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# CULTURE IN SUSTAINABILITY

Towards a Transdisciplinary Approach

[SoPHI]

CULTURE IN SUSTAINABILITY  
*TOWARDS A TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH*

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## INTRODUCTION

Few can have fully foreseen the success of the idea of ‘Sustainable Development’ when it was introduced to a broad global audience in 1987 by the Brundtland report ‘*Our Common Future*’. Almost 30 years later, the idea is still increasingly being presented as a pathway to all that is good and desirable in society, widely adopted and frequently called-in-aid. Sustainability is essentially about the future(s) we want. This brings questions about the possible trajectories for a different future(s) and development of humanity. What can be achieved? How to surmount conflicts among competing values? What kind of political subject could emerge capable of making the decisions needed to ensure a better future? How to initiate and manage the sustainability transformation, both locally and globally?

In order to meet many urgent challenges of the present, new modes of thinking and acting are required. It is increasingly agreed that sustainable development as incremental change is not sufficient, but a fundamental transformation to sustainability that concern the human systems as whole, is needed. This would mean a turning point for the contemporary humanity as a whole - a quest for a paradigm based on the choice of life lived humanly within the planetary boundaries not merely in physical sense, but even more in social, political and spiritual sense. This calls, in turn, for a better understanding of the role of culture in striving towards and achieving sustainability.

## CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Culture has rarely been discussed in the context of sustainability in an explicit way. The mainstream way to explore and implement sustainability has taken place in the framework of ecological, social and economic ‘pillars’ as confirmed at the Johannesburg Summit of 2002. Culture is sometimes mentioned or understood as a part of the social dimension, although social and cultural may capture different aspects in sustainability. Yet, given that many (if not all), of the planet’s environmental problems and, in particular social and economic problems have cultural practices – people and human actions – at their roots. Pathways and solutions are therefore likely to be also fundamentally culturally based. Therefore, existing models of sustainable development forged from economic or environmental concerns are unlikely to be successful without cultural considerations. Furthermore, if culture is not made explicit, discussed and argued over within the sustainability debates, it does not have sufficient power in the decision-making.

Culture is a concept that eludes exhaustive definitions. Also in the context of sustainability, it is important to understand culture as a concept that includes several interconnected, and not exclusionary definitions. Therefore, the search for a new paradigm of culture in sustainability is accompanied by some contradictory flows and shifts in relations of politics, economy and society in the processes of globalization having implications also for science. The understanding and role of culture in sustainability is being shaped by initiatives and practices by science, politics and society, and it offers an open alternative to be further developed for a more sustainable future of humanity. If culture is

included in sustainability discourses, the resulting changes are part of broader ontological and epistemological shifts in the conceptual constitution of society and human-nature relations, and corresponding expressions.

Multiple narratives of culture(s) in sustainability are emerging. Some of them have originated in the humanities and social sciences, philosophy and environmental sciences, while others have emerged from planning practices, policy-making and the arts. The meaning of culture ranges from worldviews to livelihoods and everyday life practices, from natural and cultural heritage to planning and bottom-up initiatives in different spatial contexts and reflect on contemporary sustainability challenges, such as environmental change, economic crises, poverty and human rights. (Soini & Birkeland, 2014)

There is a growing consensus that any single discipline is not able to solve complex and wicked sustainability problems. New knowledge integrating not only theories and methodologies of different disciplines (interdisciplinarity) but also academic and non-academic knowledge (transdisciplinarity) are increasingly sought for. Although inter- and transdisciplinarity potentially offer new understanding of current problems and provide even so far unthinkable solutions, they also require rethinking of the role of science and humanities in the society as well as new competences from researchers. Furthermore, while agreeing with the need of maintaining the pluralism in understanding the role and meaning of culture in sustainability, it might also mean reducing the variety of meanings of both culture and sustainability, in particular for pragmatic reasons and for the policy making purposes.

### COST IS 1007: THREE ROLES OF CULTURE IN SUSTAINABILITY

Investigating Cultural Sustainability (COST IS1007) was a European Union (Horizon 2020) funded research network coordinated by the University of Jyväskylä in 2011-2015. The Action with 80 participants representing 25 European countries and wide range of disciplines explored possible roles and meanings of culture in sustainable development (see Dessein et al., 2015). As a result of the four-year interdisciplinary work, culture was considered to have three different roles, each of them bounded with different approaches to culture and implying interdisciplinary understanding of culture (Soini & Dessein, 2016; Dessein et al., 2015). In the following these approaches are briefly presented below without discussing the different definitions of the concept of culture in detail here.

First, culture can have a supportive and self-promoting role (which we characterise as 'culture in sustainable development'). This already-established approach expands conventional sustainable development discourse by adding culture as a self-standing 4th pillar alongside ecological, social, and economic considerations and imperatives. The second role ('culture for sustainable development'), in turn, offers culture as a more influential force that can operate beyond itself. This moves culture into a framing, contextualising and mediating mode, one that can balance all three of the existing pillars and guide sustainable development between economic, social, and ecological pressures and needs. The third role refers to an even more fundamental role for culture ('culture as sustainable development'). It sees culture as the essential foundation and structure for achieving the aims of sustainable development. In this role it integrates, coordinates and guides all aspects of sustainable action. In all three roles, recognising culture as at the root of all human decisions and actions, and as an overarching concern (even a new paradigm) in sustainable



development thinking, enables culture and sustainability to become mutually intertwined so that the distinctions between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability begin to fade.

The Final Conference of the COST Action “Investigating Cultural Sustainability” in Helsinki, 6-8.5.2015 explored theories and conceptual approaches, policies and governance, and practices and methodologies that explicitly analyse the role(s) of culture(s) in sustainable development. This book is a compilation of the papers presented in the conference. Other work carried out by the network is being published in the book series *Routledge Studies in Culture and Sustainable Development* that was initiated by the COST Action, as well as in special issues of *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (2017) and *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift* (2017).

#### THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The topic of the COST Action as well as the conference was broad, covering numerous disciplines, concepts, expertise, theories and concepts, exactly as it was intended to. Rather than giving a thorough idea of the Action or the conference, this book presents a few, very different perspectives on how the idea of culture in sustainability was interpreted and approached, showing the diversity of the issues that have been discussed and are to be taken into account when talking about culture in sustainability.

The first part of the book is composed by theoretical and conceptual considerations on the relation between culture and sustainable development or sustainability. *Hans Dieleman* invites us to reflect on enchanting sustainability. He argues that sustainability or sustainable development “is as much inside of us as it is outside” because our planet, nature, culture, emotions, intuition, imagination and creativity are our body and “they all shape us to what we are”. He asks for fundamentally different conceptions of development, progress, policy, science, knowledge and life itself. Therefore he discusses number of changes needed when moving from modernity to sustainability. *Philippe Vandebroeck*, also deals with change. He presents change as a morphogenetic process, where culture is playing all three roles also identified by the COST Action: Culture “as a resource and repository, enabler and constrainer, homogenizer and differentiator” and as a necessary element in social learning towards sustainability.

Understanding Cultural Sustainability is a title of the paper authored by *Nathalie Nunes, Hanna Söderström and Sandra Hipke*. They attempt to trace how culture has entered the political and academic discourse of sustainability and what kind of forms and contents it has received. The authors also point out change in the paradigm of sustainable development induced by culture and emphasize the interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and intercultural nature of this field of research. The chapter is a result of a Master’s level online course introduced and arranged by University of Jyväskylä, University of Coimbra and University of Jagellonica during the COST Action, comprised of international workshops, group work and research conducted by the individual students attending to the course.

The second part of the book focuses on policies and practices. The first two chapters deal with urban sustainability from a cultural policy perspective. *Isabel Ferreira and Nancy Duxbury* investigate cultural dynamic and the engagement of citizens and civil society in urban governance processes. Using a case study, a medium-sized city in Portugal, Palmela, the authors reveal that cultural participation can be a powerful driver for individual

and collective capacity to rethink values, norms and behavioral conducts. Culture has a significant role for local values, civic pride and collective memories, and it provides a fundamental way to reconcile tensions and conflicting interests in cities. *Loes Veldpaus and Ana Pereira Roders* in turn analyse urban heritage management in the context of the historic urban landscape. The authors focus on the opportunities and challenges related to integrating heritage policies in sustainable development frameworks and urban policies.

The last chapters of the second part of the book explore how culture is produced and reproduced in different contexts and the concepts and methods that can be used. Using bourdieusian concept of embodied cultural capital as a conceptual and methodological tool *Mari Kivitalo* explores, how culture sustains in an embodied state in place-based practices and mental schemes of people living in rural Finland. In particular she is interested in the meaning of family as social structure in reproduction of place-based cultural trajectories. *Harrison Esam Awuh and Maarten Loopmans* use the photovoice-method to investigate social problems in the Baka communities in Eastern Cameroon. Using this method the authors describe and analyse social problems and challenges the members of the displaced communities identify in their communities.

The third part of the book explores the role of aesthetics and arts bringing in the transdisciplinary as a practice for understanding and promoting sustainability. The first two chapters discuss culture and sustainability from the aesthetic point of view challenging the mainstream economic and technocratic valuations. *Andressa Schröder* argues that values are poorly presented in sustainability discourse and makes an attempt to connect an aesthetic dimension to environmental and sustainability ethics. She introduces some contradictory concepts that strongly influence discussions around sustainability ethics affecting the process of measuring development on economic and technological bases. *Melanie Steinbacher*, in turn, is interested in the limits of the aesthetic valuation of landscape, and in particular, the problems related to the translation of cultural values in market based system. Referring to Luhmann's system theory she argues that the economy and aesthetic values are not congruent: The latter ones are elements of the psychic system and cannot be grasped by the economic system due to translation and communication problems and the use of different terminology and concepts.

The last two chapters focus on agency in cultural sustainability. *Lummina Horlings* reflects on the role of artists and researchers in sustainable place-shaping. She focuses on the meaning of sustainable place-shaping practices, relevance of re-imagining knowledge to create new futures and the individual and collective values of people that play a role in processes of place-shaping and participatory planning. The book ends with the chapter by *Jan van Boeckel*, who discusses a four-stage transdisciplinary process of artful empiricism and improvising on emergent properties - two contrasting modes of seeking understandings of nature through art. The chapter is based on his own field work and artistic workshops.

The field of research in culture and sustainable development is broad and still finding its place in the realm of academic research. This was also proved by the COST Action, by the conference, and it is well illustrated by the chapters of this book. Nevertheless, the above illustrated framework introduced by the COST Action provides a structure for various inter- and transdisciplinary approaches and this book gives some snapshots of the possible ways and approaches, how researchers who engage with this field,

connect their research to the theme while contributing to the shaping of the discourse of culture in sustainability.

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## ENCHANTING SUSTAINABILITY

*From enlightened modernity towards embodiment and planetary consciousness*

### INTRODUCTION: A DIAGNOSTIC OF OUR TIME

At the turn of the millennium, various authors expressed their ideas on the profound changes society is going through, and on the consequences this has for the future. Ervin Laszlo observed that our actual societies are different from the previous ones, as our economic, social and cultural systems have become globally connected with impacts that straddle the entire planet (Manifesto on Planetary Consciousness', Club of Budapest 1996<sup>1</sup>). We have entered the Anthropocene, Crutzen and Stoermer argued, as a stage where humanity has increasing power over and effect on the Earth's carrying capacity and equilibrium, to the extent that we have the potentials to destroy the conditions under which we can survive on this planet (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). We all share a common earthly fate, Morin and Kern (1999) pointed out, and we must put our household affairs in order. We must develop a planetary consciousness and become aware that we all are inhabitants of one, relatively speaking, small planet that is like a living organism, a Gaia, Mother Earth or Pachamama<sup>2</sup>. It is miraculously woven together and functions in astonishing ways, is beautiful yet equally very vulnerable and susceptible to radical changes, like climate change, massive deforestation or genetic modification.

When we have the ability to destroy Earth's carrying capacity and equilibrium, do we not equally have the ability to repair them and put them — and ourselves — back in balance again? I think we should, but this requires fundamental changes, beginning with no less than the rewriting of the basic narrative of mankind. We currently live the narrative of modernity, a powerful narrative that gave us a very promising plot with various appealing storylines. The first one was that of enlightenment telling us that we can emancipate from nature — diseases, crop failures, unpredictability — and master nature through science and technology, thus improving life conditions in unforeseeable ways. The second one was that of capitalism telling us that we as individuals can acquire material wealth and possession in unlimited quantities, and that we in this way collectively contribute to a never-ending process of societal growth and development, in a straight line towards ever more progress. The third one was that of the superiority of scientific knowledge telling us that true and valid knowledge can only be generated using science-based methods and theories, using a language that is unambiguous, free from emotions and preferably mathematical.

The narrative of modernity indeed is appealing but has proven to be largely false. The plot tells us “we can have our cake and eat it too” or, in other words, that we can continue to have a society and economy based on large-scale exploitation of natural and human resources while we equally can have those resources available at all time. More than half a century of environmental politics, development programs and industrial environmental practices however, show the unlikelihood and falsity of this assumption. We need a new narrative of planetary consciousness that, like the one of modernity, should appeal to us offering a promising plot that drives and motivates us, but in a socially and ecologically safe direction. It means writing a narrative with alternative storylines based on fundamentally different notions of what nature is, society, mankind, technology or knowledge and above all, of how all of that is woven together. This is the cultural challenge sustainability presents us with and because of that I look at sustainability, in terms of the concluding report of the EU Cost Action Program “Investigating Cultural Sustainability”, *as* culture and more specifically as the need for a major cultural transformation (Soini et al., 2016) with profound ontological, epistemological and methodological changes.

In this chapter I will analyse the shift away from modernity to planetary consciousness in terms of a number of key changes, more in particular the change towards embodiment, complexity thinking and transdisciplinarity, polyphony and dialogue, and finally arts-based and artful ways of working.

#### TOWARDS A NARRATIVE OF EMBODIMENT AND PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS

The narrative of modernity is intellectually founded on theories and paradigms that have proven to be rather incomplete or obsolete, like Newtonian mechanics and Cartesian rationalism. Newton saw the cosmos as gigantic clockwork characterized by order and determinism, allowing us to conceptually capture it in general theories and mathematical equations. He pictured a disenchanted world where matter and energy exist in a sterile universe freed from chance, subjectivism or consciousness (Iltis, 1973). Descartes taught us to see ourselves as rational beings, freed from nature, separating our bodies from our minds, able to understand the world through taking it apart. In his attempt to create unambiguity and order he created endless amounts of dualities, divides and opposites like humans versus nature, body versus mind, individual versus collectivity, reason versus emotion, etcetera (Iltis, 1973). It resulted in a disjunctive view on reality emphasizing fragmentation rather than connectedness. It equally resulted in a narrative of monophony and monologue where the voice of science prevails and provides us with absolute explanations and truth. Alternative voices — tradition, day-to-day experience, spirituality, aesthetics, emotions — all are seen as inferior sources of knowledge and understanding the world.

These views indeed are rather obsolete today. It is widely acknowledged in the physics community, that there is no fixed order and no sterile cosmos outside of us; it rather is fluctuation, on the quantum level even being fundamentally random and arbitrary. As a consequence, important cornerstones of classical physics need to be rewritten. For the physicists of today, Basarab Nicolescu lays out, matter is not only substance, but is the

complexus “substance-energy-space-time-information” (Nicolescu, 2012: 16). Nature is at once material as well as informational and thus mindful, and cannot be captured in mere mathematical equations. Voices of intention and consciousness should be included in a polyphonic fugue combining science, consciousness, intention, aesthetics and more. Cybernetics tells us that in any system, movements upward — progress, growth, development — are systemically connected with movements downward. A law of nature is that all that goes up inevitably also goes down, and/or creates downward movements in other parts of the system (Meadows and Meadows, 1973). This sharply contrasts with the idea that we can have a perpetual and more or less linear progress upwards, and it contrasts with any notion of sustainable development based upon that idea of progress. Neuroscience is showing us how our mind, body, emotions and intellect are principally entangled and interconnected, with fundamental consequences for understanding how we think, act and are (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991). Quantum physics shows us that the subject-object duality, an essential proposition of traditional sciences, equally needs to be revised. We do not see a reality “out there” that exists independently from us (Heisenberg, 1998). We unconsciously create reality by allocating properties to it that are the fruit of our own embodied, sensorial and cognitive connectedness with the world. Sustainability or sustainable development is not a problem, challenge or field of research outside of us, that we can understand, conceptualize or solve using a toolbox of formal and impersonal methods and techniques, but is as much inside of us as it is outside. It asks for fundamentally different conceptions of development, progress, policy, science, knowledge and life itself.

The narrative of modernity and enlightenment needs to be replaced by a narrative of embodiment and planetary consciousness, a narrative that embeds and connects instead of fragments, and sees us humans as who we really are: cultural beings yet completely entangled with nature; individuals yet completely embedded in societal collectivities; mindful yet completely embodied. I-think-therefore-I-am becomes I breath-body-mind-eat-society-culture-use-technology-sense-nature-planet, all at once. We can analytically distinguish it, but we cannot understand ourselves — the world, sustainability, the Anthropocene — when we do not see how it is woven together in specific and particular ways, and how this affects us and makes us what we are. Our planet is our body and shapes that what we are. Nature in a more proximate sense — landscape, space, trees, water, soil — is our body and makes us what we are. Our culture is our body, as is our society and our family; they all shape us to what we are. Technology is our body that enables us to do what we do, and increasingly changes us into who we are. Obviously our body is our body and makes us who we are. Our senses are embodied and so is our mind, and make us function as we do. Emotions, intuition, imagination and creativity, all are largely embodied and make us what we are.

The plot of these narratives tells us that being “successful” essentially means being connected, with our inner self, with the social world, with nature, the planet and the cosmos as a whole. It is a plot of finding equilibrium and balance instead of seeking ever more expansion and growth. It is about tuning-in with the movements and rhymes of the world, like in a dance, as in sailing, skating or making love, finding balance between reason *and* emotion,

provocation *and* compliment, domination *and* submission. Such a plot has all the potential to make a real attractive narrative.

#### TOWARDS COMPLEXITY THINKING; CONNECTEDNESS AND REFLEXIVITY

The epistemological consequences of entering the narrative of embodiment and planetary consciousness are enormous. For Edgar Morin (1977), it implies looking at the world, ourselves included, in fundamentally different ways. The complexus 'world', 'planet' or 'reality' is not preconceived but is ever changing due to the interrelationships, interactions and above all emergent properties it creates and is created by. Such a complexus is not guided by straightforward cause-effect relationships, but is characterized by that what Morin calls 'dialogics': multiple logics — cause-effect relationships — working at the same time. A glass is equally half full as it is half empty; a whole is at once more *and* less than the sum of its parts; a country or city is at once multiple as it is singular and every system is at the same time more, less and other than itself. There is no order without disorder; no organization without disorganization and no harmony without disharmony (Morin 1977).

There is no such thing as sustainable development without unsustainable development. Sustainability projects should not focus on isolated problems in one part of a complexus, ignoring how this part is connected with the rest. They rather should focus on how sustainability *and* unsustainability are *woven together* in a particular complexus, time and space. Subsequently, projects should seek to work with the system dynamics inherently present, exploring how particular spaces create their own specific local colours, shades and sounds of sustainability/unsustainability, due to their particular composition, harmonies, blue notes, off beats, syncopations, and more. Ambivalence, ambiguity, competition, antagonism and chaos are no obstacles to be eliminated, but are the dynamic, creative and constituent forces to work with. Preferably in morphogenetic ways, stimulating and allowing new forms to unfold themselves from their previous state, while they adapt to the complexus they form part of (Alexander, 2004). This is what I mean with a dance and tuning in with the always-existing rhymes and movements, thus gradually changing patterns, interactions and emerging properties.

Yet, cautiousness is needed. We humans are as dialogical, ambivalent, ambiguous and antagonistic as the world we inhabit. According to Morin (1986), we are no *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*, but we rather are *Homo Sapiens Demens* being both *sapiens* — wise — as well as *demens* — irrational, creative, imaginary and prone to unrestricted emotion (Morin, 1986). We are characterized by a brain-mind-culture loop, as well as with a reason-emotion-impulse loop and an individual-society-species loop (Morin, 2001). We cannot isolate our minds from our bodies and ourselves from our societies or communities, and there is no superior stage of reason that has the capacity to dominate, sublimate or eliminate emotions. It does not make sense to fight 'demens' so reason can triumph (still the prevailing viewpoint in most sustainability thinking), we rather try to balance and integrate them.

To cope with our own complex nature, we need to develop a form of 'being in the world' that is always self-reflective and self-critical, as everything we know is subject to error and illusion. Our cerebral system does not give us the

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power to distinguish hallucination from perception, dream from waking, the imaginary from the real, or the subjective from the objective. Characteristic for Morin's way of thinking is the, in his words, "inescapable paradox" that we have to lead a crucial battle against ideas, but we cannot do it without the help of ideas (Morin, 2001). Instead of aiming at an on going accumulation of knowledge, we better strive for a continuous articulation of disjointed points of view of knowledge into an active cycle, in the spirit of "*agkuklios paidea*" or the training which puts knowledge in cycle (Kagan, 2011).

#### TOWARDS POLYPHONY AND DIALOGUE

The practice of dialogue is very appropriate to put knowledge in cycle, with the aim of creating polyphony of multiple voices, diverse interpretations and complementary truths. David Bohm (1996) sees dialogue as a stream of meaning flowing among and through those engaged in the act of dialoguing. The aim is not to arrive at one single truth or best way of seeing reality, but to arrive at shared meaning relevant for those involved in the dialogue. The essence is creating an open dialogue space — a listening circle — that is little by little filled with heterogeneous contributions — opinions, experiences, feelings, ideas, theories, facts, words, images, movements — allowing the participants to build upon that what all bring forward (Bohm, 1996).

Bohm contrasts dialogue with discussion that he sees as a Ping-Pong game of true-not true, constantly batting arguments back and forth with the objective to win. The word discussion, Bohm argues, has the same root as 'percussion' or 'concussion' meaning breaking things up. Discussions focus on arguments that are broken from or presented without making reference to the theory, worldview or belief-systems they originate from. The discussion model reflects a way of knowing that takes the world apart, and focuses on decontextualized parts and single best ways of knowing. The dialogue model by contrast is rooted in conjunction and hermeneutics, as a way of knowing the world through interpreting wholes in the context of their parts, and parts in the context of their whole. In a dialogue, Bohm argues, there are no winners or losers because meaning is collectively created as an emerging property of engaging in the dialogue. Everybody wins if anybody wins, Bohm argues, and this is realized when we see polyphony as richness and not as fight.

For Mikhail Bakhtin, dialogue is not only a concept related to discourse, but expresses fundamental aspects of how we know reality (Bakhtin, 1981). A particular way of expressing in words how we see the world, he argues, illuminates some aspects of it yet obscures others. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of the world by definition implies 'heteroglossia' or multilingualness. In a novel this is presented in the different storylines that interact with each other, and in social life heteroglossia is found in the words of different classes and communities that dialogue with each other. We need to keep in mind, Bakhtin argues, that words always exist in relationship with other words, and speeches or discourses with other speeches and discourses, and they always are being addressed to a listener anticipating a response. This complex totality of different ways of speaking reflects the richness of a culture and eliminating this heteroglossia equals eliminating the cultural diversity that exists in expressing how we see reality.



Acknowledging the cultural dimension and diversity of sustainability implies acknowledging multilingualness, which is rather the opposite of imposing one — scientifically approved — concept of sustainability on all social actors. In Latin America, ‘*Dialogos de Saberes*’ or ‘Dialogues of Knowing’ is an established concept based on a tradition that goes back to pre-Modern and pre-Columbian times, that were free from modern science-based monophony and functional rationality (Leff, 2004). Surely, sustainability practitioners and researchers in all parts of the world can learn from such indigenous practices.

According to Richard Sennett (2012), engaging in dialogue is like a craft that goes beyond a mere logical exchange of words, allowing us to *feel, see* and *imagine* the relevance of all that is put forward in dialogue. It is a specific form of both problem seeking and problem-solving that, like regular craftsmanship, involves combining head and hands and depends on a certain sensitivity and responsiveness to the materials one works with. It requires practice, discipline and concentration to master, and calls for a certain disposition and way of being in the world. It asks for empathy instead of argumentation, and for “opting in” instead of “acting on”. Dialogues are an essential component of creating culture(s) of sustainability that go beyond a mere science-based approach. Yet, it needs to be recognized that the dialogue practice asks extensive training and teaching that equally exceeds a mere scientific orientation. Such training should become standard practice when we start to write the narrative of embodiment and planetary consciousness.

#### TOWARDS INTIMACY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY HERMENEUTICS

As Bakhtin (1981) rightfully argues, we also can dialogue with our inner selves, as we all carry various voices inside of us at all times, like the voices of analysis, observation, experience, memory, intuition, emotion, pain, desire, fear and more. The narrative of modernity and enlightenment taught us to distinguish well among reason and emotion, and taught us to focus on cognition, logic and reason as the superior instruments to know the world. This is a major mistake, Nicolescu (2010) puts forward, as reality is divided in multiple levels that all have their own space/time and can only be disclosed when we use the organs of perception that are appropriate for each level.. Emotion, experiences, imagination and insight all are complementary to analytical or scientific ways of knowing, and cannot be reduced to or converted in scientific or analytical concepts. Yet, that is not all.

In the course of modernity, Nicolescu argues, through focusing almost completely on scientific ways of knowing, we emotionally distanced ourselves from the world around us, and we transformed our concept of the world — nature, ecology, the other, the patient, the organization, society and life itself — from a living subject into an object that we analyse in merely clinical-scientific ways (Nicolescu, 2006). Science created knowledge-en-vitro in numerous separated test tubes called disciplines, while a complex world needs knowledge-en-vivo that allows seeing, feeling and understanding across complex relationships. Nicolescu (2002) calls for the development of a transdisciplinary hermeneutics that allows us to connect with the world, ourselves included, integrating various ways of knowing thus maintaining living and experienced complexity.

Responding to Nicolescu's call, I proposed a concept of transdisciplinary hermeneutics distinguishing various forms of knowing that together create ecologies in which they mutually nourish each other. In such a process we simultaneously connect with our inner self and the world around us in dialogical/hermeneutical ways (Dieleman, 2015). At first glance, ecologies of knowing are simple, as they comprise basically three categories of knowing: formal, experiential and direct knowing. When we enter in detail however, we encounter a very rich and still rather unexplored landscape.

I see formal knowledge as 'codified' knowledge found in books, articles, documents and databases. It is indirect and mediated by concepts, theories and increasingly by technology, created in cognitive thinking processes using above all (yet not exclusively) analytical intelligence and logical reasoning. It is this kind of knowing that is so heavily emphasized and celebrated in the narrative of modernity. I am inclined to think however, that the other forms are more essential to understand the world — ourselves included — and they certainly are fundamental in sustainability. Experiential knowing is characterized by Mary Catherine Bateson as a natural way of learning by "meandering" and "moving along the way" (Bateson, 1994). It is reflective in the sense that it is rooted in action while our actions inform us on the world around us, in a constant process of action-reflection-action. It allows us, as Gregory Bateson explained, to see connections and connectivity between heterogeneous elements, and has the potential to integrate "hard" and "soft" data present in any situation (Bateson, 1973). It is relevant in the context of complexity thinking as it invites us to be systemic and reflective, looking at how reality is woven together in dialogical and ambiguous ways. It involves a combination of doing, reflecting, associative thinking, abductive seeing and logical reasoning and because of that, it is a really comprehensive way of connecting with the world.

The third category that I distinguish, direct knowing, is often part of experiential knowing. It is a separate form however, that is especially crucial in the context of creating intimate and embodied relationships with our inner self and the outer world. It is a complex of various processes and practices involving intuition, insights, creativity and imagination that present themselves in moments of "flashes", when we try not to think in logical ways (James, 1902). Direct knowing is sensorial as well as sensuous. It involves using our five senses yet equally goes beyond that, including emotional and feelings intelligence. It is abductive as in seeing with the heart or the third eye or, in terms of David Abram (2010), means becoming animal as in re-establishing an animistic capacity of sensing and connecting with the world. On an aesthetical level Sacha Kagan talks in this respect about the sensibility to the patterns that connect and mark the essence of a system or its thresholds, something that is highly relevant in sustainability (Kagan, 2011). Direct knowing plays a major role in processes of creation and imagination and in cultures of sustainability based on an enchanted concept of the cosmos, which includes consciousness, sensuousness, intention and spirituality.

Transdisciplinary hermeneutics is a practice of creating ecologies of knowing in which all forms of knowing have a place and mutually nourish each other. It is a form of, in terms of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975), engaging in a double dialogue with our inner self and the outer world, opening us —

listening and hearing — to that what is being dis-closed and brought to the surface. It involves moments of reflecting, meditating and consulting our inner mental map or horizon of meaning, moments of analysing and trying to comprehend that what the world unfolds, and it involves moments of sensing and being sensitive to that what the eye cannot see. The essence of transdisciplinary hermeneutics and ecologies of knowing is found in their systemic nature, allowing for feedback and feed-forward loops and emerging properties. It is *beyond* each individual way of knowing where meaning of meaning, or wisdom, is found, seen by Nicolescu as consciousness or the “hidden third” that bridges between levels of reality and levels of knowing (Nicolescu, 2012; Dieleman, 2015). It enables us to see sustainability in conjunctive, polyphonic and intimated, enchanted ways.

#### TOWARDS CULTURE(S) OF SUSTAINABILITY WRITTEN AND CRAFTED IN ARTS-BASED WAYS

Writing a narrative of embodiment and planetary consciousness — or in other words of culture(s) of sustainability (Kagan, 2012) — requires a language that is metaphorical or allegorical, rather than analytical. It is a language that leaves room for interpretation, while it aims at apprehension rather than comprehension. Such a language is closer to the arts than to the sciences. Just like the science-based approach goes well together with the principles of enlightenment, the arts-based approach goes well together with the principles of embodiment and enchantment.

Donald Schön created the term ‘artful doing’ while he analysed the way a painter acts while making a painting. A painter adds colour or form to the canvas, allowing to experience surprise, puzzlement or confusion. He takes one step back, overlooks the result, reflects on the phenomenon before him, as well as on his largely implicit prior understandings or expectations. He carries out an experiment, which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in his work (Schön, 1983). This description has similarities with how I previously characterized the double dialogue of transdisciplinary hermeneutics and indeed, the two are very similar. That is exactly why artful or arts-based ways of working match so well with the principles of embodiment and enchantment as laid out in this text. The essence is establishing a combined embodied/enchanted connection with the inner self and the outer world, that prevents seeing the outer world in sterile/clinical ways, and prevents us from acting like mere cognitive and rational machines; as heads without hearts and minds without body.

These characteristics equally facilitate creativity and creation processes. Mike Sharples (1999) describes creativity as an “emotion-driven associative work” and both elements of his description are crucial. Our emotions drive and motivate — move — us, and creativity manifests itself when we connect with the outer world starting from our inner intentionality. Otto Scharmer calls that “presencing” as an act of creating the future we want, working from our inner source (Scharmer, 2008). It is embedded in aspiration or as Alfonso Montuori phrases it, in the love for knowledge and the desire to create one’s own cosmos, rather than in specific skills or tools (Montuori, 1998). Frances Whitehead pointed out, in her ‘knowledge-claim for artists’<sup>3</sup>, that artists indeed tend to follow their own instincts, motives and intentionality, rather than being

compliant to societal demands or norms. This inner orientation in terms of desire and intentionality is key in writing and crafting culture(s) of — enchanted — sustainability.

Associative lateral thinking — lateralness — equally is an important source of, literary, *transforming* the world, rather than building upon established forms and ways of seeing. Here, Edward de Bono's distinction between vertical and lateral thinking is insightful (De Bono, 1992). Vertical thinking, he points out, is 'building upon' and 'adding on', in contrast to lateral thinking that is about re-arranging and trans-forming patterns. Vertical thinking is logical, cognitive and analytical and deals with that what is, while lateral thinking is associative — embodied — and *creates* patterns and connections in associative rather than logical ways. On a societal level, vertical thinking results in proposals for sustainable ways of living in terms of using led-light, fuel-efficient cars, biodegradable plastics or recycled paper, non of them changing the culture or basic patterns in our ways of life. The Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls this orthopaedic thinking, focusing on techniques leaving the fundamental questions untouched (Santos, 2009). Many societies indeed react to problems leaving established patterns untouched, for political reasons and in response to established power relationships, but also because we are not organized for, and neither trained in artful doing.

Almost all our organizations, sustainability projects included, are still following science-based linear and vertical planning schemes, based on the standard sequence of: "Formulate a vision > Diagnose problems > Develop solutions > Seek consensus > Take decisions > Implement and execute". Artful doing by contrast flourishes in environments that are rather unplanned, undirected and non-designed, and offer because of that "emergence-friendly" environments (Kagan and Hahn, 2011). In various publications I called such environments "spaces of imagination and experimentation" (Dieleman, 2013, 2015) where situations are explored in artful ways. Here as well, visions are created and diagnoses are developed, but in reflective, iterative and spiral ways, stimulating mutual nourishment, imagination and creativity. Such spaces are important, as writing and creating culture(s) of enchanted sustainability requires, next to the love and disposition, organizational conditions that stimulate and facilitate creativity.

A shift in balance is needed, away from science-based thinking/doing in favour of artful doing, transdisciplinary hermeneutics and dialogue as craftsmanship. As I argued before (Dieleman, 2004, 2008), artists are potentially excellent change agents in realizing such balance-shifts thanks to the way they work, know, think and are (their knowledge claim). Numerous examples of ecological or environmental artworks convincingly prove this<sup>4</sup>. Yet I feel it is important to distinguish among *artists* as special *agents* in sustainability on the one hand, and *artfulness* as special *agency* in sustainability on the other hand. I do not want to exclude artists in sustainability, by no means, but I feel it is very important that everyone rediscovers the artist that lives inside of him or her. Just like the science-based way of thinking is used throughout the whole of society, by many non-scientists, I envision the arts-based or artful way of doing to become standard practice throughout society as well. It is this change, with the characteristics

laid out in this text that I see as crucial in creating culture(s) of enchanted sustainability.

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS: OLD HABITS DIE HARD

Old habits die hard, while our societies change rapidly. Just recently I came across the ‘Old Way New Way’ method, developed by Harry Lyndon (Lyndon, 1989). It teaches us to deliberately unlearn old skills, habits or dispositions as part of learning new ones, something we easily forget as we usually focus one-sidedly on learning new ones. It is relevant for the cultural change and learning process I propose here. The tradition of thinking in disjunctive and analytical ways is deeply rooted in our societies, and intentions to engage in conjunctive and transdisciplinary approaches often fail. Many studies remain merely cognitive/analytical and essentially disjunctive, as they realize no more than a parallel exploration of the parts of a whole — economy, society, environment — without studying how those parts are woven together, unfold from their previous states in particular system dynamics, and create emerging properties in dialogical ways. The Old Way New Way method proposes to carefully analyse — instead of taking for granted — how old ways work, to then compare them with the new ways in one unidual unlearning/learning process. The task we have in front of us however exceeds simple changes in habits or dispositions. It asks for a fundamental change in worldview and paradigm, and in a fundamental different way of looking at the world, ourselves included. For science it involves rethinking of its very fundamentals and roots, and requires the development of new concepts, theories and definitions, which form a truly scientific basis for enchantment and planetary consciousness. It does not imply that we need to throw away all that we have and start from scratch. On the contrary, science offers a set of theories, methods and practices that continue to be of value. Some of them are obsolete yet others remain their great value.

