983) introduced this term to counter what he saw as weaknesses in the concept of human capital. In particular, Bourdieu disagreed with the emphasis in human capital theory on differences in innate aptitude, arguing instead that children arrive at their first day of school with different levels of "cultural capital previously invested by the family" (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 244). Thus, cultural capital is fundamentally embodied in individuals who must invest time and effort in accumulating it, beginning in their family setting. The formation of cultural capital in a young person therefore depends on the cultural and economic capital already possessed by the parents (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 25). It also depends on access to 'objectified cultural capital', which refers to material objects such as historical sites, heritage buildings, cultural artefacts, writings, paintings and the like (Klamer, 1996; Hutter and Throsby, 2008; Peacock and Rizzo, 2008).

Economists have generally not adopted cultural capital as an important concept, with the notable exception of David Throsby (1995, 1999, 2001, 2011, 2014). Throsby defines cultural capital as having two components (Throsby, 1995, p. 202):

> The first is a specific interpretation of culture as a set of activities, including all those activities undertaken within … the so-called "cultural industries" …. The second interpretation of culture is what might be termed an anthropological or sociological view, where culture is seen as a set of attitudes, practices and beliefs that are fundamental to the functioning of different societies. Culture in this sense is expressed in a particular society's values and customs, which evolve over time as they are transmitted from one generation to another.

Thus, like Bourdieu, Throsby observes that cultural capital is transmitted across generations, but also recognizes that it evolves over time. A New Zealand economist, Anne de Bruin (1998, 1999), refers back to Bourdieu in arguing that a failure to include cultural capital in analyses of human capital disadvantages people in ethnic communities outside the dominant cultural group. She uses cultural capital to signify "particular kinds of knowledge, social styles, talent and abilities" within a particular ethnic group, acquired in its embodied form "over time and/or through the socialization process" (de Bruin, 1998, p. 169). Another economists, Arjo Klamer (2002, p. 467) defines cultural capital as the capacity to inspire and be inspired: "Immeasurable as it is, cultural capital appears to generate the most important values of all, the values that can give meaning to our life".

Reflecting on these sources, Dalziel, Saunders, Fyfe and Newton (2009) argued that there is a logical distinction between social capital (built on networks within a generation and the norms and values that bind current communities together) and cultural capital (built on relationships, norms and values that pass through generations). This cultural capital is by no means static – to the contrary, each generation adapts and extends the cultural heritage it receives from the previous generation, and seeks to pass it on, transformed, to the next generation). Indeed, this transformation is a reflection of a community's cultural vitality. Further, cultural capital can be used by a dominant social group to sustain injustice against other social groups (including by men against women; see Mackenzie, 2007, and Dalziel, Saunders and Saunders, 2018, chapters 2 and 3). Thus, cultural capital must continuously evolve in pluralist societies. These considerations led Dalziel, Saunders, Fyfe and Newton (2009, p. 19) to the following definition:

> Cultural capital is a community's embodied cultural skills and values, in all their community-defined forms, inherited from the community's previous generation, undergoing adaptation and extension by current members of the community, and desired by the community to be passed on to its next generation.

Note the importance of the word *community*, which appears five times in the definition. This was a major theme of Dalziel, Maclean and Saunders (2009), where we recognized that "the use of cultural capital for economic benefit may damage cultural well-being if the cultural capital is not kept connected to its cultural context" (idem, p. 1); that is, if the use of cultural capital is not recognized as authentic in the eyes of its community. This has implications for the inclusion of cultural capital in a national wellbeing framework.

3. Cultural Capital in the New Zealand Wellbeing Framework

Recall that the LSF is based on the OECD wellbeing framework in Figure 1 above, which makes a distinction between domains of current wellbeing and resources for sustaining future wellbeing. The Treasury recognizes that wellbeing is closely linked to culture and so it "has further work underway on the topic of culture to help clarify the key components of culture that are particularly relevant to individual and societal wellbeing" (Frieling, 2018b, p. 2). As an earlier Treasury discussion paper observed (King, Huseynli and MacGibbon, 2018, p. 6):

> Cultural identity is an important contributor to people's wellbeing. Identifying with a particular culture helps people feel they belong and gives them a sense of security. An established cultural identity has also been linked with positive outcomes in areas such as health and education. It provides access to social networks, which provide support and shared values and aspirations.

This was a quote from the Ministry of Social Development's *Social Report 2016* (see MSD, 2016, p. 175), which presents statistical indicators within a framework of 10 wellbeing domains that contribute to social wellbeing (idem, Appendix 1). Cultural identity is one of those domains. Several papers on the Living Standards Framework have supported that practice (Ng, 2017, slide 7; King, Huseynli and MacGibbon, 2018, p. 9; Frieling, 2018b, pp. 2–3; Smith, 2018, p. 15). The practice is also consistent with research by the Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit on the importance of cultural well-being in New Zealand policy frameworks (Dalziel, Matunga and Saunders, 2006; Dalziel, Maclean and Saunders, 2009; Dalziel and Saunders, 2014, pp. 45–49).