I propose, in this context, to take Frances Whitehead’s knowledge claim for artists as a starting point for a unidual unlearning/learning process towards culture(s) of sustainability<sup>5</sup>. Like Whitehead proposes, let us carefully compare the ontological, epistemological and methodological knowledge claims of both traditional and emerging science, to then carefully unlearn old academic habits and learn new ones. Not to throw old academic shoes away, but to find a new balance that enables us to craft culture(s) of enchanting sustainability, which are truly rooted in embodiment and planetary consciousness.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup><http://www.clubofbudapest.org/clubofbudapest/index.php/en/about-us/the-manifesto-on-planetary-consciousness>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ugr.es/~eirene/publicaciones/los\\_habitus\\_de\\_la\\_paz/habitus\\_13.pdf](http://www.ugr.es/~eirene/publicaciones/los_habitus_de_la_paz/habitus_13.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://embeddedartistproject.com/whatdoartistsknow.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://greenmuseum.org>

<sup>5</sup> <http://a2ru.org/knowledgebase/what-do-artists-know/>

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PHILIPPE VANDENBROECK

## CULTURE AND THE SOCIAL LEARNING PROCESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

### INTRODUCTION

This paper revisits the question about the relationship between ‚culture‘ and ‚sustainable development‘. These are two encompassing terms that are notoriously difficult to define. The question has therefore a very abstract character and I have chosen to tackle it conceptually: Sustainable development is positioned as an intensity gradient that orients human ingenuity - and all the material and energetic flows people interact with - in an open and flexible way. That open future horizon connects with an understanding of change as a morphogenetic process. Change so understood in essence becomes a learning process. Culture, understood as the realm of the symbolic, can fulfil different roles in this learning process: embodied resource and immanent repository, enabler and constrainer, homogenizer and differentiator.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Let us take a step back and consider human affairs from a higher vantage point. Yes, let’s go to the moon and look back on our habitat. What do we see? Gaia (Lovelock, 1990). An astonishingly beautiful entity floating in space illuminated by the sun and powered by its energy. Evolutionary biologists hold that this constant flux of energy, this constant disequilibrium is at the root of the emergence and evolution of life on Earth. Living requires a constant driving force, an unceasing chemical reaction powered by energy differentials: „If life is nothing but an electron looking for a place to come to rest, death is nothing but that electron come to rest“ (Lane, 2015).

However, despite our remote vantage point not everything is visible from the observation platform on our satellite. What we don’t see is the noosphere, the intangible domain of human thought (Samson and Pitt, 2012). Indeed life on this planet has evolved in a highly unlikely way, giving way to complex, conscious life forms. Our minds are a most improbable biological machine. They, together with the metabolic infrastructure that has evolved over billions of years, are now a conduit for this restless flow of energy.

This is where ‚sustainable development‘ comes in. As an idea it is the psychic equivalent to solar energy. As a vision of a better way of organizing human affairs it creates a disequilibrium, an intensity gradient that orients and channels memetic and energetic flows on Earth. In other words: sustainable development is an attractor that animates a process of societal change. But it differs from the progressive utopias of the nineteenth century that projected their own myths (such



as the classless society) into the future. The vision they projected had the character of a finished whole anchored in an already directed past (Hobsbawn, 1962/2010). Today we may bemoan the difficulty to define once and for all what sustainable development is and how a world looks like that is shaped in line with its tenets. But probably it is precisely that nebulous and partially open-ended character that harbours the great opportunity of that vision of sustainable development. Despite all our efforts to ensnare it in arrays of indicators, sustainable development refuses to be nailed down. It remains slippery. We see contours but we can't draw a fixed image of it.

#### MORPHOGENESIS

This (reluctant) acceptance of a fluid attractor as driver of human affairs meshes with a much richer understanding of change that we are in the process of making our own. In our intellectual history we have moved from myth to the linear causalities of classical science to Hegelian dialectics as models to explain how things come into being and change. In the last century we have integrated all of these strands in a more sophisticated understanding of change as growth, as morphogenesis (Ingold, 2013). The heritage of our Enlightenment past still weighs heavily on us. We are accustomed to thinking of change as a ‚project‘. We (architects, engineers, entrepreneurs, policy makers) start with an idea in mind of what we want to achieve and with a supply of raw material needed to achieve it. We stop when the material has taken on that intended form. In change understood as a morphogenetic process, things happen as a result of a confluence of forces and materials. Certainly these forces can be imbued with human intelligence and intentionality but that does not change their essential quality.

A few important insights follow from embracing this morphogenetic conception of change. First, the difference between organism and artefact dissolves. A statue and a rock formation differ in the degree of human involvement. But both are shaped through morphogenetic processes involving energy and materials. In the case of the statue these flows have been merely enriched with human ingenuity.

Secondly, in the shaping of our reality the primacy shifts to process rather than final form. Form is always emergent. The anthropologist Tim Ingold has pointed out how even a mundane object such as a brick, with its seemingly totally predictably rectangular outline, does not result from the imposition of form onto matter but from the contraposition of equal and opposed forces immanent in both the clay and the mould in which it is pressed. „In this field of forces, the form emerges as a more or less transitory equilibration.” (Ingold, 2013:24)

Finally, in a morphogenetic process - in which form is emergent - a key role falls to resistance, friction and ambiguity. Richard Sennett has described craftsmanship as a practice of ‚doing and getting better‘ in the messy confrontation of human ingenuity with materials (Sennett, 2009). Doing and getting better means learning. Here we connect to a key insight from systems thinking which sees viability (i.e. sustainability) rooted in adaptiveness and resilience (Gunderson and Holling, 2002). When human beings are involved part of the stickiness of problems

is due to our own mental maps. Today we understand much better that change is inevitably a collaborative process of learning and sense making. Action is part of that process. Interventions in the sticky, problematic settings we are dealing with invites us to question our basic assumptions with respect to the nature of those situations. Action is not an imposition of form but a probing into an opaque reality. Peter Checkland, pioneer in Soft Systems Methodology, has titled his most recent book 'learning for action' and that is a very fitting synthesis of what human-induced change processes are all about (Checkland and Poulter, 2006).

The spirit of morphogenetic change informs much of what is held to be cutting edge management and policy practice today: resilience-focused adaptive management, transition governance to guide complex socio-technical systems to a more sustainable equilibrium, and Saras Sarasvathy's theory of 'Effectual Entrepreneurship' (Sarasvathy, 2008). Consider the jargon that pervades the associated literature: networks, coalitions, co-evolution, tipping point, chance, conflict, negotiation, reflexive governance, variation and selection, windows of opportunity, bounded rationality. All these conceptualizations of complex change processes boil down to the constant and non-linear interplay between visioning, experimenting (and carefully assessing the attendant friction, ambiguity and uncertainty) and reframing our understanding of where these frictions come from and how we can handle them.

The anthropologist Marc Augé mused: „Perhaps we are in the process of learning to change the world before imagining it, converting to a sort of political and practical existentialism. (...) We now need to turn towards the future without projecting our illusions on it, to (...) learn to push back gradually and prudently the frontiers of the unknown.” (Augé, 2014) Despite its tentative character, this kind of approach can lead to breakthroughs and epoch-making change.

David Turnbull has shown how the construction of Chartres cathedral in the early 13th century can only be understood from a morphogenetic perspective (Turnbull, 2000). The building boasted the tallest roof in the Western world and offered an unprecedented area for window openings. Yet architectural plans for the building have never been found and the names of the masterminds behind these structural innovations (if ever such individuals existed) are not known. What we do know is that there was no common method of measurement and no scientific knowledge of the structural mechanics necessary to keep such a tall building standing. So we can wonder: where did it come from? Almost certainly the builders did not operate from blueprints but erected the building in a sequence of full-scale experiments. As Turnbull notes: „The structure of the cathedrals results from the combination of factors. They all interact as a whole to produce a particular form. The 'Gothic Style' as such was not in the minds of the cathedral builders ...” In other words: the form was emergent. A very similar story can be told about the construction of the Large Hadron Collider and the discovery of the Higgs boson at CERN in Geneva (Boisot, 2011). These are examples of important scientific and societal breakthroughs understood as emerging from a process of social learning.

## CULTURE

In this paper sustainable development is positioned as an intensity gradient that animates a process of change, a broad societal transformation. It orients human ingenuity - and all the material and energetic flows people interact with - but in an open and flexible way. I have connected that open future horizon with an understanding of change as a morphogenetic process. Change understood in this way is no longer a question of imposing a form, a pre-conceived plan upon a reluctant environment in a sequence of discrete steps but a continuous, contrapuntal coupling of human intentionality with the ambiguity, friction and uncertainty embedded in our world. In other words, change becomes in essence a learning process.

So what is the role of culture? There is no single agreed definition of 'culture' but I propose to frame it as the order of the symbolic (Sahlins, 2000:16). Culture encompasses any and all forms of practice, including social relations, distinctive for a particular group of people. Understood as such culture comes close to the concept of 'habitus' as proposed by Bourdieu: a shared, enacted point of view from which we structure the world and bring some degree of coherence in our preferences and actions in a dynamic environment (Bourdieu, 1990).

As shorthand for a distinctive repertoire of skills, knowledge and good practices culture functions as a resource. It is something that to a certain level can be codified that is embodied in artefacts ('material culture', which in its relationship to sustainability is one of the focal points identified by the COST Action, culture *in* sustainability') and that can be transmitted from one generation to the next. But in this sense culture is to an extent also immanent, or virtual. It is not only what we can observe and point at - a repository of codifiable practices and beliefs - but it is also the unarticulated possibilities for morphogenesis that are embedded but not yet realized in that socio- biologic-technical reality.

If we consider a phase space for a dynamic physical system, it represents all possible states of the system, with each possible state of the system corresponding to one unique point in the phase space. At one particular time the system occupies a specific place in that phase space but given another balance of forces there are many others that it might have occupied. Similarly, culture functions as a vector field, as a reservoir of the immanent, morphogenetic possibilities of a contingency and experiment-driven learning process. Gilles Deleuze referred to this virtual register as a 'diagram' (De Landa, 2000).

In this understanding of culture as a meta-resource it definitely echoes the third role that this COST Action has identified for culture in sustainable development: 'culture *as* sustainable development', as immanent foundation and structure for achieving the aims of sustainability.

Culture, however, also functions as a filter, or a structuring agency. It is distinctive for a particular group of people. Hence it unifies a segment of society but inevitably it also demarcates it from others. So culture embodies unity at one scale and diversity at another. Within a community culture leads to the articulation of strata. For instance, social classes and roles sediment over time through a variety

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of sorting mechanisms and are consolidated via legal or theological codification (De Landa, 1997). But communities do not merely exist next to one another. They also interpenetrate one another as the societal fabric is traversed by different cultural lineages (ethnic, linguistic, professional, consumptive). Hence, culture not only articulate stratified structures but also meshworks. These meshworks help to connect local repositories in such a way that increasing momentum is generated to guide the development of complex and inert socio-technical systems towards sustainable development. It is in that sense that culture can be seen to contribute to sustainability in the second role put forward in the framework emerging from this COST Action: culture as a mediating agent or 'culture *for* sustainable development'.

#### WICKED PROBLEMS

Here I tackle the notion of 'Wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973). It presents an opportunity to develop a novel perspective on challenges that mix social and technical complexity. To exploit that potential we should refrain from the temptation to reify wicked problems. Various inventories have been made of characteristics of wicked problems: unclear causalities, numerous intervention points, scarce and low-quality data, multiple stakeholders with opposing interests, uncertainty regarding costs and benefits of interventions, path dependency, etc. We should treat these lists of attributes as a heuristic, as an invitation to reframe the friction we are recognizing in the wickedness and not as a checklist to tick boxes to eventually conclude that this is and that isn't a wicked problem. Wicked problems are everywhere if we want them there. Conversely, we can choose to see simplicity in situations of breathtaking complexity. The notion of wicked problem can be seen to function as an intercalary element to connect different communities-of-practice: people engaged in systems thinking, in dialogue and in design approaches to deal with complexity (Vandenbroeck, 2012). These competences reflect different sides of a transcultural problem-solving ethos that is characterized by depth, empathy and idealism. We need dedicated methodologies and approaches that blend these sentiments in a (more or less) structured approach to problem solving for sustainable development. For example, The Soft Systems Methodology makes us aware of differences in culture and worldview when confronting problematic situations. So it shows us where stratification exists and at the same time it offers a down-to-earth and respectful approach to create an accommodation, a temporary meshwork between these worldviews.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Embodied resource and immanent repository, enabler and constrainer, homogenizer and differentiator: culture seems to play all these roles, *in, for* and *as* at once in the irrevocably messy transition to sustainable development in which we are caught up. Deleuze wrote: "It is no longer a question of imposing a form upon a matter but of elaborating an increasingly rich and consistent material, the better to

tap increasingly intense forces. What makes a material increasingly rich is the same as what holds heterogeneities together without ceasing to be heterogeneous.”(Deleuze, 1994:189)

Luc Hoebeke translated the same idea in a more evocative image: “I would like to conjure a 10-billion people society, where every inhabitant of this planet is part of a number of small-scale decision groups, and that from these groups - which naturally exemplify opposing interests and which naturally consist of imperfect individuals - emerges a social texture that, stumblingly, learns to deal with the dilemmas that belong to our species, with questions about life and death, good and evil, love and hate, give and take, me and the other. And, despite the multitudes involved, I would like to imagine that the desperate belief in the gift of life offers a sufficient condition to achieve a certain degree of coherence, in much the same way that each of us shows some degree of coherence despite our innumerable neurons.”(Hoebeke, 1999).

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## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

### *Connecting sustainability and culture*

#### INTRODUCTION: HOW CULTURE RELATES AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE PARADIGM OF SUSTAINABILITY?

Sustainability has become a key concept to development, and its practices have been challenging and evolving in many areas, such as international cooperation, business management, local governance, livelihoods, or urban planning. In order to begin to conceptualise sustainability, that is, to get a general understanding about it, we can start with a simple definition from the dictionary: able to endure, last or continue for a long time (“Sustainability”, n.d.). Therefore, sustainable development can be considered as a process to achieve sustainability. However, the use of the sustainability concept in multiple areas, as the ones mentioned above, exemplifies a diversity of practices and policies that complicates this general understanding.

At an international level, sustainability was first linked to environmental issues which were placed on the political agenda in the context of the United Nations (UN) efforts to advance development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, as stated in the Brundtland Report from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published in 1987 (WCED, 1987). From thereon, the UN initiative evolved from “Earth Summit” on environment and development in 1992 to a conference on sustainable development in 2012 (Rio+20).

As a result of the conference of 1992 held in Rio de Janeiro, an action plan was designed to address the pressing problems of the time and to prepare the world for the challenges of the 21st century. The Agenda 21 was introduced as an act of a global partnership built on the acceptance of the need to take a balanced and integrated approach to environmental and developmental questions. The action plan evolved according to the various circumstances and levels of its implementation. This global initiative for sustainable development has been multilateral by involving mainly Governments and the UN system, but also calling upon the contribution of other international, regional and sub-regional organisations as well as a broad public participation and active involvement of non-governmental organisations and other groups (United Nations, 1992).

Moreover, the dynamic, balanced and integrated approach adopted is open to action beyond the concern with environmental issues, including social and economic, as stated in section 1 of the Agenda 21. In other words, the paradigm of

sustainability became more detailed with a "triple bottom line" approach, and in practice, sustainable development became a process of seeking to act simultaneously on three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Thus, the dominant theoretical understanding of sustainability became to describe a broad vision of an ideal world in the state of harmony through balance between the three dimensions now and in the future. The framework of sustainable development was designed to achieve sustainability through actions in these three fields.

As a result, the three-pillar framework inspired various actors from different fields to contribute and further enhance practices of sustainable development. For example, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is an international not-for-profit organisation, promoting the use of sustainability reporting as a way for organisations to become more sustainable and contribute to sustainable development (Global Reporting Initiative, n.d.a, n.d.b). Its sustainability reporting guidelines are widely used by companies around the world, and provide methods for measuring and reporting sustainability-related impacts and performance. The GRI guidelines are developed and regularly updated collaboratively within a network of professionals and organisations from many sectors, constituencies and regions in order to make the different dimensions of sustainability tangible and concrete through indicators applied to the management of the organisations.

Besides private initiatives, the concept has frequently been used in research, policy, educational programs and by the general public (Soini & Birkeland, 2014), and there has been "a proliferation of sustainability studies dealing with issues as varied as climate change, desertification, water resource management, and sustainable agriculture" (Stock & Burton, 2011). Scholars have particularly contributed to further develop the sustainability pillars, giving differentiated emphasis on each of its three dimensions (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Environmental dimension appears to be the most frequently discussed, since ecological concerns are at the origin of sustainable development. The social dimension and institutional aspects have gained importance for the achievement of environmental aims. Discussions specifically on the economic dimension for itself are rarer. The focus is instead on the combination of ecological and social goals through economic means, such as ecological modernization, green economy or bio-economy (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

However, the increasing interest in sustainability also spread the use of a term not always properly understood and applied. In fact, many companies or organizations use a sustainability discourse to promote their operation and reputation that are clearly in contradiction with a balanced and integrated approach between economic, social and environmental dimensions. On the contrary, some sustainability leaders with widely promoted sustainability performance, or organizations that fund important sustainability fora and initiatives, develop activities whose impacts or damages are merely mitigated and not avoided. Many organizations are indeed questioned about the gap between the information they disclose and the real impact of their sustainable practices, since the emphasis is on how sustainability can increase profitability or add value to a company (Cock, 2011). These are deplorable situations, which limit sustainability to a market word



or value, and disservice the efforts of other sustainability players. In that sense, many critics arise about the sustainability discourse, which would have been appropriated by neo-liberal capitalism, as Cock points out:

It is driving a key feature of capital's response to the ecological crisis: the commodification of nature. This involves the transformation of nature and all social relations into economic relations, subordinated to the logic of the market and the imperatives of profit. The immediate outcome is the deepening of both social and environmental injustice (Cock, 2011).

In addition, an increasing concern from various disciplines has arisen that the three-pillar model may be deficient. Attempts to explain this deficiency have been defined in many ways, as the missing “cultural-aesthetic”, “political-institutional” or “religious-spiritual” dimension, or the missing “fourth pillar” as coined by Jon Hawkes (Burford *et al*, 2013).

In this article, our objective is to consider culture's emerging correlation with sustainability and sustainable development through the concept of cultural sustainability, which impacts conceptualisation, initiatives and practices from various sectors and sustainability players, as well as policies at local, national and international levels. Our discussion is a result of a working group formed in the context of an online pilot course on cultural sustainability, organised by European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action research network “Investigating Cultural Sustainability”.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, whereas environmental, social and economic models of sustainability view culture as an important dimension, there is still a general lack of understanding on how culture relates and contributes to the paradigm of sustainability. This is why culture has remained underemphasised and under-theorised within the framework of sustainable development (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

In the context of the research initiative and pilot course, our activities started with an online workshop that critically examined the concept of cultural sustainability applied to local and national practices or experiences, and provided the opportunity to discuss current examples of the use of the cultural sustainability concept, as well as related key issues that have emerged. Working groups consisted of students from different cultural and educational backgrounds who were asked to create an essay responding to the following question: How can we understand “cultural sustainability” theoretically and in practice/policy?

Our methodology for this article was to analyse previous research and literature to explore the notion of culture in sustainability. Our analysis first explored how the concept of cultural sustainability developed from a merely missing piece in the concept of sustainability to an independent concept. The organisers of the online pilot course guided the literature chosen for this analysis. Additional literature, research papers and practical examples were also chosen and analysed to enhance a global perspective, as well as to connect and promote the necessary dialogue between our multiple backgrounds in an intercultural (Finland, United States of America, Portugal, France) and interdisciplinary (law, business administration, sociology, social, public and cultural policies) approach.

Consequently, our discussion was aimed at devising common understanding of cultural sustainability as a concept and practices, including development policies at local, national and international levels. After consideration on the debate and challenges involved in the understanding of cultural sustainability, the essay presents an elucidating revision of how sustainability and culture are being connected, based on research and practical references and discussions of the online pilot course. This literature review is organised into three consecutive phases. First, we consider the emergence of culture considerations. Then, we focus on the entrance of culture in the sustainable development process as new policies started to use a four-dimension framework that included culture. Next, we examine a third phase, which definitely integrates culture in the conceptual framework of sustainability. Finally, the multiple approaches presented in the literature review lead us to address our understanding advances of cultural sustainability, trying to handle this complex association of ideas and perspectives according to our intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue.

#### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS: DEBATE AND CHALLENGES

The connection between sustainability and culture has progressively emerged, addressing several aspects in the context of how to build a sustainable future. Witta, Flanagan, and Hagan (2012), for example, consider the current sustainability paradigm of three pillars (i.e. environmental, economic and social) as incomplete and that culture is an integral missing link. Other research considers that culture has gradually emerged out of the realm of social sustainability and is being recognised as having a separate, distinct, and integral role in sustainable development (Duxbury & Gillette, 2007). Adaptation of cultural sustainability suggests a paradigm shift, since the widely consensual, until then, three-pillar approach of sustainability is questioned.

This paradigm shift implies the introduction or redistribution of culture in a new sustainability equation, not only in the sustainability paradigm itself, but also with initiatives and new policies addressing the contribution of culture in the arena of sustainable development. Indeed, besides theory developments reshaping the sustainability paradigm and the sustainability rhetoric, cultural policies became specific tools to achieve sustainable development, such as in the case of urban renewal and revitalization through culture-based initiatives in the Creative Cities Projects throughout Canada (Creative Cities Network of Canada, 2005). In this kind of initiatives, all dimensions (i.e. cultural, economic, social and environmental) are nested. In other words, culture is considered to achieve sustainability, and sustainability is considered in cultural policies.

As an argument to explain why culture was not individually considered before in the sustainability paradigm, Chan and Ma (2004) have suggested that the cultural dimension of sustainability has been neglected and ignored under the influence of economic growth theories of development and that an economic and environmental bias still exists in the sustainable development discourse, despite the recognition of the social dimension in the three-pillar model. For example, in

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China, a destruction of a number of invaluable heritage sites in the name of economic development has raised questions on the sustainability of country's development model. Another perspective to the negligence of culture is the ignorance by the political, economic and scientific elites and/or the realisation of the possible implications that a cultural strategy for sustainability would have in practice (Kagan, 2010).

Moreover, an analysis of the scientific discourse on cultural sustainability evidences a complex debate around the concept and its comprehension with a multitude of meanings, which represent different interests and solutions (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). The review of this discourse reveals that cultural sustainability is transdisciplinary: cultural sustainability does not belong to one discipline or exist within a hierarchical system of concepts, but rather, it is both transversal and overarching at the same time.

### INITIAL EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is worth noting that culture has been considered and discussed, and its value has been recognised, in the context of development, even before the emergence of 'sustainable development'. In particular, the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), following its mandate, has played a major role in the inclusion of culture to a variety of policies and strategies at all levels, from its origins, through the recognition of the importance of cultural diversity (Bandarin, Hosagrahar, & Albernaz, 2011). The UN agency has drawn attention to the interrelationship between culture and development with several initiatives, especially during the Decade of Culture and Development from 1988 to 1997 (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

In the early 1990s, UNESCO set up the World Commission on Culture and Development with the aim of popularising the role of culture in development, like the Brundtland Report had popularised environmental concerns (Thorsby, 2005). Its report "Our Creative Diversity" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1995) raised the relationship between culture and development in somewhat similar terms to that of "Our Common Future" (WCED, 1987) and placed it, at least implicitly, within a context of sustainability leading to growing interest in cultural sustainability (Thorsby, 2005). The connection between sustainable development and culture has also emerged in other international policy documents, such as "In From the Margins" of 1997 from the European Council (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

Within the framework of sustainable development, culture has been considered and discussed as part of the social dimension (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010). At least occasionally, culture was a defining element of the social. (Stren & Polèse, 2000) Dessein *et al.* (2015) confirm that cultural aspects of sustainable development were indeed discussed and elaborated as part of the social dimension or, as they point out, in terms of socio-cultural sustainability. The latter however, recognise that culture is different from the social, but it remained tied within the

social because of the difficulty of separating them in practice (Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

The differentiation of “culture” from the “social” occurred between 2000-2002 through grassroots thinking, according to Duxbury and Jeannotte (2010). The authors argue that three parallel developments in the Pacific and Asian regions marked the beginning of a more focused policy and planning attention to be paid to culture within initiatives on sustainable cities and communities:

- (i) the Kanazawa Initiative, a major Asian research project which highlighted the neglect of cultural considerations in sustainability and city-planning literatures, and examined the place of culture in building sustainable Asian cities;
- (ii) the Cultural Development Network in Australia, which led a campaign on the importance of culture in community sustainability and well-being, and advocated to have it included as one of the pillars of sustainability; and
- (iii) the adoption of a new Local Government Act in New Zealand, 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” (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010).

Even if it is argued above that the emergence of cultural considerations took place in practice and policy, some authors have observed similar developments around the same time in academia: a recent interest in the new roles of culture in society; and the “cultural turn” movement among scholars in the humanities and social sciences to make culture the focus of contemporary debates (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). In the field of education, Thaman (2002) urges universities as research institutes to “recognize and act upon a more inclusive interpretation of ‘sustainable development’ and ‘sustainability’”. He argues that Western science and rational objective thinking on sustainability need to be complemented by valuing indigenous worldviews, thereby responding to the claim of sustainable development’s cultural bias (Renn, 2005).

Therefore, it can be considered that the emergence of the relationship between culture and sustainable development and sustainability initiated a paradigm shift through several aspects. First, it recognises that social sustainability is not sufficient to explain the role of culture in practice or theory of sustainable development (Duxbury & Gillette, 2007). Second, it acknowledges that important issues for sustainable development can be excluded unintentionally without further examination of the role of culture (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Third, without culture, the framework of sustainable development lacks the means to comprehend, let alone implement, the changes it promotes (Hawkes, 2001). Fourth, and not as a consensual approach, the emergence of culture can also enable us to conceive culture as separate and distinct reference point, and the paradigm of sustainability as a four-pillar model composed of the following: cultural vitality (wellbeing, creativity, diversity and innovation); social equity (justice, engagement, cohesion, welfare); environmental responsibility (ecological balance); economic viability (material prosperity) (Hawkes, 2001).

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### CULTURE ENTERING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Between 2004 and 2006, culture became utilised in the sustainable development process in many countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England, and by international organisations, like UNESCO, with a series of initiatives that adopted a four-dimension framework within an overarching umbrella of sustainability or well-being to address local development issues, such as: cultural policies incorporating guidelines on ecologically sustainable development, as well as indicators on the “four well-beings of communities”; integrated community sustainability plans for cities and communities based on a four-pillar framework; development situation and policy concerns of small island developing states based on a four-pillar framework as well; toolkits considering culture in urban regeneration (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010).

At the international level, UNESCO rationalised the relation between culture and sustainability in two articles of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005): Article 2, paragraph 6, “Principle of sustainable development”; and Article 13, “Integration of culture in sustainable development”. UNESCO’s Decade of Education for the sustainable development from 2005 to 2014 also referred to environmental, economic, social and “cultural” sustainability.

Agenda 21 for Culture in 2004 institutionalised culture to the sustainable development process by providing guidelines for local cultural policies. The document was submitted to the UN-HABITAT and UNESCO with the objective to give it the same effectiveness of the UN action plan for sustainable development of 1992. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) assumes its coordination, and its Committee on culture is the global platform of cities, organisations and networks to learn, to cooperate and to launch policies and programs on the role of culture in sustainable development (Committee on culture of UCLG, n.d.).

Thus, culture became part of the sustainable development process, which also evidences the evolution of the development cooperation of several countries such as in the discussion of “Fair Culture” in Finland:

The cultural sector has an important role in enabling sustainable social and cultural development and reducing poverty. Fair culture means realising cultural rights and including everyone in cultural signification, irrespective of age, gender, disability, or ethnic, religious and cultural background. These are aspects that should also be guidelines for development co-operation. (Finnish Ministry of Education, 2007)

### CULTURE WITHIN THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABILITY

The last phase of the on going paradigm shift of sustainability started in 2008-2009, a period considered as a new wave that took culture within sustainability to a higher level with an international and transnational protagonism (Duxbury &

Jeannotte, 2010). During this phase, several initiatives at different levels played an important role in the development of the conceptual framework of sustainability.

At an international level, three UNESCO related initiatives are, according to Duxbury and Jeannotte (2010), worth mentioning: the development and approval of operational guidelines for Article 13 of 2005 Convention, an experts meeting that considered the four-pillar model of sustainability in developing a new cultural policy profile, and the publication of a related report by the UCLG Culture Committee.

The Hangzhou Declaration of 2013 is another example of UNESCO's advocacy to integrate culture in the conceptual framework of sustainability. Concepts from the Declaration were created in hopes that, by "placing culture at the heart of sustainable development policies", solutions could be found to some of the world's most pressing developmental challenges, such as environmental sustainability, poverty, and social inclusion (UNESCO, 2013). As stated by Director General Irina Bokova,

Culture is precisely what enables sustainability – as a source of strength, of values and social cohesion, self-esteem and participation. Culture is our most powerful force for creativity and renewal. (UNESCO, 2013)

Other initiatives during the period include: Asia-Europe Foundation initiatives focusing culture and sustainability with an emphasis on artistic inquiry and practices; and Rio+20 UN Conference, held in 2012, stating a broad vision of the ideal world which includes culture in the paradigm of sustainability and in the framework of sustainable development to achieve it,

We call for holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development that will guide humanity to live in harmony with nature and lead to efforts to restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to sustainable development. (United Nations General Assembly, 2012)

At a national level, the initiatives mainly consisted of position papers and action plans adopted by local authorities considering culture in the sustainable society based on the four-pillar model (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010). By the end of the decade, questions on what it means to include culture in sustainable development were raised. Accordingly, culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability that had gained acceptance and legitimacy (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010), and had also become conceptualised as cultural-aesthetic, political-institutional and religious-spiritual (Burford *et al.*, 2013).

At the same time, the four-pillar model is also being contested by an understanding of a more holistic role for culture within sustainable development. Culture needs not to be understood only as the fourth pillar of sustainability, but also as "foundation or necessary condition for meeting the aims of sustainable development" or as "perspective through which understandings of social, economic and environmental sustainability may appear" (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

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Respectively, these can be understood as culture “in”, “for” and “as” sustainable development, a result of COST-action research on cultural sustainability. Three roles devise different perspectives for culture’s integration in the sustainability paradigm:

- (i) culture “in” sustainable development, with a supportive and self-promoting role adding culture as a self-standing fourth pillar;
- (ii) culture “for” sustainable development, with a more influential force that can operate beyond itself, which balances the existing pillars and guides sustainable development between their pressures and needs;
- (iii) culture “as” sustainable development, with an even more fundamental role as the essential foundation and structure for achieving the aims of sustainable development since it integrates, coordinates and guides all aspects of sustainable action (Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, according to Soini and Birkeland’s (2014) analysis of the scientific discourse on cultural sustainability, seven principle story-lines can be identified: heritage, vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience and eco-cultural civilization. The different meanings given to culture can be located within the three roles of culture described, but perhaps more importantly they are associated with the political contexts in which cultural sustainability operates. As such, conservative, neoliberal, communitarian and environmentalist ideologies can enhance the understanding of how culture can provide solutions to different problems.

Finally, it can be noted that the emergence of cultural sustainability re-defines the paradigm of sustainability and the design of the sustainable development framework. In this sense, “culture” can be both the model of sustainability and the map to reach it. This is further challenged by multiplicity of contexts in time, space and ideologies in which it is understood and applied, thereby resulting in different approaches of cultural sustainability and of culture’s role in sustainable development. And while we may consider and give culture different meanings, culture and sustainability are mutually intertwined, which mixes and blurs distinctions between dimensions (Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

## UNDERSTANDING THROUGH A CONNECTING COMPLEXITY

After this review of how sustainability and culture are being connected, it is time to address understanding advances. In other words, elaborate on the answer(s) we could now give to the question: “How can we understand “cultural sustainability” theoretically and in practice/policy?”

Our literature review already gives different meanings of “cultural sustainability”. However, it is not our purpose nor possible for us to opt for one of these meanings. In fact, our multiple backgrounds also hold different approaches that we intend to put in dialogue and not making one prevail against the others. Then, we will address the process of understanding “cultural sustainability” as a knowledge issue, more specifically the basis and tools needed to proceed to a

dialogue on “cultural sustainability” involving multiple backgrounds and approaches.

First, our working group was challenged by the multiple approaches of “cultural sustainability” as evidenced in our literature review. It should be noted that a complex association of ideas and perspectives is inherent to sustainability, even before it was connected to culture. Stock and Burton (2011) suggest that “solutions informed by multiple backgrounds that singular disciplines seem unable to provide, and possibly, are even incapable of providing”. Indeed, as argued by Koc, sustainability should be treated as a discourse (as cited in Stock & Burton, 2011), because it is polyphonic and polysemic, and its content changes depending on the context, according to Kajikawa *et al.* (as cited in Stock & Burton, 2011).

However, as our review shows, it does not merely mean that culture is just another concept becoming part of sustainability. Rather, culture is a new idea and perspective itself, it is a concept entering the field, having the capacity to further explain and bring forth different ideas of sustainability.

Second, understanding cultural sustainability is challenging and requires finding ways to handle its complexity. Therefore, according to Kagan (2010, 2013) this ‘new’ holistic way of thinking sustainability is made possible by “complex thought” based on Morin’s theory of complexity. According to Morin:

Complexity represents a shift away from the simplifying, reductionist approach that has traditionally shaped scientific enquiry. [...] Knowledge must make use of abstraction, but it must also be constructed by reference to context and hence must mobilize what the enquirer knows about the world. (Morin, 1996)

As Morin (1996) notes, complex thought is a kind of thinking that makes connections, that is, contextualises and globalises. In fact, he reminds that *complexus* means “that which is woven together”, which is even more true in the context of a globalised world, where knowledge became global, and everything must be situated in the planetary context.

Third, following from this understanding of untangling cultural sustainability by complex thought we, following Kagan, consider three main techniques to handle the complex association of ideas and perspectives that “cultural sustainability” embraces:

- (i) interdisciplinarity, defined by Kagan, as “practices which, thanks to inspiring exchanges, enable researchers from one discipline to borrow and adapt methods and metaphors from other disciplines, within a wider shared system” such as science or art (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015);
- (ii) transdisciplinarity, defined by Kagan as “an extra dimension of research and action, involving different modes of knowing, from outside of science (or of art)”, as well as “a wholly different kind of research practice, which complements disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, offering a wider integrative framework” (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015);



- (iii) interculturality, defined by Castro (2011) as a meeting platform and a society choice to opt for an attitude of openness to the plural world. That is, a choice for a humanist society that will opt for interdependence and in which each of its members will learn to manage its internal plurality in a dialogue with the outside strangeness. However, interculturality or intercultural dialogue does not mean acceptance of the other. In fact, the true dialogue presupposes welcoming and a mutual transformation, that is, “I & You” and not “I & the other” (Castro, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, our working group consists of students from different cultural and educational backgrounds: Finland, United States of America, Portugal, France; law, business administration, sociology, social, public and cultural policies; doctoral and master’s degree students, without mentioning a diversity of personal and professional experiences. Our interaction for this article is the result of an online collaboration, being the three of us based in three different continents in three different time zones, including North America, Latin America and Africa, while working and writing. Our combination is genuinely complex considering its many different parts and factors. Then, the only way to elaborate together on a complex “cultural sustainability” was to handle the complexity of our composition. That is the reason why interculturality came up naturally as “a meeting platform and a society choice to opt for an attitude of openness to the plural world” (Castro, 2011).

As for interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, it is worth mentioning that both concepts are highly debated. The debate on these concepts addresses the fact that they are both used to define integrated research, which can be confusing. However, Stock & Burton (2011) manage to clarify both concepts, which they consider similar but different, by reviewing the literature on integrated research studies both within and outside the identifiable ‘sustainability’ literature. The difference that the authors establish between inter- and transdisciplinarity focuses more specifically on the same emphasis that Kagan puts on the wider integrative framework that transdisciplinarity offers in the specific field of cultural sustainability research. That is, a clear emphasis on developing a holistic approach to problem solving involving stakeholders and scientists in a joint project. This approach becomes almost a philosophy, extending the research beyond simply problem solving towards synthesizing new bodies of knowledge with which to address complex systems problems (Stock & Burton, 2011).

Then, following our application of a “complex thought” in practice to our dialogue on “cultural sustainability” involving multiple backgrounds and approaches, interdisciplinarity arose easily as “inspiring exchanges”, as mentioned by Kagan (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015). However, transdisciplinarity appeared to be more difficult to achieve but key to face the challenge of the multiple approaches of “cultural sustainability” evidenced in writing our literature review. In fact, we needed to enter a “learning culture”, an artful inquiry that accepts ambivalences, contradictions and ambiguities and is open to dynamic complexity, as defined by Kagan (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015). Then, to navigate “cultural sustainability” requires a “transversal learning” made possible “through an

expanded rationality, striving for unity in complexity of knowledge, integrating different ways of knowing without simplifying them into one meta-discipline” (Kagan, as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

Transdisciplinarity is currently in a “heightened momentum” and is applied in a widening range of contexts, such as:

learning assessment, arts education, mental health, sanitation, engineering, sustainability, ecological economics, human population biology, informatics, knowledge organization, team-based holistic approaches to health-care, and student-centered curriculum integration. (Klein, 2013)

Specifically in a research and academic context joining efforts to advance sustainable development, such as our working group and the related COST Action “Investigating Cultural Sustainability”, the practice of transdisciplinarity can be perceived as promising to navigate a complex “cultural sustainability” involving multiple backgrounds and approaches, since it

prioritizes holism, allows multiple levels of reality and simultaneously valid and conflicting points of view and recognizes that systems’ behaviour emerges from the whole rather than from summing the behaviour of their parts. (Vanasupa *et al.*, 2014)

Fourth, if Kagan couples interdisciplinarity with transdisciplinarity to achieve transversal learning (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015), it is worth mentioning that, as a result of our working group, we have added interculturality to enhance an integrated cultural approach that opposes universal postulates, engages in dialogue, and intends to make differences mutually intelligible. This is an effort of translation between cultures that Santos calls “diatopical hermeneutics”, a method of interpretation (hermeneutics) which goes “through” (*dia* in Ancient Greek) “different places” (*topoi* in Ancient Greek), with one foot in one culture and the other in another (Santos, 2002). It is based on the idea that the *topoi* of an individual culture are as incomplete as the culture itself, therefore, the objective of a “diatopical hermeneutics” is not to achieve completeness, which is an unachievable goal, but raise the consciousness of reciprocal incompleteness to its possible maximum by engaging in the dialogue. Then,

a diatopical hermeneutics requires not only a different kind of knowledge, but also a different process of knowledge creation. It requires the production of a collective and participatory knowledge based on equal cognitive and emotional exchanges, a knowledge-as-emancipation rather than a knowledge-as-regulation. (Santos, 2002)

Our working group perceived “interculturality” as an important complement to “interdisciplinarity” and “transdisciplinarity” already identified by Kagan, since Santos’ “knowledge-as-emancipation” echoes Kagan’s perspective of “learning-able and response-able cultures of sustainability” which empower humans to change and reinvent their lives (as cited in Dessein *et al.*, 2015) as a clear expression of emancipation.

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Finally, we can understand “cultural sustainability” theoretically and in practice/policy as an opportunity for a different process of knowledge creation, integrated in an “ecology of knowledges”. Santos explains that the “ecology of knowledges” consists of promoting dialogue between scientific or humanistic knowledge that the university produces, and lay, popular, traditional, urban, peasant knowledges, coming from non-Western cultures (indigenous, of African or Oriental origin, etc.), circulating in society (Santos, 2013).

In practical terms, Santos’ ecology of knowledges promotes: the active coexistence of knowledges on the assumption that all of them, including scientific knowledge, can be enriched through dialogue; a wide range of actions valuing both scientific knowledge and of other practitioners, considered as helpful, shared by students and citizen groups; the creation of broader epistemic communities that convert the university into a public space of interknowledge where citizens and social groups intervene not only in the learners’ position (Santos, 2013).

Then, the process of understanding “cultural sustainability” is definitely a connecting complexity of conceptualisation, initiatives and practices from various sectors and sustainability players, as well as development and cultural policies at local, national and international levels, involving multiple backgrounds and approaches. Academia has an outstanding role to play in this field as a “public space of interknowledge” that the COST Action "Investigating Cultural Sustainability" illustrates, and whose results were discussed and shared among the research community and practitioners in the transdisciplinary conference “Culture(s) in Sustainable Futures: theories, policies, practices” held in Helsinki, Finland, on 6-8 May, 2015.

Our working group had the opportunity to participate in this final conference, where we presented the first results of our dialogue in the session “Framing Culture(s) in Sustainable Development: Breaking the Boundaries”. The session was focused on the different theories of cultural sustainability, as well as how it has been framed in the past and should be framed in the future. This experience enabled us to get a wider contact with various views on the topic, which emphasized that the definition of cultural sustainability is not universal. We understood that the field is still evolving and that the debate will continue regarding where culture belongs in sustainable development. Sustainability is itself a relatively young field, as one presenter pointed out, and there is still much to be researched and learned as it continues to evolve. The fact that we did not always understand the conceptual and field connections of other presentations confirms also the necessary openness to complex thought.

## CONCLUSION: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION ON CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

This article enabled us to understand how culture became related to and contributes today to the paradigm of sustainability after having entered the sustainable development process. We have shown that the economic-social-environmental three-pillar model was incomplete, and that culture is indeed an “integral missing link”. Our literature review revealed a paradigm shift introducing or redistributing

culture in a new sustainability equation with different existing approaches of concepts and practices, including development and cultural policies at local, national and international levels, where culture is considered to achieve sustainability and sustainability is considered in cultural policies.

Within the conceptual framework of sustainability, culture can be seen as a fourth pillar, or the connecting link between the other pillars, or the foundation for the other pillars. In the similar way, as scholars have contributed to further develop the three-pillar sustainability model, giving differentiated emphasis on each of its dimensions, research initiatives reviewed here have advanced the understanding of the sustainability paradigm shift related to culture and its impacts by revealing different approaches of culture within the conceptual framework of sustainability.

In fact, the European research network explored the concepts of culture, sustainability and sustainable development and learnt to embrace their multiple meanings and connotations (Dessein *et al.*, 2015). Its outputs offer a meaningful resource for building a comprehensive analytical framework for the structured study and application of ‘culture and sustainable development’ (Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

More specifically, we have tried to handle the complex association of ideas and perspectives that cultural sustainability embraces, in the perspective of a knowledge production. The differences and challenges we had to face in order to devise a common understanding became our main assets. In fact, we needed to complexify, to adopt a complex thought in order to make the connections that our multiple backgrounds require, and to mobilize all our different knowledges in order to make possible an intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue. Therefore, we have applied interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, two techniques already identified in the outputs of the COST Action "Investigating Cultural Sustainability", and enhanced the use of interculturality as a third one. In this aspect, our jointly authored essay constitutes a vivid experience of cultural sustainability, that is, an intercultural and integrated research involving and connecting our multiple backgrounds in building common complex understanding.

Finally, we envision two important open fields of development for the knowledge production on cultural sustainability. First, knowledge advances are expected through the development of the relationship between research and practice. We have evidenced in our literature review that culture has been integrated in the conceptual framework of sustainability following its entrance in the sustainable development process, which occurred through new policies starting to use a four-dimension framework including culture. These policies gave place to practical or grassroots experiments, namely in participatory processes of local and community development undertaking some form of sustainability planning with a cultural dimension, which makes this a rich field for further investigation and collaborative research (Jeannotte & Duxbury, 2015).

Second, the necessity and the use of specific techniques to handle the complex association of ideas and perspectives that cultural sustainability embraces will certainly have an impact on the attitude and profile of the “knowledge producers” or researchers. For example, in the case of transdisciplinarity, “personal

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experiences and culture are increasingly viewed as just as important as one's educational background for success in doing transdisciplinary work, as are intellectual risk taking, a sense of transgressiveness, and creativity" (Augsburg, 2014, p. 244). Then, "one learns from one's culture and experiences, as well as by the cultivation of certain attitudes and competencies, how to become transdisciplinary" (Augsburg, 2014).

Both perspectives of development for the knowledge production on cultural sustainability confirm our understanding as an opportunity for a different process of knowledge creation, integrated in an "ecology of knowledges".

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The online pilot course "Cultural Sustainability" (Master's / PhD level) was held from April to May 2014 and organised in collaboration with: the University of Jyväskylä/Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Unit of Cultural Policy (Finland); the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra (Portugal); and Jagiellonian University/Institute of Culture (Poland). All universities were members of the COST Action "Investigating Cultural Sustainability" network. The work of the network was supported by the European COST Association (Cooperation in Science and Technology) and funded within the European Commission's research programme Horizon 2020. The course is now established at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) as part of the MA in Cultural Policy.

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ISABEL FERREIRA & NANCY DUXBURY

## CULTURAL PROJECTS, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, AND SMALL CITY SUSTAINABILITY

### INTRODUCTION

Participation in arts and, more broadly, cultural activities is generally considered as valuable, personally and socially, with participation viewed as a vehicle that fosters creativity, confidence, and other “life-skills” in personal development (Robinson, 2001; Matarasso, 2000), provides venues and occasions for shared learning (Melville, 2013), increases civic engagement (Keaney, 2006), contributes to social cohesion among diverse residents (Jeannotte, 2003), and builds social ties that can contribute to local development and resiliency.

Cultural participation can be a powerful driver for individual and collective capacity to (individually and collectively) rethink values, norms, and behavioural conducts (Duxbury, 2013). For individuals, it can increase self-confidence and self-belief (Cowling, 2004; Harland et al., 2000) and raise competences of expression (Gould, 2005; Harland et al., 2000) and other norms of conduct of citizens in the public sphere. Socially, cultural activities can create spaces and platforms that can lead to increased levels of trust in society (Delaney and Keaney, 2006). Altogether, these effects can create a virtuous cycle in which “culturally engaged” citizens become more willing to participate in other types of civic activities and processes, and become more active and engaged citizens (Keaney, 2006; Delaney and Keaney, 2006; Robson, 2003; Jeannotte, 2003).

Contextualized by this research, this paper investigates the relevance of citizens’ engagement in cultural processes and the implications of this participation on local sustainability using Pamela, a medium-sized city in Portugal, as a case study. Compared to larger cities, research on small and medium-sized cities has highlighted how smaller cities have specificities, specializations, and cultural identities that may constitute opportunities for development (Lorentzen and van Heur, 2011; Bell and Jayne, 2006); tend to have greater transparency and accountability and a greater ability to promote participatory democracy and openness to civil society (Francisco, 2007); and may be more able to resist the forces of purely commercial gentrification through “promoting the multiple facets of the city, generating a strong sense of place, and taking advantage of scale to promote community involvement” (Garrett-Petts and Dubinsky, 2005: 2). These advantages are not, however, free of contradictions, since the specific conditions of small and medium-sized cities are also connected to a cultural conservatism and traditionalism that may lead to a crystalized self-image and ways of acting that may reflect a “small-mindedness and parochialism” (Hristova, 2015: 49).

Small and medium-sized cities are also affected by global and urban cross-cutting issues, including a number of issues around power relations, such as the



deepening of inequalities and political ungovernability (Harvey, 1989/2002), the potential for social emancipation through citizenship (Turner, 1993; Bellah et al., 1985), access to decision-making (Polese and Stren, 2000), and how these concepts are materialized in the governance of the city. The debate about alternative paths is increasing, as is interest in forms of democracy that deepen the active participation of citizens in decision-making, planning, and regulation of urban life (Saint-Martin, 2006; Ascher, 2006; Santos, 2003; Guerra, 2006; Booher, 2008; Borja, 2003). This research contributes to this debate though offering an example and assessment of cultural participation in a small city as a pathway to greater citizen participation in other civic matters.

This paper is based on an analysis of the cultural and political situation in Palmela, Portugal, in which broadly based community-engaged cultural activities provide the context and foundations for a vibrant civic life. The paper examines how the processes of these cultural activities and the International Festival of Street Arts (FIAR) in particular encourage positive relations between participation in culture and in local governance processes. It then considers how this participation contributes to the local sustainability of Palmela in terms of cultural and urban governance and the expansion of the local public sphere. The paper gives particular attention to this trajectory in the local context to understand its effects in the community, based on the descriptions and discourses of citizens, municipal staff and City Council members, and members of cultural associations. The paper presents the initial results of research in process<sup>1</sup>, based on fieldwork conducted in the city of Palmela. It outlines the theoretical frameworks informing this work, the research methodologies employed, and the city's political and cultural contexts. It then provides initial assessments and reflections on two research questions: Does participation in cultural activities influence participation in public life and in public policies? If so, how does that influence contribute to local sustainability?

#### CULTURE, PARTICIPATION, AND LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

In the research literature, what is defined as participation is inconsistent and not always clear (Jancovich, 2015). Ranging from attendance at performance and exhibitions, to engaging in creative practice, to deliberative and aesthetic or symbolic types, participation in arts and culture can take multiple forms and lead to different results. Furthermore, looking at the issue of participation from a citizen participation perspective widens the scope of activities and roles considered.

Sherry Arnstein's widely cited Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) provides an institution-centric view of levels of participation, discussing eight types of participation, ranging from non-participation (therapy, manipulation), to tokenism (placation, consultation, informing), to citizen power (citizen control, delegated power, and partnership). A shortcoming of the model is its implicit view that "participation is something that needs to be fostered, rather than something that happens naturally whenever people come together" (Sani et al., 2015, p. 12). Wilcox's Ladder of Participation (1994) also provides an institution-centric view, but with people "ultimately being supported in their independent community

interests and initiatives” (Sani et al., 2015: 12). Simon (2010) also highlights the degree of audience independence in participatory projects.

From an institutional perspective, Jancovich (2015) argues that long-term participative approaches must be embedded in the management of an organization. Research literature suggests that “long-term commitment to participatory decision-making is essential to increase rates of participation and in order for arts organizations to embrace organizational change” (Jancovich, 2015: 20), and practice shows that transformation to long-term, participative deliberative practices requires “authentic commitment to work with people and give away power ... embedded over a number of years” (arts manager, quoted p. 23). In the current research study, participation is considered from a multi-dimensional perspective. The International Festival of Street Arts in Palmela incorporates different levels or types of participation within its planning and production phases – from reception through to hosting and decision-making.

In a review of public participation in cultural projects, Sani et al. (2015) identify the need to think about participation as activating agency and thus re-focus participation initiatives on building community capability and self-determination. From this perspective, participative processes should provide citizens resources to collectively “mak[e] change happen in their communities and becom[e] more capable in the process” (p. 72). Looking at participation through a capability development lens means that “participation is less focused on what people can do for institutions but rather what people [individuals, groups, and whole communities] can do for themselves through using institutional resources – a major, conscious move away from an institution-centric view” (pp. 71-72). This approach “challenges the notion of ‘participation’ as doing *for* or even *with*, but rather focuses on communities doing for themselves, with the help of a range of resources” (p. 72).

Participation is central to local sustainability, in its political and civic dimension, in two ways. On one hand, *public participation* represents the right to participate in the decision-making about public policies, strategic orientations and management projects of public services in cities (Santos, 2003; Guerra, 2006; Booher, 2008). On the other hand, public participation is also viewed as a core process to design and implement sustainable models of development (Ascher, 2006; Borja, 2003), acknowledging that values, rules, norms, agendas, and institutional culture form the foundation for introducing innovation in models of development (Murray et al., 2010). In this way, culture, in the broad constituent sense of “cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and fundamental convictions that constitute individual and collective identity” (Kangas and Sokka, 2015: 141) represents the social anatomy in which motivations and collective imaginaries set up the context for sustainability. It feeds sociability as a “the glue of similarity” by nurturing the sources of cohesion, commonality, and sense of identity (Kong, 2009: 3), bringing together individual and social dimensions.

Participation of citizens in culture has a significant role for local sustainability. Artistic processes and activities can address the complexity and symbolic dimensions of sustainable urban development, motivating public discussion on

collective issues and catalyzing action on alternative, more sustainable local development trajectories (Duxbury, 2013). Cultural participation expands civic urbanity (Landry, 2015), raises civic pride and collective memories, and provides a fundamental way to reconcile tensions and conflicting interests in cities. Art-led collective actions and *activist* interventions, an increasingly present phenomenon of social activism through the arts, further extend participation in cultural/artistic actions as platforms for pursuing the broader public good. Activism initiatives can have important impacts in reinvigorating and contributing to the life, identity, and social sustainability of neighbourhoods and other local spaces (Dragičević et al., 2015). Participatory, creative practices can contribute to “social inclusion, urban vibrancy and renewal, and the incremental development of meaningful places” (Hristova et al., 2015: 6). Participation in arts and culture can lead to an expansion of culture in the public sphere as a public good and a cultural right fundamental to urban development (Dragičević et al., 2015).

Such dynamic cycles are grounded in the local context and in the configuration of the place, which shape patterns of cultural participation. The “throwntogetherness” formed by elements of collective memory and place identity (Gilmore, 2013: 93) reveals “tacit and embodied knowledges,” “hidden practices and values,” and “vernacular” forms of engagement (p. 94). These specific aspects of each community shape the cultural dynamic and configure the positioning of culture as a fundamental dimension of sustainable local development. In this study, *sustainability* in local development focuses on the articulation of social, environmental, cultural, and economic components of local development and the crosscutting aspects of governance in this articulation.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last decade, the conceptualization of relations among culture, sustainability, and community development has been in an exploratory phase (Soini and Birkeland, 2014). The diversity of local situations in which these discussions have unfolded – in research literature and in policy and planning practices – has encouraged pursuits to better understand these connections as locally specific and inclusive (Duxbury and Jeannotte, 2011, 2012). Recent literature reinforces the position of culture in local sustainability both as a process-character where systems of values, power and economics flow (Anheier and Hoelscher, 2015), as well as with a more narrow focus on cultural activity as an artistic process that can “create new spaces for dialogue and enable new ways of thinking” and “catalyse shifts of societal consciousness, increasing both awareness and knowledge” (Kangas and Sokka, 2015: 151). In this study, *culture* is analysed both in the narrow sense, as the artistic dynamic of the cities, and in the broad sense, as the culture of values, norms and institutional culture that shape community and political agendas.

#### METHODOLOGY

This paper presents the initial results of research in process, which is based on fieldwork conducted in the city of Palmela. The methods applied – documentary research, interviews, and direct observation – were triangulated, analytically and

methodologically. Documentation was collected from the Internet portal of the City of Palmela (reports, plans, regulations), the Palmela Public Library (publications about cultural and public engagement projects and programming events) and through personal contacts (reports, plans, and internal documentation of the municipality). The lead author conducted eight semi-directive interviews (involving two politicians, three staff members of the City of Palmela, and three citizens and members of cultural organizations) and 16 exploratory interviews (involving four politicians, four staff members of the City of Palmela, and eight citizens and members of cultural organizations). During six visits to Palmela, the research also benefited from direct observation of public events (local government events such as participatory budget meetings and other public meetings as well as cultural events), with field notes and detailed information about the projects and their actors compiled during these visits.

### A CITY OF CULTURAL VITALITY AND COLLECTIVE PROJECTS<sup>3</sup>

Palmela is a medium-sized city in Portugal (63,000 residents) and is located near the national capital, Lisbon. In the Portuguese context, Palmela is an exemplar case of active engagement in urban government and cultural city life. It has a very dynamic cultural environment, with many activities organized by non-governmental organizations and the municipality. For more than a century, cultural associations in Palmela have encouraged many citizens to participate in the cultural arena, contributing to a public space where participation is welcome and nurtured. The municipality, particularly since the 1990s, has recognised the richness of this environment and has been supporting both the cultural dynamic and the engagement of citizens and civil society in urban governance processes.

The predisposition of the Palmela community to association, and its presence in the public space through arts and public participation in public life, has motivated the City government to undertake many participative initiatives in different public policy areas. The participatory budget of Palmela was the first to be implemented in Portugal. Thematic public seminars were organized in the 1990s dedicated to education, agriculture, social issues, and economic development, including the preparation of the first Palmela Forum in 2000, which promoted a wide discussion about the city and its development priorities. From those meetings, other initiatives were born and municipal councils were established, like the Local Council of Education and the Local Council for Social Action. The City has also nurtured the participation of children and youth, leading to the development of a Plan for Promoting Child and Youth Participation in 2015.<sup>4</sup>

Within this general context, the 1990s were particularly important for culture in the city, when significant steps were made for cultural policies, led by Mayor Carlos Sousa and Luis Guerreiro, the head of culture at the City. They informed themselves of the local-level participative methodologies of the time.<sup>5</sup> During this period, a network of cultural, educational, sports, and citizenship policies and projects were brought together under the umbrella of a participative public management approach. It was a vibrant period marked by many initiatives and

innovative projects that aimed to stimulate dialogue across sectors and stakeholders with most of them being highly participative.

The City developed three municipal support programs for music, theatre, and dance and, over time, territorially decentralized cultural programming, now run by three units, two in the urban areas and one in the rural area of Palmela. The introduction of cultural policies added more sophisticated and contemporary artistic languages to an already-rich cultural field. Local cultural activities advanced significantly through reinforced local cultural staff, new support for arts and cultural activities, and the creation of municipal artistic and cultural projects. The Municipal Program for Associations' Development was also launched during the 1990s, including not only financial support but also educational resources that allowed local associations to improve the capacity of their members and quality of their activities.<sup>6</sup>

The 2006 Forum "Culture Palmela 21" was an important moment for culture in the city. The Forum was an initiative of the City to promote public debate about the present and future of culture in Palmela and to collect contributions for a Strategic Plan for Culture, and saw the participation of more than 100 artists, craftspeople, representatives of associative groups of citizens, and residents. The high participation was a reflection of the participatory tradition in public meetings and also reinforced the creation of links and synergies between the various participants, highlighting the intersections of the cultural programming of Palmela.

Many projects have emerged from Palmela's associative traditions that combine cultural, social, educational, and recreational goals and even urban regeneration (e.g., Fantasiarte and I Participate, see footnotes 6 and 8). These activities, some more formal, some less, follow a movement that is not always continuous and linear, occurring in various artistic fields, and emerging from various sources. Local cultural organizations regularly produce events in partnership with the City that create dialogues among erudite, popular and contemporaneous artistic languages. The cultural agenda of Palmela also has a significant dimension that is not dependent on the City's strategy or funding, positioning the cultural agents in a more equitable status in joint initiatives and projects. These associations are thus more autonomous and some have old, strong relations with their associates, whom they easily mobilize.

Two such associations with a strong presence in the cultural dynamic of the village of Palmela<sup>7</sup> are Os Loureiros and Humanitária, philharmonic societies that originated in the Palmelense Philharmonic Society (founded in 1852). Almost every citizen of the village of Palmela belongs to one of these groups, following their own familiar tradition of membership. Each philharmonic society has its own facilities and preserves a strong but (mostly) respectful and healthy competition. They promote several artistic fields, ranging from music and singing to dance and theatre, and give shape to many artistic groups. Thousands of students receive their musical education in these societies and some of them follow an artistic career. (There are similar organizations with their own music schools and philharmonic bands in the other districts of Palmela.)

Theatre has also had a long-standing, significant presence in the village, becoming more active in the 1990s, with several companies, some of them professional and many of them with educational goals.<sup>8</sup> A diversified range of dance education and presentation opportunities is also available.<sup>9</sup> These many associations and artistic groups produce their own public events (locally, nationally, and internationally), and also interact with each other in the conception, organization, and performance of collective projects and events. This dynamic gains visibility in annual events, some locally important and others a reference point in the national and international cultural context, such as the International Festival of Cabeçudos e Gigantes ('Big Heads and Giants', a festival of giant puppets). Out of this collaborative milieu, the community generates a series of dynamic, participatory festivals and other events, combining local traditions with erudite and contemporary artistic languages.

It is in this context of a community that is simultaneously very active in both cultural and civic affairs that the International Festival of Street Arts (Festival Internacional de Artes de Rua – FIAR<sup>10</sup>), the most ambitious arts organization in Palmela, is able to succeed in catalyzing the engagement of a substantial proportion of the community. Palmela's most recognized event, FIAR is held in the public space of the historic centre of Palmela. It brings together the artistic community to present original events and shows from both inside and outside the community. The Festival, first held in 1999 is co-organized by FIAR in partnership with the Municipality of Palmela, the theatre company O Bando, several local societies, and the active involvement and participation of the community. Over the years, FIAR has been growing as a street arts centre, focusing on the development of arts in the public space.

FIAR brings together citizens, artists, associations, City Council, and municipal staff in two important moments: first, in the conception and organization of the event and, secondly, in a common experience that articulates their identity as an active community. In its planning, the festival involves several cultural associations and the residential community, setting up participative dialogue relations among the associations, between the associations and the City, and between these and the wider community. In terms of cultural programming, local associations (amateur and professional) participate in the creation of contemporary representations based on traditional customs, promoting the arts born in Palmela, and brings together the old (and ever rivals) philharmonic bands and young internationally-recognized artists raised in Palmela. In terms of the organization of the event, citizens participate by offering their houses and backyards for logistic support and for performances. In this way, the Festival becomes a cultural feast that spreads from the streets to the parties in the backyards of the residents of the historic centre.

By privileging a collaborative approach, FIAR establishes a network with local actors and agents to promote and encourage the public in appreciating more complex artistic languages. Its mission to introduce innovative artistic languages is centred on the participation of citizens in the festival-building processes and is carried with a contagious enthusiasm and perseverance. The organization contends

that amplifying participation in the cultural scene stimulates practices of participation more widely.

Furthermore, extensive local involvement in the festival has catalysed the development of other cultural organizations and contributed to capacity building in the artistic community. The Festival has brought in national and international cultural actors, bringing an array of enriching experiences to its audiences. These international actors have been fundamental to the incubation of new projects and associations, since the Festival has always included elements providing artistic education to the local artistic community.<sup>11</sup>

Analytical reflections on cultural participation and local sustainability  
In Palmela, the artistic activities animated by local associations and collectives, over many decades, have allowed for and encouraged continuous resident engagement.<sup>12</sup> This associative dynamic forms the socio-cultural foundations of the community and contributes to maintaining a territory that cares for, nurtures, and invests in participation in public life.

This long tradition of community events – in which citizens attend, engage with, and organize cultural activities – has produced an unusual scene among Portuguese small cities, leading to Palmela becoming recognized as one of the most innovative cities in the Portuguese cultural context and, in the context of a young democracy, fostering ‘advanced’ citizenship values in terms of valuing participation in public life. As mentioned previously, in Portugal, public involvement is still in the process of being affirmed, being less frequent and generally with less intense initiatives, reflecting the strong effect of the dictatorship (until 1974) in constraining public dialogue and community interactions. But in Palmela, the presence of many cultural collectives and associations has mobilized many families to attend and to participate in the production of amateur and professional cultural activities for many decades. This means that the collectives and associations have kept alive a space of public life where the community gets together and interacts regularly.

Cultural participation has been the pathway to individual and collective empowerment, expanding the access of citizens to the public sphere and providing a fertile ground for culture itself, motivating dynamic cultural productions and regular public dialogues about local cultural (and other) development, with significant involvement of the community and local agents. The participatory cultural dynamic in Palmela is reflected both in the high levels of participation in “The Forum Culture” (2006) and in the way that FIAR has become a cultural feast that brings together the community of the village with the artistic community in a collective artistic experience.

More broadly, the public’s expectation for participation has fostered a local climate and ‘general culture’ that contributes to the quality of both democracy and cultural development, and forms a dynamic social platform. This local culture (broadly defined) is the glue that brings together the strong socio-cultural dynamic and widening pathways of participation, raising collective awareness and valorising both culture and the right to participate in public matters as fundamental aspects of the sustainability of this small city. In Palmela, residents’ long-standing high level of participation in culture influences the local system of values and puts

in motion codes of conduct for participation in the public arena, amplifying access and citizens' capabilities for participation in other urban policies and projects.

Different dimensions of local sustainability have been influenced within this context, including the *cultural dimension*, through, for example, building capacities and a permanent presence of citizens directly involved in creation and arts management; the *social dimension*, through nurturing an active, collaborative community with regular appropriation of the public space; and overall *governance*, through incorporating an array of levels of participation and democratic innovations within local governance processes. The remainder of this section outlines some preliminary observations and assessments in these three areas, noting that they are intertwined in practice.

### *Cultural dimension*

Local associations continuously feed an array of cultural activities into the local scene, and it is the widespread and long-running community engagement that fuels FIAR and other cultural activity, coupled with partnerships among organizations. Contemporary participatory practices in culture are driven by diverse partnerships that bring together the City, cultural organizations, and the community. FIAR, for example, regularly brings together a variety of partners into an area of on going collaboration, incorporating different levels of participation within planning, production, and reception phases. Municipal cultural staff members see themselves as animators, researchers, and mediators in the territory's communities, viewing artistic intervention as "imminently political and social" (P8, min. 3). Local cultural policies bring together both the broad and narrow senses of culture.

Within this context, widespread public participation in cultural activities is an important means to provide citizens with the skills and confidence to express themselves in public arenas – both cultural and political – and thus reduce inequalities of expression and participation in public life. The continuous participative planning, organization, and implementation processes serve to enlighten both the cultural and civic dimensions of the community. Over the years, citizens' capacities have grown, with intentional attention directed to building various capacities, including the development of skills in arts management. For example, FIAR has incubated new and pre-existing cultural projects developed by artists and groups of artists from the municipality. Some, such as Os Ausentes do Alentejo, a group of Cante Alentejano<sup>13</sup> singers, began as amateurs but with the mentoring and training efforts of FIAR's directors have become semi-professional and gained regional and national visibility. In other cases, the creators were already on a path of professionalization and FIAR pushed them forward into national and international networks and circuits of culture, such as the maestro and composer Jorge Salgueiro.

This approach reflects a long-term organizational commitment to the traditions of public associative activity and fostering citizen engagement in both cultural activities and in community life more generally. For example, the participation of the Association of Seniors from Palmela in the first editions of the Festival led to



the creation of the theatre group *As Avozinhas* (“The Grannies” in English) in 2009. This group contributes positively to the personal and interpersonal development of elderly citizens as well as to social and community development through active participation in new experiences of contemporary arts.

### *Social dimension*

Through partnerships and arrays of activities, the pathways of citizen participation in Palmela are enlarged, activating individual and collective agency while reinforcing the focus on what the community can do for itself with available resources (Sani et al., 2015). Many ties coexist within and among different networks. Being a small city, sometimes these ties are networks of influence in which dubious or awkward situations might happen, like overlapping positions in the City, in the political parties, and in non-governmental organizations. But this a consequence, and probably a lesser evil, of a community in which participation is high and quite common, either by attending and engaging in cultural activities, or by engaging in the organizational life of associations and collectivities, in which citizens develop their argumentative and dialogical skills.

Through FIAR, relations among citizens, members’ associations, and City Council and staff are strengthened and the public sphere is reinforced and potentially expanded through enhanced cross-sectorial dialogues. In creating spaces in which these relations are nurtured, FIAR raises the possibility of extending or transforming these partnerships into crucibles for social innovations, in what Dragičević et al. (2015) see as a path to expand the role of culture in the public sphere as a public good and a right.

### *Governance*

The long-running participatory practices in culture, grounded in a rich associative territory, set the stage for introducing participatory initiatives in different public policy areas. In general, as citizens’ skills and confidence to express themselves in public arenas grow (e.g., through cultural participation), raising their competences of expression and the norms of conduct in public life, the public sphere itself incrementally expands, becoming accessible to more and more people over time and reducing inequalities of expression and participation in public life. In Palmela, this process has created a virtuous cycle in which a wide array of citizens, many starting by participating in arts and cultural activities, have become more willing to participate in processes of public policies (cultural policies as well as policies in other areas). This rich democratic field has, in turn, provided fertile ground for the development of more participative models of urban management and governance.

In its politics and policies, the City of Palmela has acknowledged the associative movement as something very valuable that needs to be in the centre of cultural policies and that influences political life more generally. As one interviewee noted,

... when I arrived here I was a bit surprised with the gregarious level of these communities. This gregarious level manifested itself in what, in behaviour, it is not, I mean, in assembly situations, ... I found that people were simply, spontaneously, and quickly taking the initiative to speak and discuss

.... Over the years, I think I learned here, in relation to the municipality of Palmela, that this fact, this predisposition to be present, to say your opinion, to take sides in matters, I came to realize that maybe is related with the associative and community tradition ... (P1, parag. 2)

The strong associative movement..., which is alive and moves and is demanding, must have an answer, must be accompanied, must have our presence as a public responsibility... (P1, parag. 96)<sup>14</sup>

Since the 1990s, a participatory model of urban governance has taken root in Palmela, influenced by its “citizen traditions,” and an interactive participation takes place in public meetings and events. In these times of crisis for representative democracy, Palmela has expanded the possibilities for its citizens to participate in the decision-making, planning, and regulation of urban life and its sustainability. The local management of power is handled through a participative management approach in which dialogue and interaction about public policies take place through open forums (for example, the Palmela Forum of 2000 and ‘Culture Pamela 21’ in 2006, mentioned earlier), advisory councils (for example, the Local Council of Education and the Local Council for Social Action), and participative projects (for example, the municipal Participatory Budget, and the ‘I Participate’ programme and projects directed to children, described in footnote 6).

Public participation has also been integrated into the multiple community projects launched in the 1990s and the following decades. These projects have articulated different dimensions of local sustainability and established bridges between culture and education, environment, and economic development. For example, Fantasiarte, a project of education through the arts using the resources of Palmela’s artistic community, was launched in 1994 as a joint initiative of the departments of culture and education of the City and is still active today. Over the years, the project has been responsible for the incubation of associative initiatives and groups of theatre and, especially, for the preparation of citizens to become more active in their communities and even to become leaders. A second example is the urban regeneration program, Recovery and Dynamization of the Palmela Historical Centre (2009), which brought together organizations from multiple sectors (cultural, social, business, etc.) to focus on revitalization of the historic centre of the city in a sustainable manner.