If *cultural identity* as accepted as a domain of wellbeing, however, it is reasonable to ask whether *cultural capital* should be integrated into a national wellbeing framework as a fifth capital alongside human, economic, social and natural capital (Frieling, 2018a, footnote 1, p. 1). This is advocated by Dalziel, Saunders and Saunders (2018, chapter 3), but is not accepted in Treasury reports on the LSF. Burton, Morrissey and Ng (2017, p. 5), for example, propose that "the closest highest-level capital [to cultural identity] is probably social capital". Consistent with that proposal, a Treasury Discussion Paper on the role of culture in the Treasury's Living Standards Framework (Frieling, 2018b) makes no reference to the term "cultural capital". Instead, culture is considered in a Treasury discussion paper on the value of social capital by the same author (Frieling, 2018a). That paper draws its definition of culture from King and Waldegrave (2003, p. 13): "Culture embodies the conceptual and normative framework within which the members of a particular society, community, or other social grouping, are socialized, live, enter into relationships, think, communicate, and assign meaning to objects, events, and their very existence". The discussion paper continues (Frieling, 2018a, p. 13):

> Social norms, the ways in which people connect, and the types of social networks that they form, are strongly anchored into these cultural backgrounds. Different cultures will emphasise different norms and values among their members. Cultures influence our family structures, expectations about the social roles that we play, what we see as the role of government, the amount of favours and support we can legitimately ask from our community and so on.

The Treasury has prepared short descriptions of each of the four capitals in its LSF. This explains that social capital "describes the norms and values that underpin society" (Ng, 2017, slide 4), which "includes things like trust, the rule of law, the Crown-Māori relationship, *cultural identity*, and the connections between people and communities" (ibid, emphasis added). Thus, the same term 'cultural identity' is used twice within the LSF: to describe one of its key domains of current wellbeing; and as a key contributor to the social capital needed to sustain future wellbeing.

This approach contains an important insight – that cultural identity is important not only for current wellbeing, but also for future wellbeing. The paper cited above by King and Waldegrave (2003, p. 13), for example, pays attention to the ongoing impact of colonial programs and practices on the cultural frameworks of Māori and Pacific peoples, causing considerable stress and modification. In this approach, culture is treated as part of the *context* within which different types of capital accumulate over time. This is the approach recommended by Smith (2018, p. 15) in his report on a Treasury Living Standards Dashboard:

> …culture may have an important role both as a driver of the accumulation of capital stocks and as an important factor shaping current wellbeing. In particular, it is clear that culture is fundamental in the transmission of human and social capital between generations. Because of this, culture is one of the key contextual factors affecting the Living Standards Framework, and represents an important area to understand better.

Smith recognizes that an alternative approach could include cultural capital as a capital stock within the framework. He cites (ibid) a truncated version of the definition of cultural capital given in Dalziel and Saunders (2009, p. 19, cited at the end of Section 2 above) as follows: "cultural skills and values … inherited from the previous generation". This leaves out all references to community and also omits the process of adapting and extending cultural capital by a community's current generation. Smith offers three arguments in support of his recommendation not to include cultural capital in the LSF:

- It is not clear how cultural capital can be distinguished meaningfully from human capital and social capital, raising the issue of double counting;

- The originator of the term primarily saw cultural capital as a positional good, rather than as a productive asset (citing Bourdieu, 1989); and
- Cultural capital often appears to be used to mean human and social capital associated with minority cultures, and so the inclusion of cultural capital might become a way to ghettoize minority cultural issues within the LSF.

These arguments are not convincing. First, while it is true that some care is required to ensure cultural capital is distinguished from human and social capital, this has been well-addressed in the literature, beginning with Bourdieu's (1983) original contribution. Second, the article by Bourdieu (1991) does not separate cultural capital from other forms of capital. To the contrary, *every* reference to cultural capital is associated with a reference to economic capital in the same phrase. To give a representative example, Bourdieu (1991, p. 17) observes: "Thus agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the total volume of their assets."

Finally, Smith (2018, p. 27) correctly observes elsewhere in his report that "it is important to remember that the four capitals fundamentally represent factors of production that are used together to produce wellbeing, rather than each producing a stream of benefits on its own". The way different capitals are interconnected in producing wellbeing means it is no surprise that analysts of the social and human capital of a minority population often pay attention to the minority population's cultural capital. The tragedy occurs when the dominant cultural group analyses its own social and human capital *with no reference to its cultural capital*. Unaware of how its own cultural heritage is influencing social relations and educational institutions, the dominant culture can unconsciously embed institutional racism in the country's policies and practices, causing considerable personal harm and social injustice (Rangihau *et al.*, 2008). The solution is not to remove cultural capital from the discourse; the solution is to include cultural capital with explicit attention paid to the cultural heritage of all cultural groups in the nation.

There are good reasons for considering cultural capital as a key asset for sustaining wellbeing into the future (see Dalziel, Saunders and Saunders, chapter 3). This would recognize that a community's culture is continuously undergoing transformation by each generation, which requires economic and social resources to occur. Thus, culture is not simply the context within which economic and other outcomes occur; cultural capital requires personal and community investment to flourish. This should be recognized in a national wellbeing framework used to guide and evaluate central government policies.

Conclusion

This paper began by recognizing the contribution made by Professor Michio Yamaoka over many decades to cultural exchange between Japan and New Zealand. The paper has proceeded to explain how cultural identity is recognized in New Zealand as an important contributor to personal and national wellbeing. The paper has argued that New Zealand's national wellbeing framework, known as the Living Standards Framework, should explicitly include cultural capital as one of several foundational capital stocks needed to sustain wellbeing into the future. As I and three colleagues argued nearly a decade ago, national wellbeing requires social cohesion, environmental responsibility and economic efficiency, but also requires *cultural vitality*, which can be defined as follows (Dalziel, Saunders, Fyfe and Newton, 2009, p. 21):

> Cultural vitality refers to the way in which communities are able to participate in recreation, creative and other cultural activities, to express and extend the cultural practices and values inherited from previous generations, and to pass on their transformed culture to the next generation.

Professor Michio Yamaoka has shown us through his example and through his scholarship how inter-cultural exchange can contribute to cultural vitality, and so enhance national wellbeing. I hope that future generations of scholars and policy advisors will continue to expand our understanding of important links between culture and national wellbeing.

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