Altogether, the participatory processes within cultural life, urban governance, and arts management seem to benefit each other, restoring and reinforcing the ties between the personal and community life. These ties become collective memories that carry huge potential to reinvent and augment the community’s rhythms and intense dynamics in public space. Cultural participation continually feeds a

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collective memory of shared experiences, giving rise to a collective imaginary in which culture and engagement in community life become organic parts of Palmela's model and dynamics of development. This is certainly not a definite dynamic, but a cyclical one, susceptible to advances and withdrawals, which create a collective awareness of the relevance and power of collective action.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Palmela provides a case where four important elements come together: a long-term legacy of active, community-driven cultural participation; citizens' expectations for and valuing of participation and engagement in cultural and civic activities and processes; an openness of local institutions to cooperate and partner on initiatives; and a willingness of local organizations to develop diverse types of opportunities and expanding pathways for public participation. Outcomes of this dynamic include: individual and collective skill development and self-confidence to speak and act in public situations; valorisation and nurturing of shared public values and expectations of engaged participation; a cooperative social fabric, regularly renewed, rewoven, and extended; and the development of a shared imaginary and moments of collective memory linked to collective action. Together, these elements have created and fuelled participative dynamics and governance in the city, fostering articulations among different sectors and cooperation among diverse actors, expanding the local public sphere, and forming the overarching framework for community-engaged, locally resonant, and sustainable development trajectories.

Palmela's cultural and municipal organizations take advantage of its small scale to promote community involvement. The long-term participative approaches embedded in their governance configure a strong sense of place on the "throwntogetherness" of Palmela (Gilmore, 2013) and the "vernacular" forms of participation have inspired the introduction of democratic innovations, like participatory budgeting, in urban governance. As a moment of reflection on the ongoing research, this paper has examined how the public processes of participation in Palmela, crystallized in the FIAR festival, reflect positive relations between participation in culture and in governance processes. It considered how this participation contributes to the local sustainability of Palmela in terms of enhancing and propelling cultural and urban governance, articulating between different domains of society, and expanding the local public sphere. More broadly, it also aimed to inform thinking about the role of cultural activities in the context of local sustainability by exploring how public engagement/civic participation and cultural participation are linked.

From a research perspective, many challenges remain, for example, the difficulties of directly linking engaged cultural participation with the multidimensional aspects of local sustainability processes in a community, which are time-specific and simultaneously influenced by multiple factors and social impulses. The multiple definitions and aspects of participation in culture further complicate this endeavour. Moreover, while relations between cultural engagement

and other public participation are evident on a general scale, they are difficult to track more concretely within the “messiness” of everyday life, personal pathways, and community change. The research continues with particular attention to aspects related to sustainability, including the organizational challenges for collective cultural projects as FIAR and the articulation of agendas in order for such cultural initiatives to remain socially innovative and proactive, open to dialogue with the community, and linked to the longer-term sustainable development of the territory.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The research is part of ongoing doctoral research that focuses on the strengthening of social, civic, and political participation of citizens as one of the main challenges in the governance of cities today. It investigates how this issue has been addressed within small and medium-sized cities through comparative research between Portuguese and Canadian cities.
- <sup>2</sup> The sustainability dimension is informed by Polese and Stren (2000); Ahern (2002); European Council of Town Planners (2002); and Ferreira (2005).
- <sup>3</sup> This section has been developed from reviews of a wide array of local documents and the interviews conducted as part of the broader research project.
- <sup>4</sup> Two projects and a programme have been developed under this plan. The project “I Participate” brings practices of participation in decision-making into the educational context. The project “Local Power: I Know, I Participate” aims to promote dialogue among children and local elected politicians. The programme “Acting for the Rights: I Participate,” developed in partnership with UNICEF, aims to stimulate educational environments that are more inclusive, participative and respecting of children’s rights.
- <sup>5</sup> Participation in international networks has been important for the City, which has been open to embrace and introduce new paradigms. For example, Palmela is a member of networks such as Local Agenda 21, Educating Cities, the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, and Agenda 21 for Culture.
- <sup>6</sup> In 2015, the program was revised through a highly participative process, in which more than 100 members of cultural, sports and recreational associations and collectives participated.
- <sup>7</sup> The Palmela territory consists of five parts: three urban districts, including the villages of Palmela, Pinhal Novo, and Quinta do Anjo, and two big rural districts: Marateca and Poceirão.
- <sup>8</sup> Among them, the company O Bando, which specializes in street theatre as participation in community life, is one of the most recognized in the Portuguese cultural scene and one of the oldest cultural cooperatives. It started in 1974, just after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April Portuguese Revolution (when many joint initiatives were triggered) and has had a permanent residence in Palmela since 2000.
- <sup>9</sup> Dance activities are promoted by the City in its Municipal Program of Dance through support to DançArte, a dance company that has its permanent residence in Palmela, with whom the City co-organizes Dance Week, an important event in the dance panorama of the country.
- <sup>10</sup> *Fiar* translates to “spinning” in English.
- <sup>11</sup> In recent years, severe economic constraints resulting from the national economic crisis and austerity policies have forced many cuts in culture, and the continued realization of the Festival has become

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uncertain. Since 2014 the FIAR association has had to drastically reduce its activity, suspending the Festival's regular edition. However, it still keeps the project alive with smaller initiatives in the public space, anticipating better days for financial support to give continuity to the collective work.

<sup>12</sup> This old and strong associative dynamic, which has been essentially built through cultural projects, ranging from over-100-year-old cultural collectives, to municipal programmes of theatre, music and dance, to education in the arts at all schools in Palmela, to collective projects that bring together old and new artistic languages through old and new associations, such as within FIAR.

<sup>13</sup> Cante Alentejano is a Portuguese music genre based on vocal music from the Alentejo region, which was designated UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2014.

<sup>14</sup> All quotes from interviews conducted in this research, translated from Portuguese by lead author.

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LOES VELDPAUS & ANA PEREIRA RODERS

## HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE APPROACH AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

### INTRODUCTION: HERITAGE IN AN URBAN AGE

Urban development and the protection of heritage are often positioned as opposing powers in the management of cities, while one can just as well argue that they are two sides of the same coin (Araoz, 2013). Heritage gets accused of being one of the 'usual suspects' of local grass-roots opposition to urban development, while development pressures are perceived as threatening, for endangering the continuation of cultural heritage resources (Fairclough et al., 2008). In heritage theory and supranational policy, the trend is to recommend a holistic, integrated and multidisciplinary management of resources, by means of a new approach in heritage management: and urban landscape approach. For the urban context, the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape promotes this landscape approach.

Cities have gained a central place in cultural, economic, environmental and social policymaking and there is wide and transdisciplinary interest in regional and urban cultures (Soja, 2011). This age has therefore already been coined the urban age. Since the second half of the 19th century, large parts of the world have seen rapid urbanization, urban growth and urban renewal. This urban and urbanizing environment is expected to become more important for humankind in the decades ahead. In the 1980s, cities became a lens into the larger economic and political shifts of the emergent new global era, which increased the urge to rebuild entire urban centres and prepare them to become platforms for the current urban century (Sassen, 2011). During this process, cities became strategic and their management increasingly complex in nature. There is growing interest in the increasingly urban condition of the planet, if only for the increasing interest in labelling cities as smart, sustainable or resilient (De Jong et al., 2015).

However, the urban can no longer be understood (if it ever was) as a bounded, enclosed site of social relations (Brenner and Schmid, 2014). Urbanization processes are not bounded by municipal or even national boundaries: they take place simultaneously on various levels and at multiple locations, and are thus to be managed accordingly. The urban 'condition' is now understood as a historic dynamic process, in which larger urban areas magnify the opportunity for social and cultural interaction (Bettencourt, 2013). At the same time, the presence of culture and heritage increases the attractiveness and sustainability of an urban area (Auclair and Fairclough, 2015; Van Duijn and Rouwendal, 2012) and thus likely stimulates growth. This implies a cycle that can be both virtuous and vicious, but will always entail the creation or reuse of urban resources while others disappear or are destroyed. This process will likely be accompanied by accumulating



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development pressures and needs for transformation, particularly in areas that constitute a high level of cultural value.

Heritage management in the urban context for long focused on conserving the fabric of the past for future generations (Pendlebury et al., 2009). While this might often still be the case, a change in thinking can be observed. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the approach slowly shifted from conserving historic fabric to managing resourceful urban areas. Change is no longer used as a binary concept with (0) *no* for protected resources and (1) *yes* for all other resources. The level of change is gradual and related to the, also gradual level of value. Third, the focus was on a 'site', while it is now on the *processes* that create a site. Therefore, the focus is now on the processes of integral management of urban resources and their values, generally called the 'landscape approach' (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2015). The landscape approach as a new approach in environmental management has been the framework for more recent supranational urban policies. The approach is holistic, and aims for the integration of urban heritage management with larger socioeconomic development frameworks.

In this context heritage is thus defined as a process that contributes to sustainable development. Not only by being an urban resource that can be recycled, but even more so, by the social and cultural contribution it makes everyday to the human environment, and to quality of life. "As the future of humanity hinges on the effective planning and management of resources, conservation has become a strategy to achieve a balance between urban growth and quality of life on a sustainable basis." At least, that is what was globally agreed in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape. The main aim is to enhance the quality of the cultural landscape while acknowledging its inherently dynamic nature, in order to allow communities to (continue to) prosper. This view of heritage, as a process that contributes through cultural sustainability to human well-being is becoming more mainstream.

## THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE

The landscape approach was developed by and within several adjoining disciplines, such as rural, cultural, urban and natural landscape management and territorial governance. 'Landscape' can be a slippery notion, and as such landscape, and a subsequent 'landscape approach', needs to be further defined (Phillips, 2015). Landscape is a crucial concept for many academic and professional disciplines (Turner, 2006). The development of a landscape approach is strongly entangled with theory on landscape as a concept, as it develops in cultural geography and urban studies. Landscape in this case refers to how humans affect geographic space as well as to real places (Nassauer, 2012). This notion of landscape is universal, dynamic, hierarchical and holistic; it cannot be understood or managed except through an integrated, multidisciplinary approach that embraces all its components (Taylor et al., 2015; Brown et al. 2005). The landscape approach is therefore not about transformation in itself, but about guiding the nature of the transformation. It addresses the quality of the resources and relationships that form a landscape over

time (Cortina, 2011; Dalglish, 2012). This goes hand in hand with a shift in thinking in culture- and heritage-led studies. The focus of those fields has traditionally been on materiality, and on aiming to decipher embodied meaning and social expectations (Latham and McCormack, 2004). More recently, however, the focus has been on understanding the material and immaterial as resources of a more performative, constitutive nature. Following actor-network theory, heritage theory is moving towards defining objects as actors or agents, creators of value, rather than as symbols that represent value (Pendlebury, 2013; Yaneva, 2013). Heritage is seen as the ever-present interplay of resources, standards and values, cross-linking past, present and future societies (Winter, 2012). To manage such interplay in a more integral and ethical way, heritage is conditionally framed by a conceptual landscape that incorporates social, economic and environmental factors, through space and time (Stobbelaar and Pedroli, 2011). Such a landscape easily crosses policies, nations, disciplines and scales, and thus also the boundaries that would traditionally be defined to manage heritage in an urban context.

When it comes to the historic environment, guidance on landscape approach can be found reflected in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). HUL defines a historic urban landscape as a landscape that goes beyond the city core, to include hinterland, metropolitan regions, urban peripheries and peri-urban zones, from World Heritage to wastelands. A Historic Urban Landscape, the recommendation defines, is “the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, [...] to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting” As such, this landscape can exist of (a selection of) socio-spatial arrangements, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable, natural and cultural resources such as products, patterns, practices, perceptions, and processes, and their relations, and the values they constitute.

The 2011 UNESCO recommendation also states that “[u]rban heritage, including its tangible and intangible components, constitutes a key resource in enhancing the liveability of urban areas, and fosters economic development and social cohesion in a changing global environment. As the future of humanity hinges on the effective planning and management of resources, conservation has become a strategy to achieve a balance between urban growth and quality of life on a sustainable basis”. It promotes the protection and enhancement of the quality of the human environment, while acknowledging this environment is dynamic and needs changes to allow communities to continue to prosper. The HUL approach does not focus on a particular idea or type of heritage: it aims at quality of life and a socially just urban world. It builds on the assumption that “development without the conservation of key resources cannot be sustainable, while conservation cannot succeed without development to sustain its efforts” (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2015).

Heritage management becomes the thoughtful and sustainable management of change, instead of the prevention of change. Rather than hindering development, heritage can foster development: it can be used as a driver and source to build sustainable and resilient cities, while fully acknowledging that change is in the very nature of the urban landscape.

This paper provides a review of this landscape approach, and its application in the context of sustainable urban heritage management. It presents a SWOT analysis of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, to provide a discussion of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This SWOT analysis is based on a review of the concepts put forward in HUL in relation to the general landscape discourse as well as workshops to test the application of HUL (Veldpaus, 2015). The aim is to further the thinking on the landscape approach as a suitable and sustainable approach to the management of urban resources, and question the future of the landscape approach as a strategy to balance sustainable urban growth and quality of life.

### ANALYSING THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE APPROACH

To further the thinking on the landscape approach as a suitable and sustainable approach to the management of urban resources, and question the future of the landscape approach as a strategy to balance sustainable urban growth and quality of life, critical reading of the approach is important. The presented analysis is based on the concept of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) method. The SWOT matrix was used to analyse the HUL recommendation in relation to current theory on heritage and landscape. While SWOT is a standard tool to be used for assessment and management to combine analyses of the positive and negative, internal and external factors (Helms and Nixon, 2010) it is also a criticised tool. In this case was mainly used to structure the arguments and to find out how the values and vulnerabilities of the HUL approach relate to each other.

This SWOT was conducted by the researchers, based on the outcomes of a series of workshops discussing HUL in the context of local government (Ana Pereira Roders, 2013; Veldpaus, 2015) and a systematic analysis of supranational urban heritage policies of the past 50 years (Veldpaus and Roders, 2014). The results are intended as a critical reading of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape undertaken to further the thinking on the approach and the heritage concept in general.

Using SWOT for analysing environmental policies in multilevel governance settings has its pros and cons. Research shows that SWOT allows for structured qualitative analyses of a wide range of issues, and can also be useful for identifying the needs for change in policy or processes (Fertel et al., 2013; Scolozzi et al., 2014). The limits mentioned are that SWOT is done from the perspective of the one undertaking the analysis, which can easily bias the outcomes. Moreover, it provides only a snapshot in time. It does, however, create awareness of the matter at hand, which can provide a push forward in an on-going transformation of processes or policies (Dyson, 2004; Helms and Nixon, 2010).

The starting point for this SWOT analysis the approach itself, and in particular the questions: what is being recommended and why?

The preceding systematic analysis of supranational policies (Veldpaus, 2015) revealed four thematic issues throughout the past decades. Those were the A)

integration of heritage policies in sustainable development frameworks and urban policies; B) definition of heritage in terms of attributes and values; C) focus on the management process rather than heritage categories; and D) widening of the definition of actors to be involved. By means of the SWOT analysis (Table 1), those issues were addressed and further discussed in relation to each other.

*Table 1. SWOT analysis on the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*

Strengths, the possible value of HUL	Weaknesses, the possible vulnerability of HUL
[A] HUL is defined as an open concept of heritage, to facilitate its integration in wider sustainable urban management frameworks;	[A] Integration is a reactive and problem-solving measure, it lacks a proactive vision or strategy
[B] HUL uses the umbrella terms: attributes and values instead of specific heritage categories. By doing this there is no a priori in- or exclusion of what could be defined as heritage.	[B] Nor the terms attributes and values, their relations, or implications of their use are further explained or clearly defined in the recommendation.
[C] HUL is defined as management approach, and introduces general process steps;	[C] The implication of focus on process are not made explicit, while they can be radical for both heritage and management;
[D] Possible involved stakeholder groups are made explicit in the recommendation.	[D] It remains unclear how role and responsibility (power) are to be (re) distributed, and thus how co-creation and consensus building can work.
Opportunities to develop and implement HUL	Threats to be aware of when developing and implementing HUL
[A] A platform for integrating approaches, knowledge and skills from all types of disciplines and affiliations is needed to grapple with the complexities of heritage;	[A] Multilevel and multidisciplinary governance is getting more and more complex;
[B] Provide an alternative to the Authorised Heritage Discourse. Using a definition that does not a priori define categories of attributes and values, or stakeholder groups in theory means everyone and everything can be involved.	[B] Authorised Heritage Discourse is strongly developed in many places, leaving the notions of attributes and values undefined will probably not change the discourse.
[C] Making the process steps explicit, makes them comparable to current practices, and it opens up the process for 'outsiders', can help streamlining and inclusiveness; The process focus does seem to fit better with current urban governance systems, as the line of reasoning becomes very important. This way a platform for a more open and just process is provided.	[C] Implicit preferences (implicit bias) can play a huge role in the heritage management process; a process focus can facilitate such implicit bias without naming it. A category focussed system is at least clear on the categories is favours; Moreover, the process focus might open up ways of change that are not considered acceptable by current standards, and with the focus on the line of reasoning, miscommunication and misuse are looming;
[D] Ways to open discussions between stakeholder groups, to stimulate inclusion, and enable democratisation and the redistribution of power are asked for. HUL is ultimately meant as a stakeholder-led process to facilitate exactly this	[D] Current critiques on power relations in heritage are not addressed by making the process and the line of argumentation leading; As long as the discussion on power (re) distribution is hardly taking place in practice, it is very well possible nothing much changes.

*A) A historic urban landscape of integration*

In HUL, landscape is used as a notion of integration of tangible and intangible attributes and human values, which is not at all uncommon in territorial research disciplines (e.g. urban studies/cultural geography). The HUL approach is applicable to the entire landscape, including all tangible, intangible, movable, immovable, cultural and natural resources and all the values they constitute. There is no a priori exclusion of anyone or anything because there are no predefined categories for the attributes and values that could define the heritage. As such, the landscape approach stresses holistic heritage management. It supports the integration of many branches of heritage, as defined by all possible stakeholders stimulates them to find common ground, literally. This is definitely an enthusing exercise that provides an opportunity for horizontal and vertical co-creation, and as

such stimulates new crossovers and innovation. HUL recommends integrating by means of 'the identification, assessment, conservation and management of historic urban landscapes within an overall sustainable development framework' (article 10).

A weakness however, is that the landscape as a conceptual framework for integration is still to gain prominence when it comes to heritage management (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2015). In terms of concrete suggestions of integration, HUL is very much focused on integrating heritage management and urban development. This integration in urban policies has been recommended in most supranational policies since the 1970s. As it is emphasized in HUL even more strongly, it is safe to say it is still not at a satisfactory level. The integration of heritage management and urban development might be considered a first and necessary step towards wider integration. This 'in between step' however, can also undermine the intention of integration in a more general sustainable development framework. It does not stimulate the consideration of integration for example in socioeconomic and cultural policies, or even wider environmental and natural policies. Moreover, the actual level of integration of heritage policies in urban development frameworks is largely understudied. The studies that have investigated this are all based on one or a few case studies. While some studies indicate it is the way forward (Dupagne and EC, 2004; Getty Conservation Institute, 2010; Landorf, 2009; Pickard, 2010), they also show that the level of integration, and the understanding of this integration, are still generally low.

Finally, it can be considered problematic that integration is in a way a reactive measure. It implies bringing together existing systems that also evolve in themselves. Thus, integration can never fully catch up with existing systems, unless the original systems cease to exist. In addition, the definition of heritage continues to expand and shift, which makes the integration with other policies more and more necessary but also more complex. The context of heritage policy, and its integration in the multilevel and multidisciplinary setting it has to operate in, is becoming increasingly convoluted.

#### *B) A historic urban landscape of attributes and values*

For a long time, supranational policy tried to set common categories of heritage such as "monument" or "traditions". The ever-growing critique is that this precludes anticipating diversity. As discussed above, HUL focuses on suggesting a landscape approach that defines heritage in terms of tangible and intangible attributes and human values instead. The historic urban landscape is then defined as a complex and layered set of attributes and values. Those are preferably determined and built up in consensus by all involved stakeholders. The umbrella term 'values' or 'significance' had already replaced more specific definitions of such values, such as 'beauty' or 'historic'. The notion 'attributes' can be seen as the umbrella for all specific categories of heritage assets that were introduced in supranational policies, as for example monument or 'traditions'.

One of the main potentials of the notions of attributes and values is that they help to redefine the concept of heritage in a more open way, to be nuanced, open and socially just. One landscape can then consist of many different overlapping, conflicting or parallel sets of attributes and values, which are probably also changing over time. Working with attributes and values as umbrella terms provides the opportunity of alternative to the often used Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006). Using a definition that does not a priori define categories of attributes and values, or stakeholder groups in theory means everyone and everything can be involved. However, this Authorised Heritage Discourse is often strongly developed. The pitfall being that leaving the notions of attributes and values undefined and this shift under discussed will allow for this bias to persist. The assumption that attributes are only those traditional heritage categories is easily made. This is one of the problems in HUL. Although there is a lot of potential in using attributes and values, these terms are not further explained or clearly defined. Using these notions implies a different way of approaching the heritage management process; the novelty of this perspective is neither explained nor emphasized. There is a need to further understand and thus theorize and analyse the conceptual and concrete application of the notions of attributes and values, and their relations. Otherwise categories are no longer acknowledged as guiding the thinking on heritage, but remain steering implicitly. Another vulnerability of this attributes and values approach is potentially too nuanced and open, which might lead to time-consuming and thus expensive processes (Sobhani Sanjibod et al., 2016).

*C) A historic urban landscape management process*

The landscape approach is explained throughout the Recommendation and the attached ‘action plan’ as a set of process steps. This as opposed to most preceding policy guidelines (except for the Burra Charter, (ICOMOS Australia, 1999) that do not specify such process explicitly. The proposed steps provide a management structure for national and subnational urban and heritage policy, to be tailored accordingly. Specific cases or projects are also expected to benefit from the proposed process. By defining the steps, the process becomes potentially more accessible, especially to non-expert stakeholders. It can synchronize moments of input, increase understanding for decision-making and support the integration with other processes.

Making them explicit also emphasises the shift from category-driven to process-driven guidelines. HUL aims to make the process the main place for integration: streamlining urban and heritage management processes. For the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972), it was explicitly chosen not to suggest a single regulatory framework (Vadi, 2014), but to define categories of cultural heritage (monuments, groups of buildings and sites) to be protected by any kind of regulatory framework established nationally. The HUL approach more or less turns this around. It suggests a process and as such a regulatory framework, and does not lay down the categories to which it should apply. This is a radical change in

supranational guidelines that potentially supports the opportunity for heritage management to become more open to a much wider variety of attributes, values and stakeholders. Instead of steering on common categories, the aim is now to develop a common process (how). Within this common process the stakeholders (who) with a vested interest should agree on the landscape of attributes and values, and its management. The implications of such focus on process however, are not made explicit, while they could be fundamental for both the heritage and heritage management.

The landscape approach is intended to expose overlapping, matching as well as conflicting, values, needs and ethics (among groups, individuals, levels of power, etc.). Revealing and managing those is not an easy process, and it remains a matter of give and take, of selection, concession, mitigation and conflict resolution. However, HUL stimulates governments to transparently draw and map the landscape of attributes, values and needs, and co-create a strategy accordingly. The landscape of attributes and values is a starting point for the process as suggested by HUL. From here, one can sketch scenarios to understand the potential impacts on the communities and their resources of favouring certain attributes, values or needs over others. As such, they form a baseline to understand the impact of certain development scenarios (both in future projects and in retrospect) on those attributes and values. It is in this perspective that HUL does not prescribe specific categories or treatments, as those are based in the local reality of the defined attributes and values. In other words, there are no pre-set limits, either for what is heritage or for what is acceptable in terms of change.

Making the process steps explicit, makes them comparable to current practices, and it opens up the process for 'outsiders', can help streamlining and inclusiveness; However, implicit preferences (implicit bias) can play a strong role in the heritage management process; a process focus can facilitate such implicit bias without naming it. A category focussed system is at least clear on the categories it favours. The processes of increasing the amount of heritage categories presumably eventually led to the shift towards a process-minded heritage management. They are, however, often presented as the same argument. This impedes the discussion on the implications of both. Shifting the emphasis from tangible to intangible attributes for example, is replacing one attribute category with another. Shifting from an aesthetic to an ecologic bias is a change in value. This is different from replacing the suggested categories for a suggested process, as HUL does. A bias towards one category (what and/or why) over another could, but does not necessarily change the overall way of thinking, as HUL aims for by its focus on process. The implications for or impacts on heritage management caused by this shift from category to process remain unclear. Open mindedness towards what is valued and why, and possibly even actively stimulating the exploration of 'other' attributes and values, seems necessary to go beyond an Authorised Heritage Discourse.

The process focus seems to fit better with current urban governance systems, at least in the Western European context that move towards indicative approaches, that act more as a facilitator, guiding and shaping the policies (Dühr et al., 2010). The line of reasoning becomes very important, and the

guiding framework. This way a platform for a potentially more open and just process is provided, that can also accommodate for a more tailored solution. This process focus however, might open up ways of change that are not considered acceptable by current standards which could be considered a threat as well as an opportunity. Though with a focus on the line of reasoning, miscommunication and misuse are looming. For example, due to the focus on process, stakeholder groups that are less involved or informed, such as the wider public, might understand less about certain decisions. The approach to two different buildings that seem like similar cases might be totally different based on the actual attributes and values agreed upon.

*D) A historic urban landscape of and by its actors*

Not excluding any resources or treatments beforehand is primarily an opportunity to not exclude people, disciplines, ideas, and perspectives – and thus potentially making the entire process more holistic and inclusive. HUL is open: everyone and everything could be part of the process; the stakeholders decide. To make clear that this could involve stakeholders beyond the most direct and obvious ones, the possible stakeholder groups are made explicit in the HUL Recommendation. ‘This approach addresses the policy, governance and management concerns involving a variety of stakeholders, including local, national, regional, international, public and private actors in the urban development process’ (article 6). Ways to open discussions between stakeholder groups, to stimulate inclusion, and enable democratisation and the redistribution of power are asked for (A Pereira Roders and Van Oers, 2015). HUL is ultimately meant as a stakeholder-led process to facilitate exactly this. Heritage is always a stakeholder-led process; attributes and values do not select themselves. This is not inherently different from previous supranational policies. The approach HUL suggest is, however, potentially more inclusive. As it takes an approach similar to what was stated by Howard a decade before, “people and their motivations define heritage. Not everything is heritage, but anything could become heritage” (Howard, 2003).

However, the differences in stakeholder roles and responsibilities, or any possible shift in this regard, are not very explicitly addressed or pushed for in HUL. Roles and responsibilities per process step are also not made explicit. The only explicit reference to it, is the aim for consensus on attributes and values among all stakeholders. As such, it still remains unclear how power and responsibility are to be (re) distributed, and thus how co-creation can work. Apart from the fact that there is no ready-made solution here, and the current guidelines are not all that clear, there is also not much research to be found that goes beyond the individual case study in relation to this. As long as the discussion on power (re) distribution is hardly taking place in practice, it is very well possible nothing much changes. Moreover, none of the current criticisms of power relations in the definition and management of heritage are solved by making the process and the line of argumentation leading. Understanding the impact of democratisation of heritage needs to remain or even rise on the agenda.



## CONCLUSIONS: IS THERE FUTURE IN THIS LANDSCAPE APPROACH?

HUL is a heroic attempt to address the current issues in the field of sustainable urban heritage management on a global scale. Such attempts can easily be criticized, as they can probably never fully succeed. Though, why not try to see it as an opportunity? It allows for a much needed shift in thinking and opens up new perspectives on sustainable urban resource management. Its application will provide new challenges, some of them are discussed above though reality will surely reveal many more, and snags are to be expected. It is however, also a post-crisis recommendation to reposition and renegotiate culture and heritage in the context of reduced government involvement and investment. If the future of humanity indeed hinges on the effective planning and management of resources, we should take seriously the ideas that HUL promotes. Not because it is a perfect and clean solution to a problem, but because it pushes for different ways of thinking, for new perspectives and for openness in processes of heritage management, for thinking about heritage beyond the traditional definitions. A landscape approach is inclusive, as it encompasses cultural, social, economic and environmental factors, in space and time. As such, it contributes to the discussions about inclusive and sustainable development for the urban age we live in. It is holistic and development-minded, and promotes a focus on sound reasoning and process over a specific pre-selection of attributes and values that should or should not be protected. It positions heritage in the wider landscape discourse and alters the conceptual framework for heritage management. And it does so in a context beyond the theoretical academic one. This opening up of new discussions and interpretations is essential.

Defining what is of value and why (the attributes and values) by the stakeholders involved, sets a baseline for determining the impacts of future actions, including the redefinition of those values over time. Heritage is a stakeholder-led process and there are no pre-set limits, either for what is heritage or for what is acceptable in terms of change. As such, what is really new about HUL is the shift from category-driven to process-driven guidelines.

The concept of heritage as represented by supranational policies has been criticized for being a European invention, being Eurocentric (Willems, 2014; Winter, 2012) and supporting an 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). Authorized heritage discourse is a conceptual framework that has gained considerable importance in heritage studies over the past decade. The question for this paper was to find ways to continue beyond theorizing such discourse, by questioning the future of the landscape approach. The critical interpretation of the definition of heritage such as authorized heritage discourse is providing, is clearly taken seriously by those developing supranational policies. The inclusiveness of the heritage concept increased a lot over the past decade, and the predefined nature of heritage decreased. This does not mean we can dismiss the critiques on heritage management and supranational policies. It simply shows the value of an active debate between practice, policy and theory, and of the presence of a wide variety of disciplines in the heritage discourse. Moreover, the global urban condition

immediately confronts us with the next questions. What is sustainable urban heritage management when urbanization processes are not bounded by municipal or even national boundaries? What is the impact of the fundamental reforms in urban governance driven by global economic forces, migration, and climate change? Shouldn't we push much more for sustainable urban resource management? And isn't this actually the same as heritage management?

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## CULTURE AS EMBODIED PRACTICES:

*Reproducing nature relation within families in rural Finland*

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary societies it is often argued that the velocity of flows of information result in disembedded flows of meanings and disconnectedness between past and present (Edensor 2009; Dodgshon 2008). Yet people's daily habits and routines reflect continuity (Edensor 2009, 18) that derives from dense meanings and proximity of relations within places (Ellegård and Wilhelmsson 2004, 282). How people reproduce their relation to places and the environment? In what way the relation sustains over time? Recent discussions on territorialisation and place-based cultural sustainability focus on time-space dimension in sustainable development (Dessein et al. 2015). The notion of territorialisation in sustainable regional development emphasises the eventual, processual and relational characteristics of human interaction with the environment (Horlings et al. 2015). Whilst place is seen as an important component of sustainable development, territorialisation can be understood as an interplay between human, nature and culture (ibid; Brighenti, 2010) In this interplay culture has an important role mediating values, sense of place, practices and routines between human and nature (Horlings 2015).

Cultural practices are considered as an integral dimension of territorial processes in rural areas (Horlings 2015, 44). They are part of rural cultural reification and community vitality. Alongside with values, symbolic representations and institutional support practices are basis for creating sustainable place-based cultural trajectories (ibid; Kivitalo et al. 2015.) Rural livelihoods, especially related to farming and forestry, are eroding from rural practices and they are reframed in rural space. Whereas some cultural trajectories are changing slowly for example the way farmers are adapting new agri-environmental policies in their attitudes and livelihoods (Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011, 95-96; see e.g. Herzon & Mikk, 2007). Finland is one of the most rural countries in Europe (OECD, 2008). About 91 per cent of the land cover is considered as rural, primarily characterised by nature and natural resources. Thus, one third of Finnish population (1,6 million) lives in rural areas. Yet the conditions of livelihoods and depopulation have changed rural social structure and rural cultures in Finland (Hyyryläinen & Katajamäki, 2002). However, rural space is still in particular characterized by nature and nature based livelihoods and is perceived and experienced strongly through nature and nature related cultural practices (e.g. Kivitalo et al., 2015).

In studies of cultural sustainability and territorialisation interesting questions are for example, how local communities assign meaning to their natural assets and what are the rules of using the assets and adding value to it (Horlings et al., 2015, 7)? Regional processes are performed and symbolized through practices that are networked in time and space (Paasi, 2009). These processes are characterized by intersection and connectedness between places, and between local and global (Massey 2005) through social, economic and political relations (Pierce et al. 2011). Territorialisation can be considered as a meta-frame when studying the multi-scaled processes structuring agency and social relations in relation to places. It can be stemmed from various theories and methods. (Horlings et al., 2015.) As a principle, 'territorialisation' calls for research methodologies that overcome ontological dualisms such as agent/structure, nature/culture, and subjectivism/objectivism (Brighenti, 2010).

Pierre Bourdieu's (1972; 1977; 1980; 1997) theory of practice gives an elaborate sociological methodology for overcoming ontological dualism between agent and structure. His concept of *habitus* combines individual action in relation to space (*field*). In this relation both agent and structure have structuring relation to each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 127). Habitus is a system of dispositions, that is, of long-lasting schemes such as manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Capitals are mediators in this interplay while they are constitutive for both agent and structure. Cultural capital is especially important in creation of the embodied system of dispositions (*habitus*) and sense of place (Bourdieu, 2005). In a broader sense, cultural capital refers to skills, habits and practices and 'savoir faire' related to certain socio-cultural contexts (Bourdieu, 2004, 41). It can incorporate in relatively long lasting systems of human's dispositions, perception, values, and series of positions i.e. trajectories in social structure (Bourdieu, 1994, 88-89). Whilst cultural practices and attitudes are rather persistent and they change slowly among territorial actors and their livelihoods, cultural capital can be seen as a means to symbolic change, establishing social relations and developing culturally sustainable trajectories (Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011).

Bourdieu's theory has been adopted in a number of studies focusing on interconnectedness between territoriality, place attachment and social structure (e.g. Champagne, 1987; Savage et al., 2005a, 2005b; Longhurst, 2007; Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011; Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011; Alanen, 2011), yet the elaborations towards cultural sustainability are rare (see e.g. Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011). More than a theory, bourdieusian frame can be seen both as a theory and method of an analysis. With bourdieusian conceptual tool kit one can both set questions and analyse empirical stratum. (Reay, 2004, 437-439)

In this chapter, I explore how culture sustains in an embodied state as place-based practices and mental schemes in rural Finland. Culture is examined as inhabitants' embodied cultural capital particularly related to nature. How nature creates a basis for system of embodied practices and mental schemes in rural culture(s)? What is the meaning of family as social structure (*field*) in reproduction of place-based cultural trajectories? I operationalize and discuss rural culture in a

bourdieusian frame through the concept of embodied cultural capital. To illustrate theory driven analysis, I present empirical examples from the case study conducted in Central Finland. In the conclusion I discuss embodied cultural capital as an intermediate between human and nature, while family is an important unit reproducing embodied cultural capital.

#### EMBODIED CULTURAL CAPITAL, LOGIC OF PRACTICE AND REPRODUCTION

In relation to the concept of ‘culture’ there is no coherent account of Bourdieu’s stance among current commentators (Lizardo, 2011, 25). One attempt is to operationalize culture through the concept of cultural capital. In order to define cultural capital it has to be studied among other types of capital – economic, cultural and social – which Bourdieu sees as (1979; 1986) basis for societal reproduction. Economic capital refers to money and resources as material property. Cultural capital consists of both, the possession of culturally significant objects and artefacts, and the embodied skills, knowledge, cultural dispositions and taste. Social capital relates to social relations, resources and power at hand within social networks. For Bourdieu cultural capital and economic capital are the dominant competing forces in societal reproduction. While social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, 47). Economic capital accumulates via ownership, access and use of natural and societal resources, whereas cultural capital inculcates into mental and bodily schemes, possession of cultural goods and qualifications legitimised by institutions such as schooling, church, academia or field of art. Cultural capital accumulates in time within socialisation processes through family, schooling system and different cultural institutions and contexts that one is in a dialogue with.

Cultural capital can be distinguished in three relational forms: institutionalised, objectified and embodied (Bourdieu, 1979; 1986). In an *institutionalised* form cultural capital refers to certifications, professional titles, educational qualifications and societal positions. In an *objectified* form cultural capital can be understood as valuable cultural goods and artefacts like works of art and handcraft. As an *embodied* form cultural capital refers to long-lasting mental and bodily schemes such as cultural skills, habits, perceptions and taste. Cultural capital gives its owner societal competence, symbolical recognition and power over structures that enhance agency. People that are well resourced of their cultural capital are potentially more adaptable to societal changes while they can orientate their resources and dispositions in a way of profiting new situations. (Bourdieu & Saint Martin, 1987.) All forms of capitals tend to accumulate and convert towards each other so that in the ‘upper’ levels of societal fractions, where people possess high amount of cultural and economic capital, they create power networks, whereas

within 'lower' societal fractions capitals are more distant and more specialised from one another (see Bourdieu 1979, 139-144). Within any social space, whether referring to a rural society (Bourdieu, 2002) or a smallish community (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011), capitals tend to converge into exclusive power relations that give value attribution to certain social order, type of capitals, behaviour and taste, that function as 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, 54).

Bourdieu's (1979) concept of cultural capital is usually related to highbrow culture and 'good taste'. Although, the aggregation of cultural capital is always dependent on the context where it is afforded and how it is converged into practice. Indeed, the concept is empirical and it can be operationalized in various social milieus that people are engaged in their everyday lives (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, 156; Erickson, 1996; Holt, 1997, 109), for example in farming communities (Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011) and post-industrialised local communities (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011). In a wider conceptualisation of culture represented for example by Hannerz (1992; 1996) culture can be seen as a symbolical system through which people perceive space and are connected to the space both emotionally and through practice. This relation is an on-going process: people giving meaning to the space while culture expressing collective representations of the space. As a practical methodological tool cultural capital extends beyond the divisions between 'highbrow' culture versus mundane skills and knowledge in a way of profiting from different cultural systems and social milieus (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, 569; Lamont & Lareau, 1988, 156; see also Sullivan, 2007; Burton & Paragahawewa, 2001, 97).

*Embodied cultural capital* can be seen both as concrete skills and as mental schemes related to specific culture. Skills can be practiced in a certain environment or social space giving agent an insight and means over resources (Holt 1997, 109), like skills of cultivating the land and getting crop out of it (Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011, 97). These skills and value system are acculturated into bodily dispositions through socialisation process within families, communities etc. giving its owner certain competence and symbolic power in a given territory (e.g. Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011). Thus, the accumulation of embodied cultural capital takes certain material and social conditions, and time. Cultural capital is yet transferrable by inheritance between generations. Practices, attitudes and cultural taste are likely to accumulate within social trajectories such as professions and social class (Willis, 1977; Maton, 2008, 50). However, in order to transmit cultural capital over-generationally from parent to his/her successor it has to be also accepted by the inheritor. For example, when reproducing agricultural family inheritance the heir accepts the good (farm) and the interest in farming (profession) (Champagne 1987, 51). Cultural capital is a systemic concept designing systematics into empirical work. It can be defined only within the theoretical system it constitutes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 96.) Reproduction of embodied cultural capital can be understood via concepts of field and habitus through logic of practice.



*Logic of practice*

In the bourdieusian epistemology agency cannot be abstracted from its structure nor structure reduced into its parts (Bourdieu, 1972; 1980; 1994). Structure and agent are in a relational dialogue with each other. Capitals are mediators in a dialogue between agent and structure (Bourdieu 1986). They accumulate in time and space. Bourdieu (1992, 107) refers to space primarily as a social space, which he calls *field*. Fields – such as artistic field, religious field and economic field – are relatively autonomous microcosms each with their own specific capitals, profits, practices, and unity of style, beliefs and symbolic order. Each field profits from their own specific capitals reproduced within the field. The reproduction of capitals follows its own immanent logic, rules and regularities. Fields develop in time and space. Society as a meta-field is embedded with fields and sub-fields. (Bourdieu & Wacquant ,1992, 94-115.)

*Habitus* is the embodiment of agent's social position, capitals and practices in social space (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 126-127). It formulates a relatively long lasting system of individual capitals (positions) and mental schemes (dispositions) that develop through socialization processes in a course of one's life trajectory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Habitus consists of knowledge and cognitive skills, practice and perceptions, unity of style and titles. It functions as matrix of perceptions that encompass agents navigating in social space and its microcosms. As an embodiment of social structure habitus is a *structured structure*. It tends to reproduce structure that it is originated from. At the same time habitus is generative as *structuring structure*. It generates inventions and improvisations transforming social structure, but within its limits. (Bourdieu, 1980, 88, 92; 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant ,1992, 126-127.)

The systematics of habitus results from combining two evolving histories between agent and structure (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 126). Habitus encounters social structure that it is a product of, in such context habitus feels like "fish in water". Habitus does not feel the weight of the water and the world can be taken for granted (ibid.,127). Regularities of the structure enforce habitus to follow certain systematics, but not mechanically. As a structuring structure habitus also moulds the structure according to its own structure while being re-structured by the pressure of the structural conditions (Bourdieu, 2005, 46-47). The systematics of habitus neither goes without necessity of rational calculation nor structural determinism, but following logic that is rational for practical reasons (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980). This includes sense of limits that are structured in habitus (Bourdieu, 1974). As structured structure habitus derives from the past, as generative principle it molds perceptions of the future. Thus habitus may be changed by the history via new experiences, education and training (Bourdieu, 2005, 45). In the epistemic sense habitus is a *modus operandi*, a mode of practice. Thus, habitus is an *opus operatum*, result of practice. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 36; Bourdieu, 1980a 26, 58, 88, 152; 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 127-140.)

In addition to metaphorical space Bourdieu refers to space also as a concrete physical space in which actors act and activities occur (e.g. 1989, 1994, 1997). Cultural capital is an important intermediate in the interplay between agent, place and structure (see e.g. Alanen, 2011, 118). Agents internalize the external conditions of the environment and modes of social action while developing cultural competence to act and profit from its history, habits, norms and meanings. Embodied cultural capital as bodily dispositions and mental schemes intertwines between social space and physical space, while both of them are having practical and symbolic relation with each other (ibid., 93). Bodily senses relate to specific situations occurred both in social and physical space. In a familiar habitat bodily relation intertwines between social space and physical space into inseparable embedded trajectory giving an agent a sense of being “at home”. (Bourdieu 1997, 216.) The sense of belonging reflects ontological complicity between embodied trajectory and social positions the ease and comfort of being in such situations and places. (Bourdieu, 1980, 134; also Savage et al., 2005a, 9, 12; Alanen, 2011, 94-95). While actors are occupants of multiple places embedded with relatively autonomous fields and habitus, they constitute social space reflecting certain social category and mode of practice in a society (Bourdieu, 1997, 191; see also Alanen, 2011, 93).

#### *Family in the field of reproduction*

Family is a central part in cultural and societal reproduction as constitutive of specific dispositions and capitals (e.g. Bourdieu 1986; 1994, 140-143). Family group stretches over history and space forming networks into various social fields. It struggles to hold on to physical, economic and symbolic relations, capitals possessed by each of its members, and between family members. As such it is a primary source of capital for its members. Family can be even considered as a field. (Bourdieu, 1994, 135-145; Alanen, 2011, 96-97, 100.)

Family forms a kind of social body, a tense circle of social reproduction, which operates both as social category and as mental category (Bourdieu 1994, 139). As an objective social category family functions as matrix of representations and actions, while it reproduces social order for being as such. As mental subjective category family generates a collective principle of perceptions of the world. (Ibid, 137-139 144.) Social order and mental categories are mundanely reproduced within families throughout family work (Alanen, 2011, 96). This means both practical and symbolic work, the involvement and investment in family relations, the actual expenditure of time and energy with family members. Family work is basis for creating ‘family feeling’ and ‘loving dispositions’ that engender devotion and solidarity among family members (Bourdieu, 1994, 139-140; see Alanen ,2011, 99-100). Family feeling functions as affective principle of cohesion based on “obliged affections” and “affective obligations” between family members. Hence, it provides a cognitive principle of vision and division of the world. (Bourdieu, 1994, 137.) Family also stretches power relations among family members (ibid, 140-143).

While family is located in physical space and it is embedded in a specific social structure, it also gives value attribution to certain social order and environment (Savage et al., 2005a, 2005b; see Alanen, 2011, 94-95). Family reproduces a system of emotional dispositions *in situ*. Family is an important constituent in the hermeneutic circle of relations giving its members also the sense of belonging and what is being “natural”. (Bourdieu, 1994, 137, 139.) It provides a foundation for sense of limits and experiencing socially constructed relations as taken for granted and giving a feeling that it “has always been that way” (ibid, 139). The congruence between mental structures and objective structures is historically and culturally constructed through institutionalization of the family. Yet, there is always a struggle of the legitimate idea of ‘family’ (ibid, 137-141; Lenoir, 1991, 1992, 2008; see also Alanen, 2011, 96-102). In the next chapter I present methodological settings for the empirical study.

#### EXPLORING THE EMBODIED CULTURAL CAPITAL IN RURAL FINLAND

I explore rural culture through inhabitants’ everyday life as embodied place-based practices related to nature. Embodied place-based practices are distinguished from other cultural practices; residents regard them as something that only a rural place affords. I focus on family as field of reproduction reproducing mental categories and bodily dispositions towards nature. Here, family is understood of what inhabitants express mostly through child and parent –relation. Nature refers to physical space, a natural environment, embedded with human activity (see Bourdieu, 1997, 191). Rural is understood as lived social space, a place of everyday life and experiences of local people. It is perceived through local structures and embeddedness of natural resources. (Halfacree, 2006, 2007; see also Kivitalo et al., 2015).

The case study is part of PhD program KULKEMA - *Cultural Sustainability in Rural Areas*. The aim of the program was to understand the role and meaning of culture in sustainable rural development in Finland (Soini & Kangas, 2011). The case study is conducted in rural municipality of Keuruu in Central Finland (Kivitalo, 2017). It is located at the crossroads of two provincial districts. Keuruu has 13 villages, with a total of 10,000 inhabitants. Keuruu represents a typical small town in rural areas where people live close to nature. The essential element of the rural landscape is multitude of small lakes; about 12 per cent of the surface is comprised of water. Population density is low, approximately 8 inhabitants per square kilometre. Yet only 6 % get their living from farming or forestry. Most of the employees work at service sector (almost 70 per cent) and in industry, especially in metal, laser and wood industry (about 24 per cent). The unemployment rate in Keuruu, which is about 13 per cent, has been almost 3 per cent higher than the Finnish average (Official Statistics of Finland, 2012). Like many other remote post-agrarian communities, Keuruu has also experienced

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depopulation since the late 1980s. Thus, Keuruu profits from leisure residents; there are nearly 2,000 summer cottages in the area.

Empirical data is based on semi structural biographical interviews among permanent residents (N=41). The sample includes both native inhabitants and new comers within different age and professions. The information consists of questions regarding for example residents living history and socio-spatial trajectories. The analysis derives from narrative and contextual analysis as basis for bourdieusian socioanalysis (e.g. Bourdieu, 2002). Narratology is about exploring peoples' perceptions and dispositions within time and space (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). To operationalize embodied cultural capital I study how informants talk about rural landscapes, about nature related practices and mental schemes towards rural culture in an over generational span. The analysis is descriptive following bourdieusian conceptual frame. In the next chapter I illustrate the reproduction of embodied cultural capital with quotations from the case study.

#### *Nature-related practices and affective obligations*

The vast majority of Finnish after their 60s have rural background. Thus, the emotional relation to rural natural environment derives from their childhood. The emotional bond follows during a life course as mental schemes inculcated into *habitus* as perceptions of rural landscape. Many of new comers in rural area are returning into similar physical space from where their own trajectory started. Mental schemes are significant when choosing a place to live. Similar landscape gives an agent a sense of belonging and comfort in rural place.

We bought this place on top of the hill. This reminds me of my childhood, our home also located on top of the hill similar to this... Somehow, I feel comfortable up on the hills. (Labourer, part-time pensioner, woman)

Rural space is perceived with variety of practices related to nature. Due to short distance to the nature, rural physical space creates good geographical conditions for nature-related practices. Frequencies to the forests and lakes are part of inhabitants' everyday life. While living close to the nature, inhabitants have created skills to navigate in the forests and lakesides and use of natural resources, like picking berries and mushrooms and fishing.

Nature-related practices are also part of rural collective action. Rural social space consists of families, neighbourhoods, associations and institutions that are constituents of rural social networks and local social capital. In the forestry area hunting culture is especially vital. Besides the interest in caching the game, hunting performs certain symbolic power in local social life. Being a member in a hunting club is basically exclusive and usually related to land owning. The membership gives its owner a certain social status and backing of social capital, while reproducing social order in rural areas. Typically the interest in hunting passes through kin and dominantly among males. "I have been hunting since I was a child... Hunters gathered nearby every autumn and I joined them..."

Hunting is part of tradition; it has been always that way. My two sons they hunt, too.” (Agricultural entrepreneur, forestry and earth moving contractor, father)

Many rural practices are based on the rhythm of seasonal cycles intertwining physical space and social space with the rhythm of nature. Seasonal changes are sharp in northern latitudes, which makes summertime distinct from wintertime due to the natural light and temperature. Following the cycle of nature, inhabitants are skilled in following the annual changes in local flora and fauna. Observing changes in local nature raises questions of sustainability, which is discussed and shared among family members. Capability to make distinctions is basis for giving value to local environment and developing long-lasting nature-relation. “[Me and my son] we have been talking about the situation in The Gulf of Finland concerning seaweed. Here [in the inlands] we have clearer waters... That is the reason why we prefer staying here in the lakeside.” (Public officer, pensioner, father)

The valuation of local nature reflects also on how inhabitants structure their social space. Parents who value nature-related skills that they have learned in their childhood are willing to transfer these skills to their children. Parents may to organise their family leisure in a way that children can profit from playing in the nature with other children. This interplay is seen as important when practicing valuable skills and handcraft.

In my childhood we used to play and do things ourselves. We made huts under the trees and on top of the rocks, of course we had playhouse, actually two of them, but we used to make our own hut. Today, it should be also that way. That is the reason why we spend time in [our] summer cottage; since I want that my daughter plays and makes things by herself - and with her friends that she may also bring along. (Domestic mother)

Nature related practices converge often with family livelihoods and economic interests. Learning about nature with parents relates especially to farming and forestry. When transferring family cultural capital such as a farm and the profession of an agricultural entrepreneur, the inheritor has to have the interest in forestry. Professional skills are practiced in the forests by working side by side with adolescents. “Both of my sons were with me driving wood. We slept [in the forest] in a trailer over the weekend ... Nowadays my oldest son drives wood in our home farm and he is practicing quite well.” (Agricultural entrepreneur, forestry and earth moving contractor, father)

Parents make different kinds of investments in children in order to enhance their commitment to the land and strengthening their nature-relation. Investments in space may be economic, but also investments in time and family relations. Through family work parents transmit emotions towards nature for younger generations, and

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vice versa, nature-related practices are a basis for emotional bonding and keeping up parent-child-relation. The articulation of such relation may be searched outside the local settings.

I say that our trips have bonded us. Even though my late mother said that driving around the world is a waste of time. I told my mother to think how much we share things with my children when I take them into the car and we drive thousand kilometres to the North. We discuss about many things that would not be brought up at home... In its harsh nature you can realize how small human being is in this world... We can contribute something when cultivating the land, but what we gain is decided up there [pointing out to the higher force]. Of course we can choose the crop [we cultivate] but if the sun does not shine you gain nothing no matter how much you make efforts. (Agricultural entrepreneur, father)

Parents see that close nature-relation is important also in their children's socialization process for becoming a good citizen. Parents make judgements about rural space due to its moral atmosphere. These judgements derive from their own experiences and knowledge from different environments and cultures. Parents see that nature gives a good basis for moral education and keeps children out of troubles. Nature-related practices are means for inculcation of mental schemes and moral education. Rural space is basis for culturally embodied habitus.

When my son was born we lived in a town in southern Finland. I started thinking that it would be better for him to start wander in the forests, like I did, since I am originally from here. Hunting and fishing that is what I do and those are the things that my son has now inherited (Labourer, father)

Nature creates an important asset for rural bodily practices and mental schemes. While parents invest in family work via nature-related practices, children become interested in learning more about their environment. Younger generations show interest and dispositions towards nature. Dialogue between older and younger generations creates a circle of reproduction when family members start learning about nature together. "Me, and my son we are planning to navigate throughout the lake and get to know it better. Namely this is quite wicked lake since there might be a rock in the middle." (Public officer, pensioner, father) Place-based practices inculcate into bodily dispositions and mental schemes into younger generation's habitus. While the generations change, younger generations as occupants of rural social space become reproducers of rural culture. Through the embodiment processes physical space and social space intertwine into an embedded system of dispositions (habitus) creating cultural trajectories specific to rural areas.

She [my daughter] knows so much about stuff that I have not even heard about. She teaches me everyday things that are really nice to learn. Like in the Midsummer Eve she says [to me] should we go walking around the old Keuruu area and explore all the things that are there. (Domestic mother)

As the situations may change quickly in the globalised world due to livelihoods and migration, also individual interests and course of trajectories may change. Yet habitus as a persistent system of long lasting dispositions and embodied emotions encapsulates rural culture in an embodied state. While learning from new experiences and environment habitus as an embodied history that cannot be undressed.

Embodied cultural capital can be seen as specific skills and as mental and moral schemes related to nature and rural social space. In an epistemic sense, cultural practices can be seen as cultural praxis, a *modus operandi*, a way of doing things. For many rural inhabitants this means doing things in a way that only a rural place affords. Practices stem from close distance to nature and rural social structure.

Family as a social space creates means and moral basis for cultural reproduction. The relation is reproduced through family work and daily practices via affective obligations started from childhood. Together they create a basis for system of relatively long lasting mental and bodily dispositions resulting to an *opus operatum*, a piece of culture, in a given territory.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this study I outlined rural culture as embodied practice. I used the bourdieusian concept of embodied cultural capital as a conceptual tool and method for exploring the ways of how culture sustains within rural space in an embodied state. I illustrated the analysis with empirical examples from the Finnish case study. The results cannot be generalized, but Bourdieu's concept of embodied cultural capital links the analysis into wider epistemic relation between agent, nature and culture. The objective is thus more extent than the empirical case in itself. (See Reay, 2004, 437-439.) Narratives illustrate how inhabitants' nature-relations are reproduced through practice in rural space. Reproduction follows logic that is practical in a sense of the given context. Practical logic derives from inhabitants' experiences, values and perceptions of the social space and nature they afford.

Nature creates relatively permanent conditions for cultural practices. Nature-related practices are part of inhabitants' everyday life. Nature is location for accumulation of skills and knowledge related to rural culture and the way of doing things. In this case nature was understood as a physical space, a natural environment embedded with human action. It was considered more as a resource of human intentions than an "agent" itself. More elaboration of 'nature' would be needed for further studies within bourdieusian theory.

Family functions as an important field of cultural reproduction. Family transmits practices and nature-relation from generation to generation at daily basis. Through family networks people connect to rural social space and its history. Family moulds perceptions of space through practice. Practices are symbolic acts that reproduce mental schemes and affective obligations among family members. Nature-related practices and mental schemes are repeated and reproduced through family work. In

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a way, nature-relation might be also traced back to emotional relation between family members. Family creates a basis for mental schemes to inculcate through practice into permanent system of relation (*habitus*). Family is a meaningful field to enhance emotional bonds and mental schemes towards nature. In this case family was investigated through parent-child –relationship. Thus, family as a concept and social category is broader and it can be operationalized into various relations.

Inculcation of embodied cultural capital creates long lasting bodily and mental schemes in habitus that is quite persistent system of dispositions. Yet the strong connectedness to nature and family also creates certain amount of dependence. This dependence may make inhabitants vulnerable and less adaptive to changes, since skills and schemes are specialised in certain territory. Skills and knowledge may be difficult to transfer to other spaces without breaking the system of relations that only a rural place affords. On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus endows human potential to adjustment and change (Bourdieu 2005). Inculcation of new mental schemes and more sustainable practices may well be the way of implementing culturally sustainable place-based trajectories. Strong connectedness to the territory might also make people more interested in their local environment and enhance their willingness to learn more about sustainable way of doing things. Anyhow, more empirical research with Bourdieu's toolkit on this area could deepen the knowledge of the interplay between human, nature and culture.

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HARRISON ESAM AWUH & MAARTEN LOOPMANS

## INITIATING CRITICAL REFLECTION TO COUNTER SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

*Applying photovoice in the Baka community of the Dja Reserve, Cameroon*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the application of a method called photovoice to investigate social problems in the Baka communities of the Dja Reserve, in Eastern Cameroon, that have faced and are affected by conservation-induced displacement (CID). Photovoice was applied to assist the Baka to identify and discuss problems and social issues in their communities and to initiate critical reflection and processes of change to mitigate these issues. The chapter is based on a study conducted by employing the photovoice method in two displaced and resettled Baka communities in Eastern Cameroon.

CID refers to the process of physically relocating people from protected areas or restricting access to resources in protected areas (Cernea, 2006; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington, 2007). Protected areas – defined by Dowie (2009) as areas set aside for the preservation, management and care of natural and cultural resources - are increasingly being associated with negative impacts on livelihoods and conservation itself (Fabricius and de Wet, 2002; Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Chapin, 2004; Schmidt-Soltau, 2004; West et al. 2006; Adams and Hutton, 2007; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington, 2007; Bray and Velazquez, 2009). Correspondingly, different forms of action to resist the displacement and negative impacts on livelihoods have been documented in literature. The action has taken place in the form of active resistance to conservation legislation through illegal resource use (Brockington, 1999) and the reinvasion of lost lands by local people initially displaced from them (Brockington and Igoe, 2006). Measures to deal with the implications of displacement have been established by the public authorities, but as those affected by the displacement are principally marginalised ethnic minorities, political will to address their situation is often limited (Awuh, 2015; Brockington, 1999) - an issue many studies of social impacts of CID fail to address, focusing merely on the loss of assets due to displacement.

In this chapter we describe the first part of our action research set up amongst displaced Baka in Cameroon. Baka make up an indigenous, but largely marginalised and socially excluded community of the Dja Reserve, in eastern Cameroon (Leonhardt, 2006; Geschiere, 2004). In particular, the displaced Baka

face strong discrimination by the host communities, in addition to the displacement-induced loss of assets (Awuh, 2015). Our action research draws upon Freire's dialogical theory of action (Freire, 1970) to think of ways to stimulate community action against social exclusion. In the dialogical theory of action, raising critical consciousness through reflection and communication between individuals is the first step towards practical actions to transform the social reality (Freire, 1970). Through critical reflection, the 'oppressed' improve their understanding of the sources of their oppression (Freire, 2000). According to Freire, critical reflection is important for the oppressed because ignorance of oppression leads people to accept their socio-economic and political marginalisation and exclusion. Freire (2000) proceeds to argue that critical reflection is a form of action against oppression because it allows people to reflect on the feasibility of any course of action.

Participatory action research is not without its criticisms as Kindon et al. (2007) highlighted. Freire's action for liberation has been discussed as being a paternalistic imposition of positivism, science and reason from Western civilization on oppressed people (Sherman, 1980; Ellsworth, 1989). Aware of these problems, we avoided pre-imposing interpretations on the communities. Rather, through our intervention, we attempted to open up and establish an atmosphere of publicness (Biesta, 2012), to stir up discussion and conflict of opinion in which the participants can explore their own problems, figure out what is good for their communities and engage in a process of change on their own terms (Loopmans et al. 2012).

For this reason, we selected photovoice as a method of investigation. Freire (1970) already mentioned visuals as tools to get people to think critically about the social problems affecting their communities. Drawing inspiration from Freire's work, Caroline Wang and Ann Burris developed photovoice 1992 as a method to empower rural women in Yunnan Province, China (Wang and Burris, 1994; Wu et al, 1995; Wang et al., 2004). The method has since been employed with culturally diverse groups to explore and address community needs across the world with different groups, e.g. Palestinians living in occupied territories (Kuttab In. Wang and Burris, 1997), immigration experiences of Latino adolescents in the United States (Streng et al., 2004), employment-seeking behaviour of persons living with HIV/AIDS (Hergenrather et al. 2006), understanding household behavioural risk factors for diarrheal disease in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (Badowski et al. 2011), and orphaned children living with HIV/AIDS (Fournier et al. 2014). It is based on auto-photography, a tool long in use as a research method to understand how marginalised people view their world (Rose, 2008; Lombard, 2013). It has been described as a more accessible method of expression compared to verbal or written communication (Dodman, 2003) and allows research participants to speak up, instead of researchers (Lombard, 2013). Photovoice as a qualitative research methodology is based on the constructivist notion of learning through the individual's interactive process of developing and constructing meaning through experiences (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

This chapter attempts to provide answers to the following questions: What kind of social problems and challenges do members of the displaced communities identify in their communities? How can an active exploration, identification and discussion of challenges and problems by the people themselves initiate critical reflection and activate change in the community? How can photovoice as a method of investigation and communication facilitate such processes?

We will start with an introduction to the study site and provide background to the Baka communities and the issue of displacement. After that we offer a description of our photovoice intervention, followed by the presentation of the outcomes and discussion of the key observations. Finally, we conclude by assessing our photovoice approach to stimulate critical reflection amongst the Baka communities involved.

#### BACKGROUND TO DISPLACEMENT AND THE SELECTION OF THE COMMUNITIES

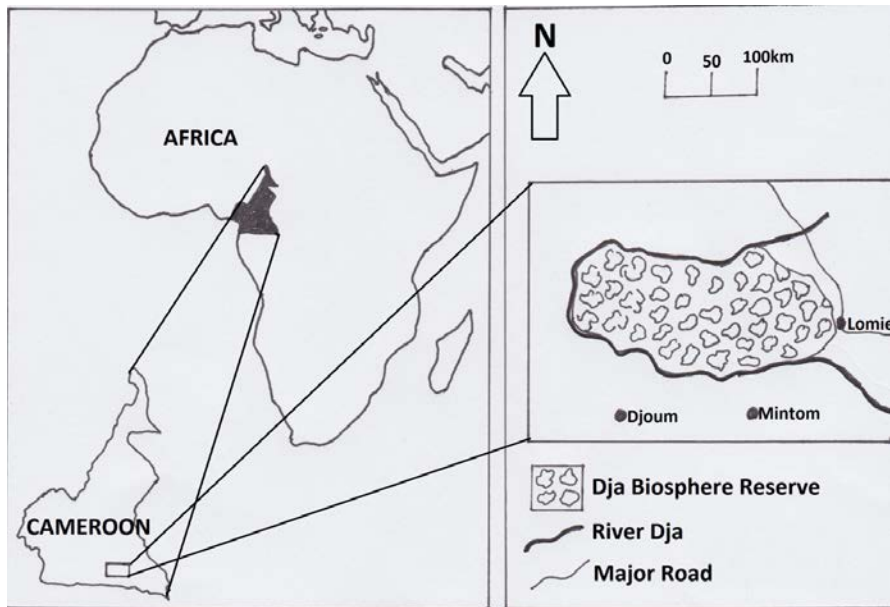
The Dja Reserve was officially established as a wildlife reserve in 1950 by decree number 75/50 of the French colonial administration (United Nations Environment Programme, 2008). Following the creation of the reserve, the first wave of the expulsion of the local Baka population began in the 1950s and has been on-going (Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau, 2006). Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2003) have shown that an estimated 7,800 Baka depending on the forest for more than 50 percent of their livelihood were forced to relocate from the protected area between 1996 and 2003 alone. Consequently, the Baka have been forced to resettle in villages alongside the sedentary and majority Bantu groups. As a result of this forced sedentarisation, the Baka are enduring restrictions on mobility and access to resources, and marginalisation by the state and Bantu ethnic groups (Assembe Mvondo, 2006).

In addition to the formal protected areas such as nature reserves, there are forestry exploitation units (UFAs), which exert further pressure on local people in relation to access to resources (See Figure 1). According to the 1994 Cameroon Forestry Law (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 1994), UFAs are restricted areas in which human activities apart from timber exploitation are forbidden. Due to pressure from the World Bank on forestry policy reforms in the 1990s, the government of Cameroon enacted the 1994 forestry law (Assembe Mvondo, 2006). This model of managing forests through licensing large-scale industrial logging concessions became the prevailing form of forest management in Cameroon (DeGeorges and Reilly, 2008). However, according to The Rainforest Foundation (NGO), this model of forestry management has failed in terms of producing benefits for communities and reducing rural poverty (The Rainforest Foundation, 2014).

The Baka villages of Le Bosquet and Adjela (Figure 1) were selected for their comparable socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Le Bosquet is a roadside settlement stretching for approximately two kilometres. Le Bosquet was founded in 1972 and has a population of approximately 1,500 inhabitants who are

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exclusively Baka. The village has a Catholic church, Catholic primary school and a Catholic health centre run by Franciscan Catholic sisters from the diocese of *Notre Dame de la Foret*. Le Bosquet was created for the Baka who had initially been resettled in other villages alongside the Bantu. The Catholic mission relocated some Baka to this newly created settlement. Adjela, on the other hand, is located approximately 1 kilometre south of Lomie town. It is situated along the main eastern entry into the Dja Reserve. Adjela is a very densely populated village with approximately 500 inhabitants living in circa sixty houses. Unlike other Baka villages, Adjela does not possess a community forest. Also, close proximity to Lomie means that Adjela does not have its own health centre or school and it is not recognised officially as a Baka settlement.



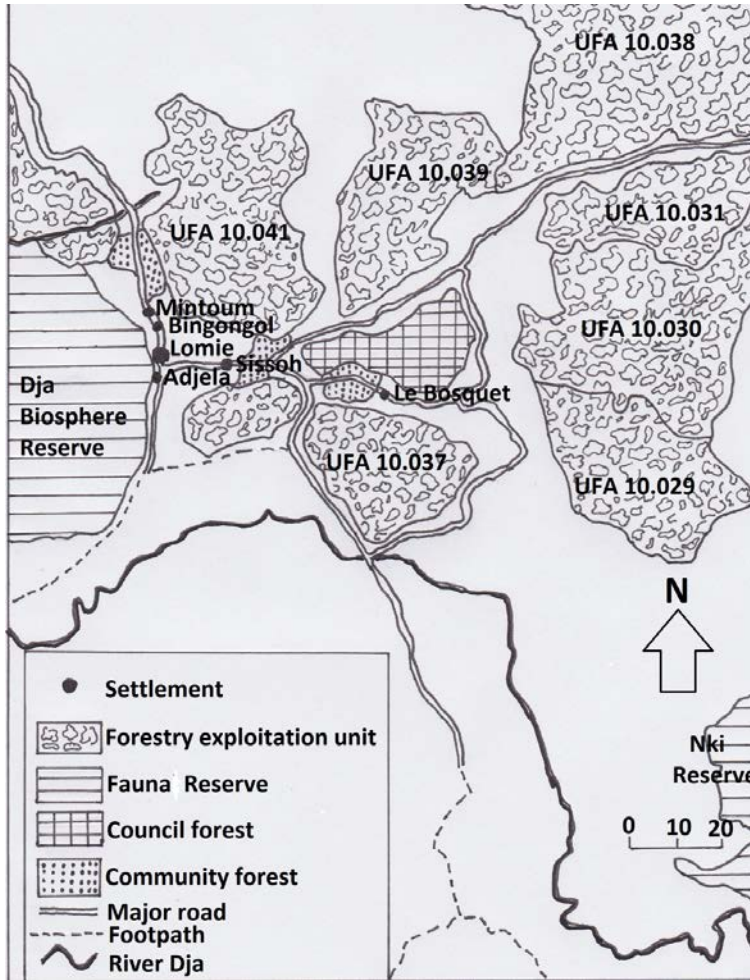


Figure 1: Location of the study site

#### APPLYING PHOTOVOICE IN THE BAKA COMMUNITIES

##### *Structure of the study*

Our study employs an open, flexible, and inductive approach guided by Freire's (1993) work on action with marginalised groups. The entire photovoice study can be divided into five consecutive phases: study design, recruitment of participants, training of participants, taking of photographs, and discussing the photographs. The execution of the photovoice method including the focus group discussions which



followed included a total of eight meetings (over 540 minutes) between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2013 with the Baka of Le Bosquet and Adjela villages. As indicated above, the discussion sessions were held in order to explain and discuss about the photographs and the social problems represented in them. Additionally, as part of a larger study on social impacts of displacement, a survey was conducted prior to the photovoice intervention in 2012. The purpose of the survey was to collect background data on the Baka and their living conditions. Another survey was conducted one year after the photovoice exercise in which the same sample of the population (as in the previous survey) was interviewed. The data provided by these surveys was used to assess and analyse any impacts the photovoice intervention possibly had in the Baka communities.

Participants spoke in their native language (Baka) along with French. As a result, all of the group discussions were conducted in Baka and French, and all written material was available in French. The village shelter (*hangar*) was chosen as the place for all meetings in both villages as it was seen as the most convenient and familiar place for adults to meet and share their experiences. The field research team consisted of the principal investigator, and two research assistants (one Baka and one Bantu), who are born and raised in the area, and fluent in local languages. They assisted in translations from Baka to French when required during the course of the discussions. The research assistants were trained in the photovoice method prior to its execution.

#### *Recruitment of participants*

The recruitment of participants was based on convenience sampling through which adults were randomly approached and given the choice to participate in the study of their own free will. Adult men and women (adulthood amongst the Baka begins conventionally at the age of 16) were randomly selected from the Baka villages of Adjela and Le Bosquet. Also, not more than one person could represent each household in the selection of participants. This was done to make the sample as diverse as possible. Participant age was reported in the majority of cases as an age range because it was difficult to gather information on the exact ages of most participants. In both villages, the photovoice exercise began with an introduction of the research and its objective. Participants were asked to voluntarily come forward and sign for the cameras. Participants were also asked for consent to use their photographs for research purposes, for the dissemination and presentation of the results, and consent to record their focus group discussions into electronic audio files. The participants were given a training session on the mechanics and ethics of photography to ensure they understood the risks and responsibilities of taking photographs in public.

#### *The taking of photographs*

Initially, participants were asked to photograph people, places and things that are important to them or which affect their day-to-day life. This broad request was

made in order to minimize our preconceived problem-oriented participant priority overriding the actual priorities of the participants. Inspired by the work of Hergenrather et al. (2009), we allowed the participants to choose themes from a broader range themselves in order to empower them to use the general community concerns and priorities to identify underlying community concerns of significance. However, although photovoice allows participants to decide the aspects of day-to-day life they want to explore, after consultation with the participants and community elders, it was decided that the initial assignment was too broad and the people needed some guidance to narrow the focus of the investigation. The Baka community leaders agreed to narrow the focus of the assignment to 'challenges we face' and/or 'impoverishment factors'. Participants were asked to take photographs of places, people and things, which pose problems to their day-to-day life. The participants were also informed that they would be expected to explain every photo taken.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, disposable cameras were distributed to the Baka in the villages of Adjela and Le Bosquet. The research team distributed a total of 40 cameras to 40 participants in this exercise (10 women and 10 men in each of the two villages). Following the distribution of cameras, participants were instructed on how to operate them. One shot was taken by a demonstrator and each participant was allowed to turn on the camera, take a photo shot and turn off the camera unassisted. Finally, the participants were informed that the research team would be returning after three days to collect the cameras for printing of the pictures. On the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, the cameras were collected from the photographers. Thirty-nine out of 40 cameras were retrieved. Of the 27 photos per camera (n= 1,053), 10 (n=390) were chosen for printing by each of the participants. The individual importance of the themes to the participants guided the selection of the photos for printing.

#### *Group discussions*

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2013 focus group discussions were held in Le Bosquet and Adjela in which printed photographs were discussed. Photo discussions allowed participants to share and discuss the photographs they took and to encourage critical dialogue about community challenges. Photo discussion sessions in which participants presented their photos were recorded and subsequently transcribed. All 20 photographers attended the discussion sessions in Le Bosquet including another close to 80 villagers who attended as observers. In Adjela, all 19 photographers who returned their cameras were present at the discussions. There was also an audience of around 40 people who were keen to watch and listen to the discussions. In both villages, each photographer was handed those 10 photos selected earlier. The photographers were asked to select their five favourite photos out of the ten for the presentation and discussion (n=5x39=195). Each person was given time to present all five of their best photos based on the following questions adapted from Wang (1999): What do we see on the photo? What is the problem the photo presents? How does the problem in the photo relate

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to your life? Why does this situation or problem exist? What can be done to make things better? Each presentation was followed by a group discussion. The data from the individual photo presentations were analysed through codifying, exploring, formulating, and interpreting into themes of social challenges. The themes were developed, revised and validated in partnership with the participants.

## RESULTS OF THE PHOTOVOICE EXERCISE

### *The problems identified by the participants*

A total of 195 photographs from 39 participants were analysed. As a result, the following major themes were identified by the participants: poor housing conditions, inadequate care for children and the elderly, malnutrition, poor sanitary conditions, insufficient income-generating activities, alcohol abuse, lack of interest in formal education, loss of culture and medicinal knowledge, burden of domestic responsibilities on women, lack of potable water, juvenile delinquency, low life expectancy, deforestation and climate change. Figure 2 shows a distribution chart of percentages of themes of social challenges, which were documented based on the frequency of themes mentioned in the individual presentation of photos by participants. Below are excerpts from the photo presentations:

#### 1) *Poor housing*



This is my house and you can see it is in a really bad state. It is constructed with fragile material. In our previous life before displacement and resettlement, it was OK to live in houses constructed with fragile material because we only lived in these houses for short periods of time. Our houses need to be constructed with more durable materials because we are living in permanent settlements now. – MJ, man from Adjela

2) *Malnutrition*



On this day, I returned home from the farm and the only thing I could cook for my children to eat was boiled cassava leaves with no meat or cassava to go with it. This was the only thing my children had to eat as food on that day. The cause of malnutrition is the lack of diversification in the crops we cultivate on our farms. -II, woman from Adjela

3) *Poor sanitary conditions*



The boy you see on the photo had just defecated in public space. This is a place where we meet up in the evening to socialise. I asked the boy why he chose to defecate in a public place like this and his answer was that there were no latrines nearby and he really needed to ease himself. - MC, Le Bosquet

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You can see standing water just next to a house. Such standing water, which is common in our village provides breeding grounds for mosquitoes. This explains why people fall sick in this village. Diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea result from such standing water. – AG, man from Le Bosquet

#### 4) *Alcohol abuse*



We have money to spend on alcohol but when it comes to sending our children to school, we complain of lack of money. You see empty sachets of whisky as seen on the photo basically everywhere in the village. This shows how much alcohol consumption contributes to poverty among the Baka. Money, which could have been spent on food for the family is being spent on whisky as you see on the photo. - AG, Le Bosquet

5) *Lack of potable water*



When my wife told me she was going to fetch water, I decided to pick up the camera and follow her to where she fetches the water. Upon seeing the source of our drinking water as you can see on the photo, I understood the water was the cause of our frequent diarrhea. - MC, man from Le Bosquet

6) *Loss of medicinal knowledge*



I took this photo to explain the loss of our medicinal knowledge. We tend to not pay enough attention to medicinal plants anymore because in our new life in the village, we do not spend enough time in the forest anymore and do not teach our children about medicinal plants. – ME, woman from Adjela

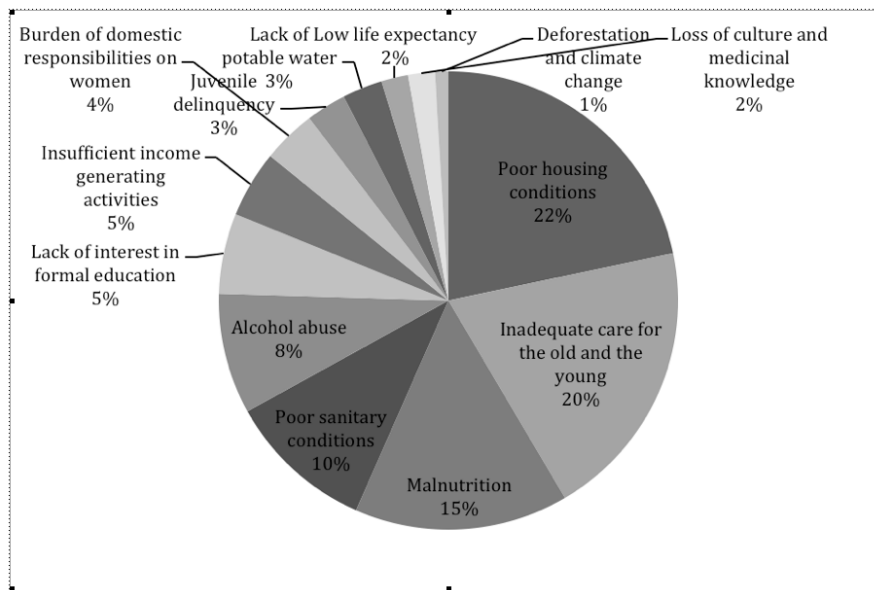


Figure 2: Percentages of themes of social challenges identified by participants (n=195 photos)

At the photovoice discussions few participants mentioned the displacement as a possible cause of some of the issues in the Baka communities. Concerning the theme of poor housing, for example, six out of forty-six photograph presentations created a correlation between poor housing conditions and conservation-induced displacement. Also, concerning poor sanitary conditions, four out of twenty-four photograph presentations made a direct reference to the displacement and resettlement as the main cause of the poor sanitary conditions in the Baka villages.

#### *The solutions and measures proposed by the participants*

In the focus group discussions, the Baka were encouraged to propose solutions to the problems identified by the communities themselves. Such measures proposed by the Baka include:

- Increased awareness on the importance of hygiene, which would possibly reduce morbidity and mortality figures. This includes basic disease prevention measures such as washing hands before eating, getting rid of any standing water around houses, and washing up once a day. The participants also found it important to mobilise the community to build a sufficient number of latrines in the villages.
- Education of the local population by the Baka themselves on the importance of care for the most vulnerable people in society which includes children, elderly

and disabled people particularly in the critical domains of healthcare and nutrition.

- Better understanding of efficient financial management. The participants expressed a need to create Baka-operated microfinance institutions (*tontin*), which would encourage the people to save money and provide access to loans. Better financial management would improve living conditions and facilitate access to secondary and higher education for the Baka.
- Finally, concerning alcohol abuse, it was found important that the consumers, producers and suppliers of alcohol are made aware of the harmful effects of alcohol abuse on individuals, their families and the Baka communities in general. Consumers should be sensitised on the need to consume in moderation. Specific reference was made to a Baka palm wine supplier in Kongo village who will not sell alcohol to anyone appearing to be intoxicated.

Other measures proposed by the participants included: the intensification of arable and livestock farming, construction of houses with more durable building materials, expansion of non-forest based income-generating activities, establishment of local markets in Baka villages, support from NGOs in the acquisition of farming inputs and tools, sensitisation of Baka men by the Baka themselves on the need to assist Baka women in domestic chores, decriminalisation of hunting in protected areas and the creation of Baka owned and operated cooperatives to buy and sell products gathered and grown by the Baka at more competitive market prices.

## DISCUSSION

### *Critical reflection and the limits of photovoice*

According to Freire's (2000) work on critical reflection, the production of critical knowledge has the potential to lead to emancipation. In the dialogical theory of action, Freire (2000) sought to counter the possible notion among the oppressed that their situation can be reduced to their own inability to overcome oppression. By applying the photovoice method, we sought to encourage the Baka to identify and discuss the problems of their daily lives and their communities, initiate critical reflection and engagement in processes of change on their own terms.

Based on the results of our photovoice study, it can be stated that the Baka participants located the foundations of their problems primarily in themselves and in their immediate surroundings. In our case, the application of photovoice to encourage critical reflection among the displaced Baka produced results that do not grasp the structural and institutional level processes of marginalisation and 'oppression' and as such do not achieve what Freire sought to achieve with his dialogical theory of action. The Baka were inclined to blame themselves for their predicaments (for example, see the photographs and their explanations above presenting the following themes: burden of domesticity on women, poor housing, malnutrition, inadequate care for the vulnerable, poor sanitation, alcoholism). The



conservation-induced displacement was brought up only infrequently. Correspondingly, in the focus group discussions the solutions to the problems (actual measures and interventions) the Baka proposed, often addressed the Baka community and focused very closely on the daily lives and livelihood choices by the Baka themselves. One of the reasons for this could be found in the photovoice method: it is easier for the participants to photograph visible or tangible phenomena. In particular for an inexperienced photographer it can be difficult (and would probably require more 'photographic literacy') to capture more abstract, subtle and intangible themes.

In our study, we tried to complement such situations in the discussions. Freire (2000) in providing a framework for his dialogical theory of action recommended researchers to ask their participants at the end of the process if there are any additional challenges which could be discussed besides those already identified. This question was posed to the Baka participants at the end of each focus group discussion. The prejudice against the Baka by the dominant Bantu was identified by participants at this stage as one of the key issues. This led to discussions on possible solutions among the Baka participants and one consensus was that the Bantu should be included in a football programme. The stated objective of this community football programme was to combat prejudice and promote mutual respect and understanding within the Baka community and between the Baka and the dominant Bantu.

Despite the limitations described above, the photovoice intervention did initiate a process of critical reflection and contributed in raising awareness among Baka. But as Freire in response to his critics (Schugurensky, 1998) admitted, critical self-awareness alone could not lead to change but it could generate a process of change (Freire, 2014). Comparatively, photovoice on its own cannot lead to change but it can generate a process of change. The photovoice intervention led to critical awareness among the Baka. For example, photovoice led to the recognition of poor sanitation (including the lack of latrines) as a critical problem in the communities. This awareness generated proposals for tackling the problem within the community, which included a collective effort to build latrines. Baka people acknowledged that the construction of latrines as a joint project would be more efficient and easier to carry out than individual efforts. In the focus group discussions Baka participants identified the above-mentioned community football as a suitable method to motivate the young men in the communities to form groups and contribute to keeping the communities clean by building latrines.

#### *Assessing the impacts of the photovoice intervention in the Baka communities*

In a subsequent field trip in April 2014 (one year after the photovoice intervention), a few changes in living conditions and livelihood strategies were observed that could be related to the photovoice intervention.<sup>1</sup> This judgement is based on the results of the interviews carried out after the photovoice intervention and the quantitative survey, which was conducted as part of a larger related study prior to the photovoice intervention. The purpose of the surveys was to collect

background data on the Baka and their living conditions. For example, as part of the photovoice exercise, the participants identified malnutrition as a long-term problem for many in the community. This underscored the need for action that focuses not only on the prevention of malnutrition through outside intervention but also through *in situ* interventions focused on community self-reliance. Furthermore, recommendations from participants called for more involvement of the Baka in arable farming as a solution to malnutrition. Evidence of a positive shift in this direction can be drawn from the increase in the number of participants practising arable farming from 53.3 per cent in 2012 before the photovoice intervention to 87.7 per cent after the intervention in 2014. Even Adjela with limited arable land in close proximity to the village witnessed an increase in the number of people practising arable farming from 20 per cent in 2012 to 75 per cent in 2014 after photovoice.

The overall outcome of the increase in arable farming has been a reduction in malnutrition among participants. In addition, through mixed farming, a variety of food crops is introduced in the diet as people have different options on what to harvest from their farms for food. In 2013, prior to photovoice and in 2014 after photovoice, the body mass index (BMI) was calculated for the same group of participants in Adjela and Le Bosquet. The results revealed that average BMI for both communities increased from 20.86 before photovoice to 21.4 in 2014 after photovoice. The most significant increase in BMI was among the women in Adjela from 18.4 (classified as underweight) before photovoice to 21.3 (classified as ideal weight) post-photovoice in 2014. These results indicate that the photovoice intervention may have played a concrete role in reducing malnutrition through raising awareness of the importance of arable farming in particular.

#### CONCLUSION

The guidelines of the critical reflection approach in Freire's dialogical theory of action were applied to investigate social challenges faced by the Baka communities in their new living environments. The displaced and resettled Baka were given the opportunity through photovoice to express themselves and develop proposals concerning what can be done to alleviate social problems of their communities. The results of the photovoice intervention revealed that in spite of certain restrictions of the method, it has the potential for initiating processes of change, which may also have very concrete and practical outcomes in the communities in question.

The structural and institutional level processes featured in the photographs and accompanying discussions infrequently. One of the reasons for this could possibly be found in the photovoice method. As regards conservation-induced displacement, some participants mentioned the displacement and resettlement as a possible cause of certain issues in the Baka communities. Considering the current conservation research and conservation practices from the perspective of this study, it could be said that the social issues of the displaced people living around protected areas should be more thoroughly addressed and acknowledged. Mitigation of negative

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social issues occurring in displaced communities could deliver positive social and environmental outcomes locally, which in turn could boost conservation initiatives. The findings of this study contribute to a call for sustainable conservation practice, looking beyond displacement and increasingly considering the mitigation of possible negative impacts of CID as part of successful conservation practices.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These changes have also been facilitated by the interventions of NGOs, which are active in the study site such as Living Earth Foundation Cameroon (human rights and alternative livelihood strategies), GEOAID (agriculture, education and health) and Plan International (education, economic security, health and sanitation). While acknowledging the activities of these NGOs, other possible factors affecting the communities and facilitating change and the difficulty of assessing the impact of each of the actors working in the area, the effect of our photovoice intervention in sensitisation and awareness raising on the importance of farming, sanitation, micro-financing and moderation in alcohol consumption can be regarded as valuable. The NGOs had been operating in the area for a number of years before the photovoice intervention. Certain changes observed after the photovoice could be associated with it.

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ANDRESSA SCHRÖDER

## AESTHETICS AS A 'MIDDLE WAY' IN SUSTAINABILITY ETHICS

### INTRODUCTION

“Recognizing the extended range of the aesthetic dimension has powerful theoretical implications, for it suggests that the domains of value are not easily kept separate. [...] An intricate complex of values infuses and enriches experience.”

(Berleant, 1992:183-84)

The aesthetic dimension of experience is an important field of research in which innovative perspectives on environmental issues can be introduced and explored. In the opening quote, the philosopher Arnold Berleant (1991; 1992; 2010) indicates a complexity of interdependent values that permeate human experience and which are incredibly enriched when perceived through an aesthetic dimension of them. As it will be argued further in this paper, this is one central issue in the debates about sustainability, as most of them provide a poor comprehension of the wide spectrum of values that comprise the topic.

Sustainability and environmental ethics are both culturally and historically framed therefore, it is not possible to establish a universal model for them, as many institutional approaches to environmental issues intend to do. It is first necessary to observe and understand the specificity of these frames, as well as how they shape the systematization of values and the processes of decision-making regarding environmental and cultural protection. In this sense, the aesthetic dimension is incorporated as an integral aspect of this complex and multi-layered system of values that surrounds sustainability and the protection of cultural and biological diversity. Furthermore, it is an important exercise to explore the different nuances of the complexity of value-systems in reference, for example, to the models of ecosystem services, sustainability, and the conventions for heritage protection. It is an exercise that needs to be undertaken as a continuous practice in order to widen the comprehensions about the fluidity of these values, as well as to understand how the measures and policies for the protection of culture and nature are created and maintained. Therefore, some aspects of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the field of Biocultural Diversity, and the aesthetic values of the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment will be briefly explored under the lenses of aesthetic engagement and environmental aesthetics. (Berleant, 1991; 1992) The goal in this paper is not to describe a “new” or “re-formulated” model for sustainability, ecosystem services, or diversity protection. Instead, it investigates

the already existing models and the issues regarding these topics in an explorative way – through the aesthetic experience – and indicates the multiplicity of values and perspectives that are overshadowed in models that attempt to embrace a universal application.

Human experience – understood as the experience of an organism embedded in its environment, in a fluid rhythm that constantly affects both (Dewey, 1934; Berleant, 1992) – has an aesthetic dimension withheld in itself. Berleant merges environmental aesthetics as an all-encompassing value to environmental appreciation. Our perception of the environment is permeated by such a complexity of experiences that influence the forms in which we assess information about it, our capacity of decision-making and, consequently, shape our lifestyles. As indicated by Sacha Kagan in his interpretation of Edgar Morin's complexity theory, "complex relations (complementary, concurrent and antagonistic) institute, no longer a linear logic, but a complex dia-logic [... which] combines a 'unity,' a 'complementarity,' a 'competition' and an 'antagonism' [...] complexity eliminates the very possibility of "universality," even in the universe itself as a whole." (Kagan, 2011) This complex net, that permeates human experience, is suppressed by models of "single-value-thinking" (Berleant, 1992) that can be misleading and sometimes extremely grievous, regarding ecosystemic and biospheric rhythms of equilibrium (which are dependent on the flows and tensions between order and disorder).

Another important aspect of the aesthetic dimension of environmental sustainability, which will be taken into consideration within this paper, refers to the different sensorial characteristics that instigate, or are instigated in an aesthetic experience, as well as the affective and emotional effects caused by them. It is important then to consider their impact on the mental processes that involve the recognition and definition of sustainable practices and the establishment of protection policies. "Psychologically, deep-seated needs cannot be stirred to find fulfillment in perception without an emotion and affection that, in the end, constitute the unity of experience." (Dewey, 1934) In this sense, the observation of aesthetic patterns, which are present in what is accepted as a sustainable practice in different cultures, is a methodological procedure that enlightens the comprehension of the processes that influence how people adopt sustainable or unsustainable practices.

#### THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ETHICS

According to Berleant (1992), exploring the realm of environmental aesthetics is an important first step in order to overcome the conception of nature as a separate domain from the human. The aesthetic dimension of human experience enforces the continuity between the body and environment. "For there is no outside world. There is no outside. Nor is there an inner sanctum in which I can take refuge from inimical external forces. The perceiver (mind) is an aspect of the perceived (body) and conversely; person and environment are continuous." These aspects of the

sensorial embeddedness of the ‘perceiver’ in its environment, which are explored in the aesthetic experience and perception of the environment, indicate the possibilities for a ‘middle way’ in the conflicts of anthropocentric and biocentric means in environmental ethics.

Following John Dewey’s pragmatic conceptions of the aesthetic experience, Berleant examines the environmental aesthetics as an experiential and sensorial perception that strengthens the sensory meanings, which are integral to this fluid exchange and continuity between organism and environment (Dewey, 1934; Berleant, 1992). Berleant also draws from the phenomenological comprehension of the flesh of the world created by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In Merleau-Ponty, this notion is remarkably developed according to the comprehension of the body as immersed in the environment, sensing it, but beyond that, being it. According to him, it is impossible to define a fine line between the sensed and the sensing body. There is an “indivision of this sensible Being that I am and all the rest which feels itself in me;” the body is therefore part of the “flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). The body experiences the environment, but it is also part of it and it forms this environment through its perception and its experience of it. “One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself or that the world is at the heart of our flesh. [...] once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside.” (Ibid.) Thence, the environment propitiates the conditions for life; however, how life flourishes is a matter of a mutual exchange that is situated in time and space. (Berleant, 1992) In the same sense, the way in which the aesthetic perception of the environment evolves is inherent to the cultural experience and history that also advance in relation to this environment. Berleant (1991) reinforces the concept of the ‘flesh of the world,’ or the inseparability of the body from the environment, emphasizing also the dynamic harmony of this sensory awareness and the psychological interconnection between consciousness and culture.

In this intrinsic relationship between organism and environment, it becomes fundamental to investigate the place of the human being in this theoretical matrix, for this is one of the main issues regarding environmental and sustainability ethics. Both, environmental and sustainability ethics arise from queries towards the human interaction with nature. In the case of sustainability ethics, though, there seems to be an implicit assumption that the instrumental value of nature is the single matter in debate. (Beckermann, 1994; McShane, 2014) One significant challenge in this regard, is the very definition of sustainability. Despite the several new interpretations and approaches emerging to the topic,<sup>1</sup> the concept of sustainability has been most often recognized through the idea of sustainable development, which was coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. In a rough summary, the focus of sustainable development is on maintaining the consumption of natural resources at a pace capable of accommodating human inter- and intra-generational wellbeing. The oft-quoted definition of sustainable development is still the one expressed by the WCED in their final report, *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundtland Report):



“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Although many cultural approaches to sustainability challenge the general model suggested by the WCED, most of them still focus on development, human wellbeing, and economic values, being unable to overcome the theoretical division between human, or culture and nature. The focus on human wellbeing is problematic because it does not take into account the structures of ecosystems that do not have human beings as the direct recipient of the benefits of a balanced system. Besides, in some sense, this misconception also affects the recognition of the effect of human actions on the balance of an ecosystem, if they are not perceived in an obvious cause and effect chain.

Sustainable development can therefore be seen as a contradictory concept, which strongly influences the discussions that revolve around sustainability ethics. (Redclift, 2005) It instigates the continuous process of development, measuring it on economic and technological bases, in ways, which do not correspond to cultural, sociological, or even ecological conditions of specific situations. In this process, the conceptualization of wellbeing is also misguided and mostly based on material conditions. This leads the ethical concerns to superficial approaches that establish their values according to generalized expectations of economic growth and technological development.<sup>2</sup>

Although sustainability ethics seems to have this propensity to deal with the instrumental values of nature, there are some heated confrontations in the scope of environmental ethics regarding intrinsic and instrumental values of nature.<sup>3</sup> Due to limited space, these debates cannot be thoroughly examined here, but through the investigation of the aesthetic approach, it is possible to address some of the issues and aspects that are often neglected in sustainability ethics. It is important to highlight that in the extreme approaches to both, the intrinsic, or the instrumental values of nature, there is a problematic emphasis on patterns of discontinuity between human and nature. Nature is defined on the one hand as a separate sphere which holds a set of intrinsic values that do not involve the human; almost as a sacred and untouchable other. On the other hand, in the instrumental perspective, it is defined as a sphere that should not be embraced by human values, unless for its significance for human benefits. (Warren, 1999) In this regard, environmental aesthetics opens the ground of environmental discussions for reconsiderations of the human interaction with the built and natural environments. (King, 2000; Fox, 2007) This is not suggested in the sense of hierarchical values, opposing nature and culture, but in integrative possibilities of understanding human beings as natural components of complete ecosystems. Berleant (1992) has highlighted the centrality of the human place in the aesthetic experience; however, this centrality can be understood in the sense of the capacity of human beings in consciously recognizing their role in their ecosystem as interconnected elements and not as ruling coordinators of it. Moreover, because environmental aesthetics is not necessarily concerned with establishing a clear division between intrinsic and instrumental values (or anthropocentric and biocentric approaches), it enables the investigation of the sensorial relation between the human body and the environment as an organic process of continuity.

The aesthetic approach stimulates the investigation of different aspects of wellbeing, not just human wellbeing, but perhaps an ecosystemic wellbeing, with humans as an integral part of it. "The aesthetic becomes, then, a universal category, not the universal category but the omnipresent concept of a pervasive feature of experience." (Berleant, 1992) However, this universal category indicated by Berleant should not be understood as a unitary theory; it is instead a category, which holds the potential to instigate the sensitivity to difference. This can be nicely related to the comprehension of the fluid relationship between "unity and diversity" in Morin's complexity theory: "Complexity emerges, therefore, at the heart of Oneness simultaneously as relativity, relationality, diversity, alterity, duplicity, ambiguity, uncertainty, antagonism, and in the union of these notions which are each in reference to the others complementary, concurrent, and antagonistic." (Morin, 1992) In this kind of experience, it is not possible to be completely free of cultural biases, but it is necessary to be neutral enough in order to acknowledge and challenge the kinds of biases and pre-established values inherent in cultural practices. The aesthetic value of environment surpasses, then, the mere appreciation category to which it is usually associated and reaches the power of engagement, highlighted by Berleant (1991): "as part of an environmental field, we both shape and are formed by the experiential qualities of the universe we inhabit. These qualities constitute the perceptual domain in which we engage in aesthetic experience." Through a significant experience, the environment acquires meaning and this process influence the ways in which human beings can measure the impacts of their actions and adopt or maintain more sustainable lifestyles.

#### INTANGIBLE VALUES AND COMPLEXITY IN CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

The concept of intangible heritage is a rich example with which to explore the dimension of the aesthetic values of sustainability. It indicates significant combinations of concerns for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the investigation of the power of engagement that can be attained through aesthetics. The first concerns that evolved to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (ICHC), issued in 2003, emerged from a critique to the bias towards grand buildings and monuments as representatives of world heritage. Thence, it suggested the inclusion of cultural expressions, which usually are not represented by material or tangible values. (Deacon, 2003) The ICHC is divided into five different domains: oral traditions and expressions - including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. (ICHC, 2003) These domains sometimes overlap and therefore do not hold a strict definition of what should be established as intangible heritage.

It is important to observe that the limits between tangibility and intangibility are also not so simple to determine. Intangible values are always intrinsic to any kind of tangible heritage, while not all intangible heritages has a tangible form of

representation of its values. (Munjeri, 2004) Aesthetic experience, as previously described, is an essential element to grasp the intangible characteristics of cultural manifestations. Connecting the comprehension of the aesthetic values intrinsic to any kind of cultural practice to the comprehension of the intangibility of environmental experience is a necessary measure to improve combined policies for the protection of cultural and natural heritage. The expanded comprehension of aesthetic experience and sensibility instigates the appreciation of different cultural values, including varied ontological comprehensions of the human-nature relation. (Berleant, 2010) Reversely, “the ecological gaze also reveals that our culture is the ecosystem of our ideas of nature, thus a double ecology of nature and culture is revealed.” (Kagan, 2011)

Furthermore, in the scope of the concerns and definitions of the ICHC, there are rich connections between the preservation of linguistic diversity and intangible cultural values. Linguistic diversity is an intrinsic value to most, if not all, of the ICHC domains. Just like aesthetic perception, language is a living organism, which transcends the structures of thought (Humboldt, 1999) and evolves together with culture, shaping and being shaped by it. Each language contains specific and immensely rich worldviews<sup>4</sup> that are manifested in different forms of cultural expressions, which allow people to create and recreate multiple conceptualizations of the world, of history and of what it means to be human. The use of a language is always a flowing process; as cultures are not stagnated in time, languages are also constantly changing and being adapted to new contexts. Nevertheless, these changes in cultural practices and linguistic structures should be perceived as fluid processes that derive from the interrelations of specific communities with their environments and not as imposed values by an external model of development.

The correlations between linguistic (and cultural) and biological diversity are strongly discussed in the emerging field of research known as Biocultural Diversity (BD).<sup>5</sup> Some published studies in BD compare the co-occurrence of linguistic diversity and biodiversity in specific parts of the globe. Part of the explanation regarding the overlapping occurrence of linguistic and biodiversity refers to the fact that environments with a rich variety of biological resources – such as tropical areas for example – would propitiate sufficient conditions for survival with no dependency on wider geographical communication.<sup>6</sup> However, with the increasing processes of globalization and modernization, linguistic singularities, as well as the specificities of different environments and the forms of assessing them through an organic interaction have been threatened. The exploration of environments, natural resources and peoples who inhabit these areas was and still is an increasing power to the creation of a monocultural world, with a single-value-perspective on the worth of nature, the definition of wellbeing, and the promotion of a standardized model of environmental knowledge:

This shrinkage of the space for cultural creativity, dignity and innovation has dangerous implications for biodiversity [...] a blind and monotheistic attachment to market principles tends to marginalize long-term values. Cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values of and for the long run.

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And cultural diversity guarantees the maximum range of visions of the good life within which relationships to nature can also be varied, specific, local and self-sustaining. (Appadurai, 2002)

In our modern and urbanized worldviews, we lack a natural contact with the world and sustainable forms of living in it. (Maffi, 2005) Thence it is necessary to explore the complexity of different aesthetic patterns and values that can improve “modern lifestyles” without necessarily focusing on economic growth and technological development.

In this sense, the Ecosystem Services Assessment can also be explored and the category of the aesthetic values, already existing within it, can be significantly expanded. First, however, it is important to stress that the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment (MA)<sup>7</sup> is an impressive and wide study that confronted conventional understandings of the values of ecosystems. It introduced a new perspective on the mutual effects of human actions on the environment and the services of ecosystems for human wellbeing, and how both are being degraded. Nevertheless, the space dedicated for what is defined as cultural services in the reports, is very restricted and the aesthetic category has an elaboration that is clearly drawn from a limited understanding of aesthetics (as well as its connection to culture and nature).

According to the first report of the MA, the cultural services are the “nonmaterial benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experiences.” (MA, 2003) This is not a completely problematic definition, it is however simplistic and vague. And although the expression ‘aesthetic experience’ is used, it indicates a superficial comprehension, for the aesthetic value is defined as follows: “many people find beauty and aesthetic value in various aspects of ecosystems, as reflected in the support for parks, “scenic drivers,” and the selection of housing locations.” (MA, 2003) This definition reflects the controversial comprehension of aesthetics as a disinterested form of experiencing the environment, based on distant appreciation. It does not integrate the kind of engagement that has been exposed by Berleant:

[...as] a participatory model of environmental experience. No longer a spectator, no longer even an agent, we join in the movement of things very much as a performer does in theater or dance, activating the conditions with which we live, integrating them in our bodies, and leading them in our own ends by a sensitivity to their requirements. (Berleant, 1991)

Later in the report, there is the important remark that many features in ecosystem values influence the “aesthetic, recreational, educational, cultural and spiritual aspects of human experience” and that their depletion would therefore have negative impacts on cultural values. (MA, 2003) Nevertheless, the relationship between the intangible values of human experience and the environment is not deepened enough to clarify the importance of these values in the human experience of the environment. The report lacks a more specific focus on the role of aesthetic

experience and an emphasis on the wider connections of aesthetics to other dimensions of life to make the protection of these values become more reasonable.

Another crucial problem of the general approach of the ecosystem services is that it does not break with the very idea that the services provided by ecosystems are primarily necessary only to enhance human wellbeing. For this matter, on a theoretical level, the concept of aesthetic values in the report can be very limiting and misleading. It is necessary to explore the ecosystem services beyond the instrumental perception it holds of nature and elaborate a new conceptualization of the aesthetics within it – an environmental aesthetics that would reach out to the capacity of engagement, as stressed by Berleant. The aesthetic engagement is fundamental because it provides an open platform for communities to have more autonomy in their processes of decision-making. Well-informed communities can develop more balanced trade-offs in nuanced value-based judgments. (Berleant 1992; 2010)

#### COMPLEX PATTERNS IN AESTHETICS AND SYSTEMS OF VALUES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

As previously indicated in this paper and exemplified with the above-mentioned cases, the established systems of value in models of sustainability and environmental protection are often based on generalized comprehensions of human wellbeing, usually associated with economic growth and technological development, and measured, therefore, with a single-value-thinking-system. In these models, different values are divided into separate categories and discussed as if they were completely separate spheres of life. This form of systematization of values offers a poor comprehension of the complex interconnection of the different values present in human experience, as well as how they affect the human interaction with nature. As indicated by Berleant (1992), the different “[categories of values] typically merge in experience, often fusing into combinations that are not only inseparable but ontologically coherent.” Furthermore, as highlighted by Morin, it is fundamental to “mentally conceive oneness and diversity together [...] as two notions which are not only antagonistic or competitive, but also complementary [...] a system is a unity which comes from diversity, ties diversity, carries diversity in itself, organizes diversity, produces diversity.” (Morin, 1992 in Kagan, 2011) A cultural approach to environmental issues should, in this sense, propitiate the comprehension and exchange of different ontological models, emphasizing their rich multi-layered and experiential forms of knowledge. Moreover, it should instigate the understanding of the ambiguous, unifying and inherent aesthetic dimension of these diverse ontological models.

There is a presumed overestimation of the scientific knowledge included in most of the sustainability discourses, which suppresses the kind of experiential knowledge that is usually shared among the individuals of a community, and which profoundly affects the forms in which people give meaning to the world. Adopting an aesthetic approach is therefore very revealing, for “the unity of the senses [...] cannot be understood in terms of their subsumption under primary consciousness,

but of their never-ending integration into one knowing organism.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) The aesthetic qualities of experience involve complex forms of sensorial awareness of the world – a form of bodily consciousness, an all-encompassing and integrative sensorial form of knowledge.

In this sense, the aesthetic dimension of experience is an appropriate category to explore the complexity of value-systems. It carries already a complex dynamic within itself, for the concept of aesthetics has a long history and multiple interpretations of it. This is one of the reasons for its vague definitions in the institutional approaches to it. The most problematic aspects of the appropriation of the concept of aesthetics in models for environmental protection are the idea of disinterested and distant appreciation, and the commodification of the aesthetic experience as pure entertainment. These two notions, very commonly associated to the concept of aesthetics, limit the powerful potentials that a more complex comprehension of the term could have. Kagan made this claim evident in his definition of the aesthetics of sustainability: “by contrast to classical, object and essence-centered aesthetics, aesthetics of sustainability is to be understood as a subset of aesthetics as understood by Dewey, i.e. a form of relation and process-centered aesthetics, which bases itself on a sensibility to the patterns that connect at multiple levels.” (Kagan, 2011) And Dewey himself had refused the limitation of aesthetics to a pure contemplative experience: “to limit aesthetic emotion to the pleasure attending the act of contemplation is to exclude all that is most characteristic of it.” (Dewey, 1934)

Moreover, as it is further stressed by Kagan in his description of the sensibility to complexity, and as it has been indicated in this paper through the investigation of Berleant’s concept of aesthetic engagement, it is fundamental to expand the comprehension of aesthetics through the sensorial characteristics that it enhances. Through the focus on the sensorial characteristics of the aesthetic experience, this paper aimed at exploring beyond the usual association of aesthetics with the visual, or the material and superficial characteristics of an object and reach to the complexity of affect, engagement, and aesthetic experience in human interaction with nature. Perceptual awareness and sensorial experience are perhaps the most basic features to which we turn (even if unconsciously) when we create or adopt cultural values and appreciation. (Berleant 2010) Furthermore, the realm of aesthetic perception goes even beyond purely physical sensation; as already indicated, it is inevitably influenced by cultural and historical frames that give weight to values and shape the patterns that become evident within a specific group, community, or society.

As suggested by Berleant, “using the investigative and critical capabilities of the aesthetic with the help of the methodology of phenomenology and a pragmatic process of determining and evaluating meanings and consequences has a dramatic effect on our basic understanding of the human world.” (Berleant, 2010:) Applying these methods to sustainability ethics has transformative results, not only in the (re)assessment of sustainability models, but in the inclusion of a wider understanding of wellbeing. Through the aesthetic dimension of experience it is possible to include the aesthetic values in the discourses of sustainability ethics as

fundamental values for the understanding of environment. "With this powerful aesthetic instrument in hand, we can now pursue its critical and constructive use in rediscovering and reconstructing our human world." (Berleant, 2010)

The complexity of the aesthetic dimension of experience and its relation to environmental perception and sustainability goes beyond the issues of the human-nature relation, or the inter- and intra-generational wellbeing. It reaches to the formation of human self-identity and the comprehension of individual values adopted in personal lifestyles as inescapably connected to a wider sense of environmental-self and an ecosystemic wellbeing.

"[...] such a sensibility should neither turn into a holistically simplified perception, nor into a merely individualized and localized perception, but should strive to become a sensibility to complexity. The challenge of aesthetics of sustainability, as a phenomenological challenge, implies both a revival of our basically animistic participation to the presence of the living natural world around us, locally, and the construction of a participative perception of planet Earth as the basis for a planetary citizenship." (Kagan, 2011)

This is a fundamental understanding in order to widen the spectrum of sustainability ethics, which, as indicated by Christian Becker, is about "developing human self-identity as a sustainable person in the context of the sustainability relations, and developing societal and global systems accordingly." (Becker, 2012) Furthermore, it is through the consideration of the aesthetic patterns in sustainable practices that it becomes possible to identify and define what sustainability means and the role of humans in complex environmental cycles.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper has posed some criticism to issues relating to sustainability ethics and some institutionalized models for the protection of culture and nature, and it challenged what has been previously referred to as the "single-value-thinking-system." The theoretical investigation was performed through an aesthetic approach, where aesthetics was defined as the sensorial-perceptual dimension of human experience. The suggestions offered throughout the paper refer to: the acknowledgement that there are different forms of sensing the world, which influence the ways in which knowledge about the world is created and shared; the search for innovative forms of addressing the aesthetic dimension of the policies for cultural and environmental protection, through the investigation of more profound comprehensions of the aesthetic experience; and the investigation of the power of engagement that is intrinsic to the aesthetic experience and which influences the perception of cultural and natural values, and the sense of wellbeing.

The theoretical investigation of the aesthetic dimension of sustainability ethics has been exposed here as a fundamental step to break through the conventional definitions of human-nature relation, sustainability, ecosystem values, cultural and natural heritage, and (human) wellbeing. Furthermore, exploring the complexity in

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the aesthetic dimension of human experiences has a transformative effect on the conception and cultivation of environmental knowledge and it can be perceived as a fundamental element to instigate individuals, communities and societies to engage in more sustainable lifestyles.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See for example the *Agenda 21 for Culture* issued by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2004, and Hawkes, Jon. *The Fourth Pillar for Sustainability. Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning*, 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> There have been growing critical approaches to the focus on economic growth as the common means to measure human wellbeing. Innovative and informative studies can be found through the movements of Degrowth, Post-Growth and the Slow Movement.
- <sup>3</sup> Intrinsic and instrumental values of nature were largely debated across Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Ecofeminism. Overviews about the topic can be found in publications by: J. Baird Callicott; William Cronon; Warwick Fox; Roger J.H. King; Katie McShane; Arne Naess; and Karen Warren, among others.
- <sup>4</sup> Worldview, in this sense, refers to the Humboldtian concept of *Weltansicht* (as opposed to that of *Weltanschauung*) which has been explained by the scholars James Underhill and Jürgen Trabant. "Languages are not assemblages of affirmations about the world which we hold to be true. Languages affirm nothing about the world; they give us the world in a certain way, thereby allowing assertive discourses (among others) upon the nature of the world." (Trabant, 1992. In: Underhill, 2009: 55)
- <sup>5</sup> The main ideas regarding the concept of Biocultural Diversity were developed by the members of the non-governmental organization *Terralingua*, who focus on the connectedness of the protection of cultural/linguistic and biological diversity, linking it also to the problems of social justice and human rights.
- <sup>6</sup> See: Maffi, 2005 (in reference David Harmon and Jonathan Loh).
- <sup>7</sup> The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was an international work program designed to develop four-year (2001-2005) research about the consequences of ecosystem change for human wellbeing.

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MELANIE STEINBACHER

## QUANTIFIED QUALITIES

*The limits of valuation of landscape aesthetics through an integrated system theory informed approach*

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, an academic discourse about the meaningfulness and effectiveness of a monetary valorisation and trading scheme for natural resources has evolved. Within the idea of the classification of nature in terms of “ecosystem service,” ecologists and economists found a common ground for the quantification and evaluation of goods and services. The invention of market places and payments for ecosystem services required a close collaboration of economists and ecologists, whereby ecologists delivered the knowledge of measurement of singular ecosystem services, and economists translated it into the economic system.

In 2001, the UN commissioned a research team, which, in 2005, produced a highly publicized study, *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MA). These ecosystem services are defined as “the benefits people obtain from ecosystems.” (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005) In terms of this study, 31 services provided by ecosystems were divided into four classes and differentiated according to whether they acted as provisioning, regulatory or cultural services (CES) directly to people, or as supporting services. CES are classified as “the nonmaterial benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experiences.” (Ibid.) In 2007, the G8 countries and five other states initiated a project called *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB). This comprehensive study was perceived as a major milestone for establishing societal and economic valuation of ecosystems and biodiversity. It was “a global initiative focusing on drawing attention to the economic benefits of biodiversity” (TEEB - The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity, 2013a). The valorisation of common goods, initially regarded as a tool for environmental protection, has become the basis for an advanced market scheme. The initiative suggests a multi-step process to quantify the services. The valuation of ecosystem services contains a spectrum of market-based tools including measuring direct market valuation approaches (prices) and revealed preference approaches such as the travel cost method. (TEEB – 2013a) Payments for ecosystem services (PES) have replaced political enforcement and a moral authority of the protection of nature, environment and landscape as an overall business opportunity. (Landell-Mils & Porras, 2002)

Critics of this development postulate that the price of nature is not calculable. (Feydel & Delestrac, 2014) They also worry about the risk that some investors might eventually benefit from the destruction of nature. The markets of environmental goods could also be in danger of a stock market crash (Ibid.) The malfunction of the CO<sub>2</sub> trade stocks is an example of the problem of integrating nature logics into market logics. This critics underline that market-based valorisation of natural goods has taken a predominant position. Responsibility for nature preservation has shifted from governmental institutions to the free market economy. (Ibid.) Morgan M. Robertson (2004) pointed out that “neoliberalism can be seen as the latest attempt by capital to colonize and dominate the rationalities of other systems with which it articulates, notably the political and ecological.”

Some critical responses (Robertson, 2004; Kosoy & Corbera, 2010) have pointed out the incommensurability of scientific or “quantitative logics” and the intrinsic quality of nature as an aesthetic asset. Regarding the example of the CES *aesthetic value*, the consumption of beautiful landscape scenery would correlate with the available amount of money on one hand, and on the other hand on the willingness to spend that money on preserving the landscape. From a constructivist point of view, however, the willingness depends on multitudinous subjective factors and values and can’t be explained rationally. The limits of market-based valuation systems are also pushed by a price collapse caused by unpredictable disinterest or the privatization of public goods. Kosoy and Corbera (2010) argue that “[t]he attribution of property rights over ecosystem services plays a critical role in influencing who can claim ownership and who can trade in PES.”

This article goes beyond the critique of neoclassical environmental and resource economics. It deals with a social-theoretically driven critique of a one-dimensional perspective on the value of nature and the valorisation of cultural ecosystem services (Büscher, 2008). This article analyses the problems related to the translation of cultural values to market based system. In that way, it highlights the limits of a positivistic perspective on cultural ecosystem services based on the example of the cultural ecosystem service *aesthetic value* related to landscape. Eventually this paper proposes how to deal with different disciplinary approaches to cultural (ecosystem) values. My intention is not to blame the positivist approach, but rather to analyse the inner logic and tradition of the different disciplinary systems to define different interests lying behind a comprehensive system of nature conservation.

In order to enrich the theoretical debate on the human-nature nexus and the aesthetic valuation of landscapes, this paper introduces systems theory as a powerful approach for analysing values and valuation. My analysis is based on Niklas Luhmann’s (1987) systems theory and the functional differentiation between social systems. By integrating systems not only as social contexts, but also as entities of intrinsic logic and language, Luhmann’s theoretical framework opens a space for the analysis not only of communication and translation between separate structures, but also further points out boundaries and limits of commensurability of divergent systems. I argue that by naming and defining these limits, can we think and talk about the possibility of their transgression. Some

researchers (Noe & Alrøe, 2012; Rieder, 2008; Robertson, 2004; Simon, 2011) have already elaborated on the applicability of Luhmann's theory to social-ecological issues. I go beyond the general question of the relation between humans and the environment, and discuss the theory within recent developments in the ecosystem services discourse by applying this framework in the analysis of disciplinary systems.

#### THE SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE: LOST IN TRANSLATION

In 1986, during a phase where environmental issues became socially relevant, Luhmann raised the topic of human-environment relation and gave a theory-based response to the issue. He rejected the upcoming and mainstreaming ecological movements and feared a politically loaded perspective on environmental crisis based on an attitude of morality. Further he saw the risk of an ideological trivialization without a realistic approach for a solution. In his book *Ecological Communication* Luhmann (1986) pointed out a theoretical and depoliticized systemic view on the subject. Central to his approach were clearly differentiated and distinguished *self-referential*, autopoietic systems (see Luhmann, 2012). Rather functionally-specialized subsystems operate autonomously (such as law, business, politics, science), are not interchangeable, and act as if there is just one system in the world. The legal system, for example, can only receive and process legal aspects of an issue. The economy responds to environmental issues by their own code; only in the language of prices. A holistic solution for environmental issues is therefore impossible.

In Luhmann's framework, systems constitute structures with their own internal logic and language, and therefore cannot simply adapt to each other, inject their structural and symbolic aspects into other systems or even communicate with each other easily and without translation errors. Luhmann chose an open and case-dependent approach for the definition and limitation of system boundaries. "The unity of the system is nothing more than the closure of its autopoietic mode of operation. [...] Besides, complex systems like societies are differentiated into subsystems that treat other social domains as their (social internal) environment, i.e. differentiate themselves within the society; for example, as a legally ordered political system that can treat economy, science, etc. as environment and thereby relieve itself of direct political responsibility for their operations." (Luhmann, 1989)

A first look at the underlying structure of the valorisation of ecosystem services reveals three types of subsystems of the social system. Hence, I define three science-based subsystems as relevant for further investigations: Economics, Natural Science and Social Science. Later on I will explain why only taking the perspective on scientific systems is too restrictive and a broader view is necessary, including the psychic system.

Although Luhmann subsumed natural and social science into the common term *science*, I consider science once again as two separate systems with their own vocabulary—essentially explanatory on the one side (Natural Sciences, Economics)

and essentially interpretative qualitative (Social Sciences) on the other side. In the discussion about the valorisation of (C)ES within these divergent social systems, one important system has enjoyed little attention in the scientific discourse until now, and I highly recommend that it be included—the *psychic system*. According to Luhmann, this system exists in the human brain as a process of consciousness. In contrast to the other aforementioned systems, no codified communication system has existed previously. The inner logic of this system explains the individual, atmospheric and situational evaluated dimension of aesthetic perception.

Following Luhmann the four completely independent systems relevant to ecosystem services are not able to communicate directly with each other in the valuation process. Communication, in Luhmann's sense, can only be performed within the borders of the subsystem.

#### *Codes of communication*

One essential attribute of social systems is communication. Through them each social system defines itself, becomes autopoietic and distinguishes from their environment. Every defined subsystem has its specific codes to operate within the specific functional systems.

The ecological concept of MA operates in a strongly quantified positivistic communication process. In the explanatory ecological science, hypotheses are tested and assumptions are rejected or postulated. "One important aim of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) is to analyse and as much as possible quantify the importance of ecosystems to human well-being in order to make better decisions regarding the sustainable use and management of ecosystem services" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). The MA suggests a quantification approach for use and non-use values (people derive utility – or not directly) with economic empirical data collection methods also used in the TEEB.

The TEEB represents the MEA within the economic system. The codes are payments. This subsystem has never pursued the idealistic target of protecting ecosystems. The autopoietic system refers to payments (or non-payments) with negotiated prices. In Luhmann's words: "[The] key to the ecological problem, as far as the economy is concerned, resides in the language of prices. The economy cannot react to disturbances that are not expressed in this language—in any event, not even with the intact structure of a differentiated function-system of society" (Luhmann, 1989). Ecosystem services have to be quantified and further monetized in order to be part of the functional system of the modern economy. In the literature on ecosystem services, a wide range of different monetized cultural ecosystem service measurements can be found. For example Baumgärtner et al. (2011) applied a method of revealed preferences, the *Travel Cost Method*, where value of an environmental good is reflected in the time and money people spend getting to it, e.g., forests, mountains, fishing sites. (TEEB, 2013a).

In contrast with the previous quantitative communication systems, qualitative social science deals with interpretative codes of action, opinions and intentions. In the humanist tradition of social science, the value of things such as the

environment is strongly influenced by personal and individual perceptions and has no graspable value per se. Schütz (1972) discusses personal motives, relevance and interpretations as follows:

The facts, data, and events with which a natural scientist has to deal are just facts, data, and events within his observational field but this field does not 'mean' anything to the molecules, atoms, and electrons therein. But the facts, events, and data before the social scientist are of an entirely different structure. His observational field, the social world, is not essentially structureless. It has a particular meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, thinking, and acting therein. They have preselected and preinterpreted this world by a series of common-sense constructs of the reality of daily life, and it is these thought objects which determine their behaviour, define the goal of their action, and the means available for attaining them—in brief, which help them to find their bearings within their natural and socio-cultural environment and to come to terms with it.

For an individual people, nature conservation is even more incalculable and volatile. The value of an ecosystem service depends on various personal factors and changes according to wishes and needs and contexts and cannot be standardized: This inhomogeneous opinion exemplifies human action theorist Max Weber (1969). He separates intentions into two categories: (1) value-rational or (2) goal instrumental intentions. People who are primarily driven by the former intention, seeing nature conservation as an act in accordance with their conviction or as an eigenvalue. In contrast to that, those who are goal-directed carefully assess the purpose and personal consequences of actions such as nature conservation.

Beside the social systems, there are psychic systems, which are also autopoietic and self-contained units. They operate with the human consciousness such as perception and thoughts. In Luhmann's thinking, understanding is not an anthropological constant, but on the contrary, psychic systems are mutually inaccessible and empirically not tangible.

The psychic system is fascinated by language or by a work of art (Koller, 2007) and imagination is stimulated. Every psychic system of an individual has its own way of operating and processing imagination. The process of integration from the psychic to the social (communication) system takes place in a constructivist way. Luhmann's considerations contain both: systems and constructivist theory. On the one hand reality exists. In reality, there are systems. On the other hand, a thought-image of the environment is not exact pictures of reality, only observations of social systems and thus individual constructs. All descriptions of reality are based on preselections and distinctions by observers and psychic systems. (Luhmann 1990)

#### *Translation of Aesthetics*

In the next explanatory step, I transfer aesthetic value into different subsystems. The use of diverse communication and perception habits is shown in the

disciplinary definitions of landscape, starting from an ecological point of view where landscape is described as a mosaic of ecological systems. Definitions given by social scientists can vary widely depending on their theoretical background. They range from landscape as a complete social construction to landscape as a mediator between environment and man, and landscape as a work of art (Simmel 1913).

Ecologists have shown efforts to integrate the system-exmanent *perceptions* of the CES's *aesthetics value*, into their field of natural science (Schirpke et al. 2013; Plieninger et al. 2013). Schirpke et al. 2013 founded their valuation on a standardized questionnaire and Plieninger et al. (2013) on a spatially explicit, participatory mapping of the complete range of cultural ecosystem services and several disservices perceived by people. Some researchers (Dietz et al. 2002; Suckall et al. 2009; Reyes-Garcia et al. 2010; Martín-López et al., 2012; Vaarala et al. 2012; van Berkel & Verburg, 2012) have taken a step further, when including various background factors of the respondents' and social aspects in the analysis. Despite this, when measuring these aspects in a quantitative way, they are not able to reveal the feelings, emotions and senses the respondents have.

Each discipline practices with its own generated codes: essentially numbers on the one side and words on the other. From a systemic point of view, a mixture of two different epistemic approaches is not possible due to communication problems. Therefore, mainly text-based contributions on a high descriptive level of social science will be lost in translation. Numbers and graphs are not able to reflect the bundle of variation of explanatory words for the sense of place. The inclusion of sense and emotions into market mechanism would also fail due to transfer problems of ungraspable descriptions of *aesthetic value* into a monetary system. Conversely, within this debate, non-institutionalized landscapes have no *aesthetic value* because there is no commercialization process behind them, in the sense that anything free of charge is not really valued.

This finding legitimates Kühne's (2008) concerns about the normative approach to landscape beauty, defined by authorities and institutions. "In addition, a number deal with government efforts to establish payment systems at the national level" (Ibid). Based on this explanation we must take a critical eye to efforts of governments and institutions using the quantitative and monetary evaluation system of aesthetic value for funds.

In contrast to the quantified communication systems described above, within the system of social science, aesthetics is defined on a highly individual level. By reviewing the social constructivist point of view I want to demonstrate the limitation of a positivistic-driven valuation of socio-cultural dimensions. The validation of the measurement of cultural ecosystem services benefits from a broader empirical approach as represented by Plieninger, et al. (2013). From a social constructivist perspective, the empirical data collection regarding intangible dimensions is not necessarily feasible, neither for social scientists nor for natural scientists. One example, from my fieldwork (Steinbacher et al. 2012), on cultural landscapes is pertinent. In a group discussion with farmers, we asked the participants to define cultural landscape. Their answers ranged from a classic



conservative perception (Trepl, 2012) of cultural landscape—“Cultural landscape is as it has always been, with Waale [irrigation infrastructure], old trees, cows and old fences, where it is simply idyllic”—to a point of view that includes modern elements, such as ski lifts and silage bales. The farmers are willing to put aside idealized notions of the cultural landscape for economic necessity. Furthermore the definition of cultural landscape must be supplemented also by non-visual elements such as noises and dialects. Interviewees associated the geographical landscape with intangible values such as the language spoken there. For the interviewees, cultural landscape represents a unity of man and nature as stated by Latour (1998). There is a wide range of possible values addressed to a certain landscape, and therefore, which values are measured and quantified is a question of power.

Finally, there is the psychic system related to landscape aesthetics. The perception or the consciousness of landscape aesthetics is individual and the psychic systems of individuals are intangible. Even when the landscape perceptions are communicated through language of art (including photography), the initial process of consciousness will never be understood. (Luhmann, 1995)

The creation of pictures via brushes or photography will only be an unconscious selection of the perceived landscape and the previous process within the psychic system is not repeatable at any time. Simmel (1913) already has identified landscape as a work of art. “The raw material of landscape provided by bare nature is so infinitely varied and changes from case to case. Consequently, the points of view and the forms that compose its elements into a sense-perceptual unity will also be highly variable” (Simmel, 2007). Hasse (2004) goes a step further and distinguishes perceptions between aesthetics and *aesthetik*. First, the perspective of *aesthetik* formally accentuates the experience of things, people and situations. Second, in addition to things, particular situations become points of reference in an epistemological sense. The perception includes items with atmospheric appearance as well as the stock of perceptually relevant social rating tendencies and individual moods, respectively. Trepl (2012) defines such an approach as “landscape as a mood.” Not only does the appearance of objects need attention, but also the cultural practices of the production of situations. A situational object always appears to be symbolically constructed. The findings are the observations of reality and thus can be considered as constructs (Luhmann, 1990). Therefore, from the perspective of individual life, these perceptions are not only thought, but also experienced evaluatively.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have tried to reveal approaches and intentions beyond different disciplines and fields to ecosystem services, exemplified by cultural ecosystem services (CES) related to landscape *aesthetics*. Luhmann’s systemic approach demonstrates some fundamental issues that have been excluded in previous investigations and debates on this topic. His theoretical framework points out that communication beyond the borders of different subsystems is an insurmountable barrier. The translation of aesthetic into specific communication systems, leads to

translation errors. Natural scientific approaches for analysing a socially-induced phenomena will fail due to incompatibility of vocabulary.

The paper also shows that attempts to translate *aesthetic values* into economic ones, based on a natural scientifically orientated quantitative system, cannot embrace the full dimension of aesthetic perceptions. Economy and *aesthetic values* are not congruent. Aesthetics (and *aiesthetik*) are elements of the psychic system and cannot be absorbed by the economic system due to communication problems and the use of different terminology and concepts.

The paper also showed that the original natural science-based MA concept has integrated non-quantifiable services such as *aesthetic value* and the economic system has made use of it. Continuing my argumentation, this value is not translatable to systems other than the psychical. Efforts of natural scientists and economists to grasp individual perceptions of landscape with their empirical approach may therefore fail to integrate the whole bundle of values.

Luhmann saw the danger of compact and too simplified approaches in the early eighties. Linking cultural and natural aspects with the economic based, natural-scientific concept of the MA risks a too reductionist approach. The article tries to demonstrate the need of a far more comprehensive approach for the issue, which goes beyond the MA concept. In terms of cultural sustainability, individual values and perceptions have to be lifted to another level than is presented in the concept at the moment. In future many discussions have to be carried out to set what significance individual perception take in different social systems.

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L.G. HORLINGS

## THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN SUSTAINABLE PLACE-SHAPING

### INTRODUCTION

The conference “Cultures in Sustainable Futures” in May 2015 in Helsinki raised important questions such as: Is sustainability a cultural issue? How does culture play a role in sustainable community development and planning? What is the role of the artist? How can agency support change? These questions are highly relevant at this time in which transformative agency is needed to address an array sustainability crises: the food crisis, energy crisis, climate crisis and depletion of resources are all interlinked and unfolding in complex ways in communities and places. We have a responsibility not only to change our practices, but also to rethink and re-imagine our current mind-sets, our institutions and our worldviews (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013; O’Brien, 2009), which are all influenced by culture. So indeed, sustainability is a cultural issue.

Culture also plays a key role in processes of place-shaping and participatory planning, as will be argued in this chapter. The aim is to pay specific attention to the role of artists and researchers in these processes and address the following questions:

1. how can sustainable place-shaping practices be understood?
2. what is the relevance of re-imagining knowledge to create new futures?
3. how do the individual and collective values of people play a role in processes of place-shaping and participatory planning?

First, I will explain how place and place-shaping can be conceptualized from a relational, dynamic perspective and how culture plays a role therein. Then the potential role of researchers and artists in place-shaping and participatory planning processes will be explored. The chapter ends with a plea for a value-oriented dialogue as part of these processes, to make the intentions, values and the multiplicity of cultural voices of participants more explicit.

In the context of the three-pillar approach to sustainability, which outlines economic, ecological, and social dimensions, culture is often conceptualized as a subcomponent of social sustainability. However it is important

“to explicitly integrate culture in the sustainability discourse, as achieving sustainability essentially depends on human accounts, actions, and behaviour which are, in turn, culturally embedded” (Soini and Dessein, 2016, p.1).

Furthermore, culture can take on different roles, as shown by the outcomes of the European Cost Action's 'Investigating Cultural Sustainability' Report (Dessein et al. 2015). Soini and Birkeland (2014) found seven storylines of "cultural sustainability" and proposed three roles of culture in sustainable development. These roles have been redefined by Soini and Dessein (2016) as "representations": culture *in*, *for*, and *as* sustainability. The second representation, the role of culture *for* sustainability is relevant here as this refers to the mediating role of culture to achieve economic, social, and ecological sustainability. This representation suggests that

"both material and immaterial culture are seen as an essential resource for local and regional economic development. It also implies that cultural values and perceptions needs to be considered when aiming for ecological or social sustainability"(Ibid, p.3).

This mediating role of culture in places and in spatial transformation occurs in processes of place-shaping and participatory planning, and is expressed in practices via the agency of a multiplicity of actors. 'Outsiders' such as researchers and artists can open up new spheres of knowledge and support the imagining of new futures. Processes of sustainable place-shaping show a variety of intentions, values and ambiguity of cultural voices, which can be made explicit and debated and preferably artistically expressed in participatory settings.

#### SUSTAINABLE PLACE-SHAPING

Place can be considered from a dynamic perspective as an assemblage of social relations reconfigured through processes of restructuring and continuously changing as a result of economic, institutional and cultural transformation (Woods, 2015). This *relational* notion of place (Massey 1991, 1993, 2004; Amin 2004; Cresswell, 2004) considers places as nodes in networks, as points of intersection, in which the global and the local are mutually constructed and are seen in terms of connectivity. This means that places are not considered as given geographic or political-administrative entities, but as the outcome of unbounded and dynamic processes, which often stretch out far beyond that particular place (Massey, 2004).

"As the specificity of place is understood as generated relationally, then there is no simple divide between inside and outside, between local and global, between local struggles and wider movements" (Massey and Thrift, 2003, p.285).

A relational research approach analyses places as part of a wider set of relations which are shaped by material and ideational ordering processes, beyond geographical and administrative borders. Places can be analysed by investigating place-shaping practices and the way people reflect on and give varied meanings to the places they co-shape. This helps us to understand processes of (re-) localization. 'Thinking space relationally' in this context is an empowering perspective (Woods, 2013; Jones, 2009).

The importance of 'place' has often been neglected in the context of sustainability debates. The researcher Lucas Seghezze (2009: 546) argues that the WCED (1987) definition of sustainable development can be disputed. This definition is often presented as a 'triangle' formed by People, Planet, and Profit, with Profit sometimes replaced by Prosperity. He argues that the limitations of the WCED definition could be mitigated if sustainability is seen as the conceptual framework within which the territorial, temporal, and personal aspects of development can be openly discussed. He proposes a five-dimensional sustainability framework including Place, Permanence (time) and Persons, which represents a fifth, human dimension. He argues that this five-dimensional is more inclusive, plural, and useful for outlining specific policies towards sustainability.

It is important to emphasize that places result from the material inscription of social relationships (see also Brighienti, 2010). They are the product of material as well as immaterial processes in which the perceptions and culture of people play an important role. A place is not static or fixed, but 'becomes' as a result of material and symbolic processes (Paasi, 2010). Lefebvre (1991), the grandfather of social-constructivism, integrated these aspects in his description of social production of space as a conceptual triad between lived space (practices), conceived space, and perceived space.

We also have to take into account the interventionist role of planning, which can enable or hamper place-shaping initiatives. As place can have multiple meanings for varied people and in different contexts, place has relevance in the context of sustainable development in the following ways (Horlings, 2016b):

1. Places as arenas of place-based debates, power struggles and negotiations. Tensions and negotiations are taking place between perceived personal notions of place and conceived formal, institutional notions of place, which can result in 'defence of place' actions. However, such place-based struggles should not merely be seen as place-protective actions, but as alternative strategies of localization (Escobar, 2001) or local agency which can alter the very mechanisms of the global itself (Massey, 2004) and lead to new hybrid forms and relations (Woods, 2007).
2. Places as spaces endowed with meaning and values. Places are relevant for people's sense of place and socio-territorial belonging and are endowed with meaning and the constitution of identities, subjectivities and difference. People attribute symbolic values to places, rooted in their sense of place. 'Sense of place' can be defined as the process by which individuals and groups derive meanings, beliefs, symbols, values and feelings from a particular locality, based on human experience, thoughts, emotions and social relationships (Chapin *et al.*, 2015). Despite processes of globalization, specific places remains fundamentally important to our sense of identity, our sense of community and our humanity (Vanclay, 2008).
3. As site of policy-interventions. There is an increasing attention for place-based policies towards sustainable development (Barca, 2009; EU, 2011). Melanie Leach *et al.* (2012) have argued that sustainable development requires new modes of innovation, which include recognition and power to grassroots

innovation actors and processes, involving them within an inclusive, multi-scale innovation politics.

Places are framed and co-shaped by a set of political-economic, socio-cultural and ecological structuring processes that are unbounded in time and space. A relational approach addresses these structuring processes, but also acknowledges the transformative agency of humans in shaping a place to their needs. We would argue that sustainable place-shaping (see Figure 1) can be transformative by re-grounding innovative sustainable practices in place-based assets. Sustainable place-shaping practices are a transformative power, occurring via processes of (Roep *et al.*, 2015, Horlings, 2016b) 1) re-appreciation, which includes perceptions, meanings and values attached to place, processes of sense-making and how actors take the lead in appreciating places; 2) re-grounding, rooted in (agro-)ecological and cultural place-based assets and resources, influenced by wider communities, cultural notions, values, assets, technology and historical patterns; 3) re-positioning, both of alternative, diverse or 'hidden' economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008) and of ways of value-adding, or altering political-economic relations shaped by globalization.

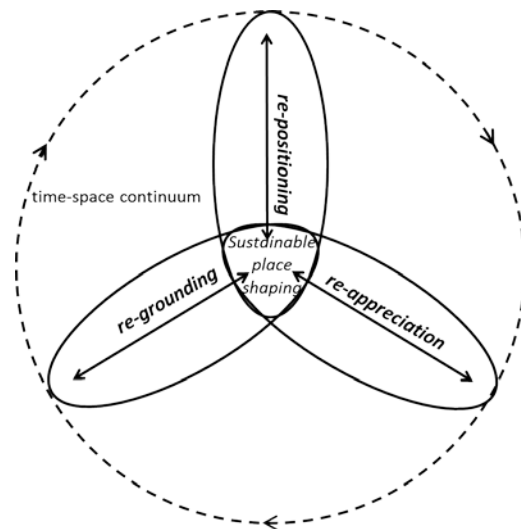


Figure 1. Sustainable place-shaping (Roep *et al.*, 2015; Horlings, 2016b).

#### THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN PLACE-SHAPING

Culture plays a mediating role between people and place in a symbolic sense, in practices, and in institutional performance and styles of planning (Horlings *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, in its variety, culture - including tangible as well as intangible aspects - is both one of the sources and one of the outcomes of the distinctiveness between places. A concrete example is the French notion of



'Terroir', which can be 'sensed' by the smell and taste of the wine, and includes immaterial aspects of people's agency, such as cultural traditions (e.g. varied ways of pruning the vines), craftsmanship, events, festivals, and spatially varied styles of winemaking. Terroir also refers to physical characteristics such as the cultural landscape and differences in grape varieties. Furthermore, it encompasses man-made artefacts such as the type of barrels, cork, labelling, expressing cultural creativity and traditions.

Culture leads to spatially varied patterns of behaviour, which influence sustainability and are expressed in places.

The concept of 'territorialisation' has been launched to explore how the natural environment and culture are constitutive of each other in specific places. This concept allows us to study the characterisation of the natural assets of a place, the means by which the natural environment and culture interact, and how communities assign meaning to local assets, add functions and ascribe rules of how to use space. Not just human agency shapes places, but also nature has agency in the sense that it 'affords' certain practices. The concept of 'affordances' (Gibson, 1986) refers to the opportunities for action that the environment provides to social actors through the particular characteristics of the specific resources (Battaglini and Marija Babović, 2016). The culturally varied ways in which people shape their places is shown in the following three dimensions of territorialisation (Horlings *et al.*, 2016, p.6):

- 1) The *symbolic dimension*: space becomes place. People reconstruct, represent, perceive or cartographically denominate a space with the aim of 'situating' and then 'placing' themselves. Here agency mediates sense and senses. People have a 'sense of place', which refers to feelings of socio-territorial belonging. They also make 'sense of their place' via subjective appreciation of their environment, and by attaching symbolic and cultural meanings to place, in varied cultural contexts.
- 2) The *reification dimension*: from a place to a 'place to live in'. Place is structured through the occupation, use, and transformation of land. Here agency mediates practices by using, re-using and adding value to natural resources. Culture refers here to cultural practices such as expressed in styles of behaviour, creativity and cultural community activities. Cultural practices are also materialised in cultural heritage and cultural landscapes.
- 3) The *institutional dimension*: structuring place. In the process of defining functions and rules, community culture influences institutional frameworks, governance and planning. Culture refers here to cultural characteristics of institutions and planning; it frames and shapes 'the rules of the game', routines, organisations, ways of cooperation and self-governance.

The described processes acknowledge the potential transformative agency (Westley *et al.*, 2013) of human actors, shaping a place according to their values, ideas and needs. Human actors are not merely victims of globalisation (Long, 2001), but capable actors shaping places by their meaningful conduct. Agency implies the ability to (re)negotiate the conditions of engagement in structuring

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processes (Woods, 2015). It is the capacity of involved actors in participatory planning processes to restructure or re-assemble the prevailing web of relations in places, in a way that is more beneficial to them. Building human capacities, both individual and collective agency, is thus key to effectuate a place-based approach to development (Roep *et al.*, 2015).

#### THE ROLE OF RESEARCHERS IN PLACE-SHAPING

In particular, rural sociology *researchers* have a long tradition in participatory processes of rural development. The ‘embeddedness’ of these researchers in rural practices (see for example Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000) is based on grounded empirical research, often in the context of long-term participation in development initiatives. This can potentially uncover power dynamics, show negotiations behind the scenes and even re-direct practices and local or regional agendas via participatory action research. Furthermore, this involvement enables the linking of initiatives to new networks and the introduction of new actors in the rural arena. An example is the invitation of ‘outsiders’ to a community, who reflect on the assets and strengths of the place, its characteristics and its distinctive quality. This can strengthen people’s appreciation or re-appreciation of their place and the construction of new symbolic meanings. As a result, people experience a renewed pride of place (Derkzen, 2009).

A joint spirit is a necessary starting point for place-based collaboration, especially in situations where there is a lack of capacity building (Wellbrock, 2013). An enabling involvement of key persons can start a ‘spiral’ process of place-shaping of an expanding range of actors, practices and impact. The process of building a joint spirit, alliances, arrangements and capacities, supports collective agency and collaboration. This can result in complementary institutional reform (Roep *et al.*, 2015).

#### THE ROLE OF ARTISTS IN IMAGINING NEW FUTURES THROUGH TRANS-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the agency of artists in place-based initiatives. An example is the role of artists in supporting a sense of place during the yearly Oerol festival in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>. Artists often provide a new, creative and fresh perspective and are probably more capable to support a joint spirit than embedded researchers, as they are highly capable of visualizing new futures in the context of trans-disciplinary collaboration.

This capability of artists brings us to the relevance of ‘re-imagining’ knowledge to create new futures. Doreen Massey has argued that an attitude of ‘openness to the future’ requires thinking in ‘multiplicity.’ She emphasizes that we must acknowledge that there are different possible futures in places and alternative trajectories that go beyond the dominant thinking of communities competing for capital, resources and human capital (Massey, 2005). A ‘place-based’ approach to development does not understand communities and places as competitive, but

rather as culturally embedded; people's knowledge, creativity and innovation can contribute to their self-efficacy and autonomy.

Social scientists increasingly recognize the importance of imagination, as demonstrated, for instance, at the first conference on Cultural Mapping in Coimbra in 2014<sup>2</sup>. Some interesting examples of creative methods were presented at this conference, including: deep mapping as a way to understand how people perceive their place; the visualization of future scenarios; and, creative performance by theatre groups. When considering and involving artists in social science research, however, we should avoid relegating them to an instrumental role; artists can contribute not just to the re-imagination of knowledge, but also to the 're-reading' of existing information and research data. Re-reading information and data excavates the possible. It produces recognition, clarifies the choices we make in policy, questions the performance of dominance, and it can produce insights into the potential of initiatives in building other possible worlds (Gibson-Graham, 2008). 'Re-reading' can thus reveal hidden practices and intentions, which challenge the dominant framing of issues.

Even more important, artists can contribute to changing mind-sets and constructing new narratives. There is an urgency for such new narratives<sup>3</sup>. Factors, which accelerate change toward sustainability, encompass not only practical behaviour or politics, but also underlying values, beliefs and value-systems, expressed in narratives. This has been termed as the 'inner' dimension of sustainability (Horlings, 2015a, Horlings and Padt, 2013) or change 'from the inside out' (O'Brien, 2013). New narratives can challenge our values, hard-headed attitudes, and behaviour based on routines.

Preferably, these new narratives should be derived from trans-disciplinary cooperation. A good example is the inspiring project Cape Farewell, in which the artist David Buckland, together with scientists and educators, explored the harsh environment of the High Arctic. Three expeditions, stretching 2,500 nautical miles, were filmed by David Hinton, resulting in the film *Art From The Arctic*<sup>4</sup> broadcasted by the BBC. The trans-disciplinary group expeditions have led participants to mind-set-shifts and a life-changing awareness of climate change, according to David Buckland. In his work as artist, he shows that the way we organise our society is not an obvious or all-inclusive condition of the world we live in, but that 'another world is possible'.

#### VALUES IN PLACE

In my research, I make the case that processes of sustainable place-shaping should include attention to what I call a 'value-oriented approach,' emphasizing a multiplicity of intentions, values and cultural voices that opens space for new questions. As a first step, this approach should be investigated in settings where these intentions and values can be debated and preferably artistically expressed (Horlings, 2015b).

The concept of values refers not only to personal, deep motivations and symbolic sense-making, but also to collective cultural values, which mediate our

practices and influence the way symbolic meanings are subscribed to places (See Horlings, 2015a,b). Values are not self-standing concepts, which can be mapped out and analysed as atomized issues. They are intertwined, context determined, culturally varied and connected to how we see ourselves and how we perceive our environment. Values such as freedom, solidarity and justice, for example, only gain meaning when expressed by actual people and practices and they can be considered as dynamic in space, place and time.

Values have been the subject of theoretical considerations in many disciplines and areas of study. A value is something that has to be recognized as valuable and made explicit; it must be consciously recognized as a value and termed as such. In social science literature, the word 'value' is contested and has varied meanings. For example, it can refer to economic value, nutritional value or moral/immoral value depending upon the context. Kumar and Kumar (2008) argued that a value is an entity that improves the wellbeing of the society—directly or indirectly. Gilpin (2000) has summarized the varied meanings of value, mostly in terms of environmental values. O'Neill *et al* (2008) have argued that environments matter to us in different ways: because we live *from, in and with* environments, these different relations to the world all bring with them different sources of environmental concern.

Environmental concern can be a deep motivation for people to take action, although this is not a straightforward causal relation. Values should not be considered from a cognitive behavioural perspective as a predictable factor for sustainable behaviour, but as socially constructed and as source of inspiration, incorporating emotions, feelings and perceptions.

Socially-constructed values in the context of place and space can refer to (see also Horlings, 2015a,b):

- questions such as how to add (economic) value to places through actor driven projects, based on the use of local resources, capacities and the distinctiveness of places;
- values as principles that guide people's agency. This refers to people's intentions, motivations, passion and attitudes;
- how people value and perceive places. This refers to processes of (re-) appreciation, social values, linked to people's (perceived) sense of place or socio-territorial belonging;
- overarching worldviews (individual and collective), cultural values and value systems.

A useful distinction has been made between held and assigned values (Bengston, 1994; Brown, 1984; Lockwood, 1999, all cited by Jones *et al*, 2016). Held values represent ideals of what is desirable, how things ought to be, and how one should interact with the world. These can take the form of desirable modes of behaviour, 'end states' (such as freedom), qualities, principles or ideas that are important to people, or provide the basis for preference judgements. Assigned

values, on the other hand, as described by Jones *et al* (2016) are more contextualized and are attached to certain places, the environment, resources, nature or activities. The authors argue that using information on values can enrich participatory planning processes and guide interventions.

Investigating people's held and assigned values related to places is particularly relevant as an alternative to the status quo of community development. Governments and researchers frequently use a problem-oriented approach, asking people what they don't like about their place or what they would like to do differently. I advocate for an 'appreciative inquiry' approach (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999) which starts a participatory process by asking stakeholders about their multiple intentions and values. Which values inspire their actions, which symbolic values do they attribute to their environment, and what do they perceive as 'valuable' characteristics of their place? This approach uncovers deeper motivations for sustainable change which are crucial for change 'from the inside-out' (O'Brien, 2013), and it sheds light on what people consider as important in their life and want to commit to in the context of their own place and environment. The challenge of incorporating a value-oriented dialogue between diverse actors in participatory planning processes is to discuss not only stakeholder interests, but also motivational, symbolic and cultural values, which can potentially result in a joint storyline and new agenda's, directed to the common good.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Culture is represented in various different ways in the context of sustainable development. In my research, I focus on the representation of culture as a mediating force to achieve economic, social and ecological sustainability. Both the material and immaterial aspects of culture are an essential resource for the development of specific places. I have argued that the mediating role of culture occurs via processes of reification (practices), symbolisation and institutionalisation. In this context, reification refers to the process of 'turning a place into a place to live in' via the occupation, use and transformation of the environment. Symbolisation refers to how space is turned into place through the ways people make sense of their place and attribute subjective cultural meanings to their environment. Institutionalisation refers to how place is structured and influenced by cultural ways of doing; culture frames and shapes 'the rules of the game', routines, organisations, ways of cooperation and self-governance.

Place-shaping acknowledges the potential transformative agency of human actors to shape a place according to their values, ideas and needs. Key-persons, researchers or creative artists can enable a 'spiral' process of place-shaping, an expanding range of actors, practices and impact, where various elements mutually enforce each other. Starting with a joint spirit, this can result in collaboration, collective agency and complementary institutional reform.

In particular, artists can provide a new, creative and fresh perspective in such processes, both by explicitly paying attention to a multiplicity of intentions and cultural voices and through their capacity to use creative methods, visualize new

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futures and open up new forms of knowledge. Even more important, artists can contribute to changing mind-sets and constructing new narratives in the context of sustainability debates.

Using information on individual and collective values is a vital element of processes of place-based and participatory planning. Such information can be gathered in the context of a ‘value-oriented dialogue’, in settings where motivations, intentions and values are debated and preferably artistically expressed. This can offer insight into people’s commitment to place and their willingness to contribute to spatial transformation ‘from the inside-out’.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> [www.oerol.nl](http://www.oerol.nl), accessed on 7-8-2016.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ces.uc.pt/eventos/mappingculture/>

<sup>3</sup> as was acknowledged during a meeting in 2014 in Potsdam, organised by the International Social Science Council on the topic of Transformation to Sustainability.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.capefarewell.com/art/media/film.html>

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## THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AND RESEARCHERS

Woods, M. (2015) Territorialisation and the Assemblage of Rural Place: Examples from Canada and New Zealand. In J. Dessein, J., E. Battaglini & L.G. Horlings (Eds) *Cultural Sustainability and Regional Development: Theories and practices of territorialisation*. London and New York: Routledge (Series on Cultural Sustainability), pp. 29-42.

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JAN VAN BOECKEL

## ARTFUL EMPIRICISM AND IMPROVISING WITH THE UNFORESEEN

*Two approaches in seeking understandings of nature through art*

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental education is commonly considered to be a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experiences, and also the determination, which should enable them to act to solve present and future environmental problems (UNEP-IETC, 2003). There may be room for affording certain aesthetic experiences through artistic practice, but usually these tend to remain somewhat marginal. Regarding the aspect of gaining awareness of our environs, the relatively new field of arts-based environmental education (AEE) turns the tables in a fundamental way. Here, art is not conceived of as an *added* quality, but rather as a point of departure. (cf. Inwood, 2013; Jokela, 1995; Mantere, 1992; York 2014, van Boeckel, 2007, 2013; York, 2014) Facilitators of AEE are specifically interested in how the learning about and connecting with the environment can be initiated, facilitated and deepened through artistic practice or experience. AEE brings art education and environmental education together in *one* undertaking.

Finnish art educator Meri-Helga Mantere can be said to have first defined AEE in the 1990s as a form of learning that aims to develop environmental understanding and responsibility “by becoming more receptive to sense perceptions and observations and by using artistic methods to express personal environmental experiences and thoughts” (Mantere, 1995a, p. 1). She holds that an artistically oriented environmental education is at its best when the artistic and creative perspective runs through the entire teaching project, from the stage of its planning to the evaluation of its results (Mantere, 1995b). Effectively, this implies that in the entire environmental education process the emphasis is on the manner of observing, experiencing and thinking that is customary to art. Tracing the development of AEE over the last twenty-five years, the following sources of inspiration can be identified: deep ecology, gestalt therapy, experimental learning theories, and environmental aesthetics (Pohjakallio, 2007).

I am an art educator, visual artist and researcher. On a regular basis, I facilitate group sessions that aim to heighten the awareness of participants to their natural environment and their own body through art. In practicing these activities I situate myself in the emerging field of AEE. In the past decade, I have explored what participants experienced when they were engaged in AEE activities that I

facilitated as a teacher, thereby employing phenomenologically grounded and arts-based autoethnographic research (van Boeckel, 2013). My presupposition thereby was that, through art, we could see and approach the earth afresh. Moreover, art can hold us in moments of aesthetic arrest, throw us out of kilter. It may catch us off-guard or hit us unexpectedly. This estrangement or defamiliarization is an important quality of art. It helps us to review and renew our understandings of everyday things and events which are so familiar to us that our perception of them has become routine. My conception of art education is that it, in contrast to other forms of education (including environmental education), is not predisposed to prepare the soil for a set of outcomes that are given on forehand. Art-making as process is grounded in curiosity. Typically, it starts from not-knowing and it may end up in ambiguity and paradox. Art assignments often provoke, they challenge the art-making learner, and the ensuing result often surprises both art teacher and student. The artistic process in AEE is first and foremost an *active* engagement with the natural environment. The participant is stirred to act upon the world around and in him, and the goal is to seek a dynamic open-ended immersion in an improvisational undertaking.

Or is it? Not all activities bringing together art, natural environment and education foreground this open-ended quality. There are approaches, developed in the course of time, which integrate an artistic element in the exploration of nature in more framed ways. One of these orientations is, what Seth Miller (2009, p. 8) aptly has termed, “artful empiricism”, an aesthetic method of observing that was first introduced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). As Miller explains, this is a variation of the original term of poet-naturalist Goethe who himself called this phenomenological approach a “delicate empiricism” (*zarte Empirie*). Such empiricism requires a participation that aesthetically places the observer within the world of the observed (Miller, 2009); this style of working “makes itself utterly identical with the object” (Goethe, 1995 p. 307)). Yet, Goethe never constructed his approach as a “method” per se, although he did describe his approach to the practice of science in parts, at different places. Other educators have later systematized his approach in various ways and these are often grouped as a developing tradition of practicing diverse forms of “Goethean science” (Davis, 2006b) or of “Goethean process” (Irwin, 2012). For Miller, Goethean phenomenology can thus be appreciated as being a methodology in its own right, for reason that it includes many different methods for its realization, and contains a world-view as its basis. This artful empiricism – Miller’s term that I borrow here to cover a wide array of approaches – is often associated with the anthroposophical tradition, inspired by the works of Rudolph Steiner. Here, Goethean practices are being employed to learn about the natural world, whereby the focus is to encourage participants to be observant, minimally interfering, and fully attentive to the world around them. The intention is to nourish, step by step, a state of attentive receptivity to and aesthetic perception of organisms and phenomena in the natural world. The Goethean method has not only been applied to the observation of plants (Bockemühl 1985; Colquhoun & Ewald, 1996), but also to human artefacts (Davis, 2006a), and even as a way to read and appraise landscapes (Brook, 1998).

In the following, I will discuss a four-stage process of artful empiricism which is central in many of the prevailing approaches.<sup>1</sup> The artistic element in this approach tends to be somewhat restrained, for the process is guided through four consecutive steps that need to be followed and completed one after the other, and bring the practitioner to synthesis of the performed explorations in previous steps.

From there, I will proceed and contrast this with art-based activities in which the emphasis is put on encouraging participants to actively respond by improvising to emergent properties that manifest themselves while partaking in an artistic group process. Here, participants are intently confronted with uncertainty and led into a liminal space of *not-knowing* (van Boeckel, 2013).

#### ARTFUL EMPIRICISM: FOUR STAGES OF TUNING IN WITH THE SENSES

Engaging in an artistic process that thematises natural phenomena tends to impact and enhance our aesthetic sensibility to the world. In this, art may help to amplify the receptivity of the senses. We experience the world, as it were, “with fresh eyes”, and thereby it can be of importance to temporarily “bracket” our pre-understandings, to be fully open to the phenomenon at hand.

This is not a new idea. In the mid-nineteenth century, Henri David Thoreau, inspired by Goethe, wrote in his *Journals* that he was continuously struggling to meet nature in its elementary directness, unmediated by conventions, categories, concepts, and scientific knowledge:

It is only when we forget all our learning that we begin to know. I do not get nearer by a hair's breadth to any natural object so long as I presume that I have an introduction to it from some learned man. To conceive of it with a total apprehension I must for the thousandth time approach it as something totally strange. If you would make acquaintance with the ferns you must forget your botany. You must get rid of what is commonly called knowledge of them. Not a single scientific term or distinction is the least to the purpose, for you would fain perceive something, and you must approach the object totally unprejudiced. You must be aware that no thing is what you have taken it to be. (Thoreau, 1859, quoted in Shepard, 1961)

Suspending preconceived notions and contemplating natural phenomena imaginatively in such a way may lead to new ways of seeing and thus allow for a poetic apprehension, beyond the limitations of literal language according to environmental philosopher and aesthetician Emily Brady. In some cases, she suggests, deep encounters with nature may even lead to the opening out of new metaphysical ideas (Brady, 2003). Brady makes it convincingly clear that the inventive capacity of imagination involves an array of valuable ways of engaging with nature, and through its revealing and amplifying capacity, it moves beyond what fantasy can muster.

Nevertheless, imagination has a bad reputation among certain environmental aestheticians, Brady contends. In their view, it is not primarily concerned with truth but rather with considering (often false) possibilities. Holmes Rolston, III (1998),

for example, holds that aesthetic appreciation of nature must be guided by knowledge that is provided by science. In their view, as Brady summarizes, imagination may have some positive role but it should be constrained by the necessary condition of scientific knowledge. As a case in point she quotes environmental aesthetician Marcia Muelder Eaton who states that a concept like imagining “make[s] no sense unless one knows what the object is that one is talking about, something (in fact, as much as possible) about the object, and something (in fact, as much as possible) about the context in which the object is found” (Eaton, quoted in Brady, 2003, p. 162).

For Goethe, however, the faculty of artistic creation did not differ essentially from the faculty of the cognitive perception of nature. For him, the artist’s style “is based on the deepest foundations of knowledge, on the essence of things in so far as it is granted us to cognise this essence in visible, tangible forms” (Goethe, cited in Steiner, 1928). Goethe was not anti-science nor would he advocate shelving one’s botany. Even the artist who would desire to represent flowers and fruits will only

become the greater and more thorough if, in addition to his talent, he is a well-informed botanist: if from the root up he knows the influence of the different parts on the growth and prosperity of the plant, knows their various functions and their effects upon one another, and if he comprehends and reflects upon the successive evolution of leaves, flowers, fertilisation, fruit and the new germ. (Goethe, cited in Bielschowsky, 1969, pp. 99-100)

In the course of his life, Goethe became more and more certain that the view that nature and art were but manifestations of one and the same reality was correct. As Bielschowsky states, “Goethe’s philosophy of art ... is based on the laws which he read in the open book of nature. The great principles underlying the realm of nature, the conception of unity and the idea of evolution, when applied to art, become the typical in art...” (Bielschowsky, 1969, 100). Thus art, for Goethe, reproduces whatever it may have received from nature; for art is not an imitator of nature, but her “worthiest interpreter”, to which he added that an irresistible longing for art is felt by all to whom nature begins to disclose her open secret.

In my view, Goethe-inspired artful empiricism can be acknowledged as a form of AEE that is centred on aesthetic sensibility, encouraging participants to use their imagination and intuition in their perception and in coming to understanding of natural organisms and phenomena. Its participants are encouraged to perceive nature afresh – “totally unprejudiced”, as Thoreau put it – and in this effort, artistic process is an important means. Below I will now dwell at some length on the four stages that can be distinguished in the Goethean process.

The first phase entails an “exact sense perception”<sup>2</sup> of the world, thereby letting the “facts speak for themselves”. It comprises an empirical study of the phenomena, collecting detailed observations of the “surface” of things. As Daniel Wahl (2005) explains, participants “stop seeing a rose and encounter the phenomenon, formally called rose, *as it is*” (p. 62, emphasis in original). What is striking to me here is the essentialist language, which makes this approach

vulnerable to criticism of being dogmatic (or at least of having missed out on the postmodernist turn in philosophy). Drawing is regarded as a suitable method to enter this process of perception through the senses, as it alerts practitioners to the details of pattern. They are encouraged to pay careful attention to the phenomenon that is being studied through a process of active looking, in which they should ideally not attempt to reduce the experience to quantities or explanations. Henri Bortoft describes this as “redeployment of attention into sense perception and away from the verbal-intellectual mind” (Bortoft, cited in Harding, 2006, p. 34). By noticing the specific details of the things, Stephan Harding (2006) adds, one’s preconceived notions and habitual responses are suspended. The sensorial qualities of the phenomenon are thus enlivened and more readily perceived. As Bortoft puts it, this allows the phenomenon “to coin itself into thought” (ibid.), inducing itself in the thinking mind as an idea. This *intuitive perception* is done spontaneously: through active looking one can encounter the phenomenon, without preconceptions, in all of its parts.

The second phase, as one proceeds, is “exact sensorial imagination” (Goethe’s term was *exakte sinnliche Phantasie*). It sets the empirical observations in motion; participants are invited to close their eyes and to use their imagination in bringing together all of the details that they so carefully observed in the previous stage. In this way, the participants can for example try to visualize the plant sprouting from seed to the moment it eventually dies. The idea is that participants, in this stage, no longer see the thing in an objective frozen present but rather begin to see, in the mind’s eye, the flowing processes of movement and transition (Brook, 1998).

This then prepares participants for the next stage, which is termed “seeing in beholding”: here participants are given “a revelation of the inner being of the plant”. At this point they have in fact returned to, as Margaret Colquhoun (2014) calls it, a state of “intuitive precognition”, and “commune with the unbroken wholeness of the phenomenon” (Harding, 2006, p. 35). The thing is allowed to express itself through the observer. According to Isis Brook (1998), such experiences are often best expressed in (what she calls) emotional language, i.e. through poetry, painting, or other art forms.

Interestingly, there is a sort of change of positions in this phase: the phenomenon itself is now said to take the active role, and the observer, with no preconceived notions, encounters it with an open mind. In this state of receptive attentiveness the phenomenon is believed to express its own gesture: “When this happens, the experience of the phenomenon revealing itself in one’s own consciousness feels very much like a sudden flash of insight, much more like something received than something created” (Wahl, 2005, p. 64). In artful empiricism’s approach to nature, the organizing idea in cognition thus comes from the phenomenon *itself*, instead of from the self-assertive thinking of the investigating practitioner. In short, it is “not imposed *on* nature but received *from* nature” (Bortoft, 1996, p. 240).

The final stage follows directly after this and is called “being one with the object”. Here, the aim is that participants achieve a more comprehensive conceptualization of the phenomenon. At this stage of perception, the inner content

of the thing is to be combined with its outer appearance or form, and this, according to proponents of the practice of the Goethean method, can only be achieved through the process of thinking. Ideally, at this point, participants start to understand how the phenomenon at hand relates to other forms and processes, in short, to its wider environment. These relationships define the range of possibilities the phenomenon has to transform and the ways it can do so (Wahl, 2005).

Each stage builds on the experiences the observer had in previous stages; in this sense the Goethean method is unidirectional and purposive. Our intuition, Harding (2006) explains, can suddenly present our consciousness with a new way of seeing – “often after the thinking mind has activated the unconscious through a concentrated focusing of attention on a phenomenon or on a given problem” (p. 34). As mentioned above, on a scale encompassing more than the study of individual plant species, one can even think of carrying out a Goethean exploration of a whole landscape. On basis of a close reading of Goethe’s scientific work, Isis Brook has attempted to articulate a practical application of Goethean methods of observation in the context of what she calls a “sensitive” approach to landscape analysis. (Brook, 1998, p. 51).

A typical example of the application of the Goethean process in an educational setting can be found in *New Eyes for Plants* by Margaret Colquhoun and Axel Ewald (1996). They encourage practitioners to use artistic methods as a way of knowing. Next to immersing themselves in keen observation, they should engage their imaginative capacity. Their workbook for observing and drawing plants, the authors say, is an invitation to practice science as an art. They aim to engender in their readers “a sense of wonder”, and thereby to sow seeds for the development of “new eyes” or ‘organs of perception’” (p. 177). Thus, observers become participants. Colquhoun and Ewald provide a host of exercises allowing their readers to acquaint themselves with the transformations that plants undergo in their growth process, such as drawing each part meticulously, thereby in a way “forgetting” the motive. In the attentive state of mind of looking carefully at a plant and drawing its features, practitioners may start to feel that it is the plant *itself* which is showing them how to “tune into” and “swim with” (p. 32) the rapidly unfolding myriad of forms, each being a transformation of the one before. In order to enter into this realm of plant development, the authors suggest, participants engaging in this way of art-making have to “dream a little” (p. 169). “The exercise of drawing exactly what you see allows one’s prejudices of how things ‘should’ look to fall away and we experience a ‘cleansing’ in our very process of seeing” (p. 32).

#### IMPROVISING WITH THE UNFORESEEN

Rather than seeking an identification with nature, making ourselves “utterly identical with the object”, with the aim of gaining insights into the fundamental nature of the phenomenon, there is another view which, in contrast, *foregrounds* the differences between us and nature, and also here art can play a meaningful role. Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir (2009) speaks of encounters with the *otherness* of nature

that can be facilitated through art. To her, art represents a form of gaining and creating knowledge about the natural environment and our situation as part of it. Art, she says, can work against the idea that nature is only a product of visual or other semiotic representations of it by pointing to aspects that show that it is *more* than that. This otherness has to do with the unpredictability of nature, its emergent character.

This brings me to another view of looking at artistic process in the context of efforts to connect to nature. I call this “improvising with the unforeseen”. When participants are encouraged to explore their relationships with their natural environment, the concern in improvising through art-making, I would suggest, is not primarily to do fully justice to the phenomena. Attention, rather, is first and foremost preoccupied with the emanations that stem *in and from* the art-making process itself. Instead of referring to art-making as exclusively coming forth from talent, skill or mastery, I conceive of art here as a human activity that consists of deliberately arranging items in a way that influences and affects one or more of the senses, emotions, and intellect. Art-making, thus understood, can catch both artist and AEE-participant by surprise; as if it, as it were, came “from behind”. Expressive arts therapist Shaun McNiff suggests that our artworks, once finished, may become a certain kind of angels or messengers – the word angel used here in a metaphorical sense. In his *Art Heals*, McNiff (2004) describes how he encourages participants in the art exercises that he facilitates to enter in a conversing mode with the paintings they make. He contends that images generate stories, and that one can enter into an “imaginal dialogue” with them. Though his focus as an expressive arts therapist is primarily on imagination as a healing instrument, I suggest the metaphor of an angel “talking back”, as it were, may be applied also in the field of AEE. The great advantage of the angel metaphor to McNiff is that it personifies the image and brings it to life in a way that opens up many new possibilities for interaction: “All of these creative methods require one to establish an emphatic connection with the expressions of an image” (McNiff, 2004, p. 101). This mode of artistic process is a way of interpreting through an ongoing active imagination, thus accessing the imaginative potential of the artwork we have just made.

The idea that the purpose of art was to make the “familiar, unfamiliar” was articulated first by Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky in 1917: “[A]rt exists that one may recover the sensation of life”, he wrote, “it exists to make one feel things”. Its true purpose “is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”. The technique that art employs to achieve this is “to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (Shklovsky, 1917/1965, p. 12.). Without art, Shklovsky wrote in his classic text “The Resurrection of the Word” (1914), “[t]he thing rushes past us, prepacked as it were: we know that it is there by the space it takes up, but we see only its surface”. Art exists, he held, “so that a sense of life may be restored and things may be felt, or, in his intriguing metaphor, “that stones may be made stony” (Shklovsky, cited in O’Toole, 2001, p. 165).



Such defamiliarization, which is also an aim in artful empiricism, however, may also provoke a moment of transformation, after which the world as it was before is not quite the same anymore. In his paper *Authenticity Revisited*, Bruce Baugh (1988) argues that the distinctive function of works of art is to reorient the experience of the perceiving subject. Peculiarly, the artwork *itself* determines the organization of this experience: “the world of the work of art ... is none other than that of the perceiving subject as transformed by the work. An artwork makes this world *its own* according to the depth and singularity of the transformation it effects” (Baugh, 1988, p. 479.). A work of art, says Baugh, is something “that exists *in order to be perceived*” (ibid, p. 480, emphasis in original). This aspect of perceivability, to me, may also mean that an artwork may carry latent properties, which only manifest themselves to the extent that we as its percipient (and I would say, the same holds for the creator of the artwork) are receptive to them. Art, through its unique power to transform experience, reveals new possibilities of existence to us.

We need a degree of defamiliarization to be open to the emanations that spring from the evolving or finished artwork that is in front of us. By allowing the artwork to organize our experience, it is given “a power over us sufficient to alter our experience of the world from its very foundations” (Baugh, 1988, p. 481). And it is through this that it achieves its epiphany.

This moment of transformation, however, will always be transitory, Baugh asserts. It is momentary and its duration coincides with that of the manifestation of the work. Others have called such moments *peak* (Maslow, 1964) or *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) experiences. Crucial for Baugh is that an authentic work of art must have an end *that cannot be understood in terms of our own*. It resists our every-day understanding of the world.

Baugh’s reflections on how the artwork “makes the world its own”, which I have summarized here, seem to implicitly presuppose that there is an intentionality, a wilfulness, on the part of the percipient of an artwork. The moment of transformation that the artwork brings about, the moment of epiphany it achieves, seems to be a consciously sought affair: we set out to undergo a momentary revelation when we engage in meeting the artwork.

This all may seem like a far cry from art-making and art perception as means to observe and understand nature. But by extrapolating Baugh’s reasoning, one could say that arts-based experiences in and of the natural world may redefine our apprehension of nature and the manifestations of life we find there.

Additionally, Baugh focuses his attention on the percipient of an artwork, not on the process of *making* art – by oneself in solitude, or as part of a group of participants. Yet I believe his understanding of how the aesthetic object transforms the experience of percipients also pertains to the impact of art-making as *process*. For, as we saw, McNiff calls our attention to how such transformation is brought about in and through the activity of art-making as it takes place in dialogue with the nascent artwork that is being created. An artistic process may evoke and engender emergent properties. I borrow this concept here from physics, it pertains to certain qualities that are not directly traceable and reducible to a system’s

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components, but rather to how those components interact (Laughlin, 2005). The idea of “emergence” can be understood as the arising and manifestation of a “radical novelty” that was previously not observed in a system (Goldstein, 1999). In the context here, it refers to latent properties that lay dormant in the becoming artwork as it were, and only manifest themselves in and through the process of its making.

Below I will provide an example of such emergence from of my own practice of AEE: the group-wise sculpting of clay figures of the human body.

#### MAKING A “LITTLE-ME” OF CLAY

In a “little-me” making workshop participants sculpt a miniature version of their own body, a so-called “little-me”, with their eyes closed.<sup>3</sup> A guided little-me making activity lasts about an hour, in which I lead participants step by step. In the process, I try to focus their full attention on each of their body parts, beginning with their feet and ending with their head. I ask them to give expression to what they perceive in their body, and at that place – in and through the clay.

This activity, using a material that comes directly from the earth and with which humans have worked and been in close contact for several millennia, tends to have a strong impact on the participants. The underlying thought is that they will learn in a surprising new way about their own embodied existence in its continuous exchange with the environment. It challenges the notion that nature is somewhere *out there*, separate from ourselves as corporeal beings. The circumstance that participants work the clay with their eyes closed tends to have a deeply defamiliarizing effect. They have to find their way forward without being able to rely on the controlling gaze; they have no reference whether or not they are depicting the growing clay sculpture realistically or if it is aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Just as important is that the controlling eyes of *others* is not felt – yet the activity is conducted together in a group. As the facilitator, I set the parameters for making this encounter come about.

I have facilitated little-me making sessions several times now over the years.. Occasionally I try to bring in a new element of which the outcome is unknown to me. One of these “innovations” was to introduce the drinking of a cup of water, again with the eyes closed, at the moment in time where the neck and throat are being moulded from clay. One participant confided to me afterwards that perceived the drinking of the water as a “reverential gesture”, a threshold experience before commencing with the formation of the clay head. The swallowing of the water apparently had a latent meaning that I, as the person who introduced this new element, had never thought of myself, and which manifested itself through the art-making process.

## RECEPTIVE UNDERGOING VERSUS ACTIVELY ACTING UPON

Every living creature necessarily needs to be both receptive to its environment and bring about a spontaneous creativity in adjusting itself. David Abram (1996) points out that this is the core of perception: the open, dynamic blend of receptivity and creativity by which every animate organism necessarily orients itself to the world. In John Dewey's theory of learning, the aspect of "experience" takes a central role. Also for him, all experience involves a swaying between doing and undergoing (Dewey, 1938). As Andrea English explains this central claim that permeates Dewey's work, undergoing describes the receptive side of the human being. "We *receive* something from the world when it resists our attempts at interaction: we *undergo* or *suffer* the world" (English, 2013, p. 66). Undergoing the world through taking in the new, "we learn that something or someone in the world has defied our expectations.... [W]e become open to the possibility of reconsidering our previous knowledge and actions...." (Ibid.). This experience of discontinuity, of being interrupted, is, in the words of English, the *countering* force of this encounter with the world. Dewey believed that only through this undergoing we are able to take in what preceded. By undergoing the experience of otherness, learning is incited. Dewey had observed that in any meaningful experience there is an on-going oscillation between "acting upon" and "receptive undergoing". Every experience, according to Dewey, is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives. Dewey explained this further as follows:

A man does something; he lifts, let us say, a stone. In consequence he undergoes, suffers, something: the weight, strain, texture of the surface of the thing lifted. The properties thus undergone determine further doing. The stone is too heavy or too angular, not solid enough; or else the properties undergone show it is fit for the use for which it is intended. The process continues until a mutual adaptation of the self and the object emerges and that particular experience comes to a close. What is true of this simple instance is true, as to form, of every experience. (Dewey, 1934/1987, pp. 43-44)

Irrespective of whether artful empiricism or "improvising with the unforeseen" is foregrounded, participants in AEE move back and forth in time between two states of being: from receptive surrendering to the process to creative acting upon the world. In their handling, moulding, and changing of objects, they inevitably engage with and interfere in their environment, they shift from following their willed intentions to having no other recourse than to grope their way forward,

There are certain actions in life, which, while we perform them, thoroughly shake our pre-understanding of the world, says Arthur Weymouth:

Such actions attempt to drive a knife through the sheen of the everyday and prise it open, so for just a moment new spaces are revealed, and new forms of thinking can emerge. In this liminal space, at the threshold between the commonplace structures of the everyday, the whole paradigm by which we set the clocks of our lives is called into question." Such a moment, he

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adds, is “the birthplace of art, of revolution, of religion, of genius.  
(Weymouth, 2009, p. 37)

Undergoing a transformative experience brings along that one is also cast in a liminal zone where one can no longer fully rely on methods that have proved their value and reliability through time. In effect, it implies a radical vulnerability to whatever the receptive undergoing may bring about. It involves an element of suffering in the sense that one is acted upon by the world, often against one’s own will. David Wong points out that relinquishing control and thus being receptive to outside influence is an essential quality of compelling, deeply engaging experiences. To underscore this point, he traces the arcane definition of the word “passion”. In Latin, *patis* means suffering: “Both passion and suffering mean to experience intensely while being acted upon by the world” (Wong, 2007, p. 202). There is also an element of inevitability here, as comes across in the expression, “no pain, no gain”. Compelling experiences are constituted by more than just our intentional actions. Only by fully undergoing the experience, by surrendering to this suffering, do we truly learn:

Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take in*. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 55)

#### CONCLUSION

One may wonder what understandings of nature these two approaches afford. In both an effort is made to break away from a mode of nature interpretation that is based on knowledge transfer. Instead, each of the two allows for art-making to impact the learner in his or her coming to understanding. In the Goethean approach, a desired outcome is that the participant is transformed through the practice. Ideally, he or she develops new “organs of perception” through it. In “improvisation with the unforeseen” such a transformation may go further, as it doesn’t lend itself readily to the kind of integration in thinking (stage four in the Goethean process) that happens in artful empiricism. From the liminal space in which participants are thrown through their involvement in the art-making activity, an effort needs to be made to make a bridge that allows for integrating the new understandings in the pre-knowledge.

The point of departure in AEE activities tends to be broad, loose and comprehensive: in the forefront are the awakening of awareness, perception, and receptivity. Often they start out by emphasizing (and further encouraging) a state of sensorial openness to the primary aspect of *being* a body, *being* in nature. From there is a progressive fine-tuning and narrowing down to a second level of attentiveness to a more specific and deepened focus on relationships with one’s

environs, emphasizing respectively *connecting with* nature. This is a step towards engaging in a reciprocal relationship to one's natural environment: of concentrating the attention and reacting upon, being influenced by and answering to the world. Attaining a third level constitutes a further narrowing into a more specific and personal *learning about* nature: the attentive awareness leads to the idea of having grasped some of the underlying relationships, and having acquired possible new understandings of what Bateson (1980) aptly called "the pattern which connects".

Ideally, participants are able to retain (and bring to bear) all the awareness and sensitivity that is aroused within the prior, more-encompassing gestalts when their perceptive faculties subsequently tune in to particulars (the bold back arrow in figure 2).

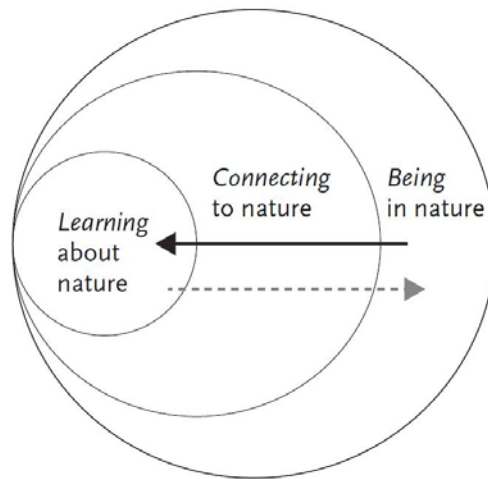


Figure 1.

When they, at the level of the smallest gestalt, pay attention to natural phenomena in a more contracted and focused mode, they thereby employ what I speculatively identify as a very primary and tentative form of apprehension. This kind of learning, that seems to take place in the AEE activities that I facilitate, I tentatively call "rudimentary cognition" (van Boeckel, 2013). The term refers to a crude, basic or minimal ignition of mental processes, to an elementary and nascent form of cognition that comes forth from and in an initial affective and embodied reaction to being immersed in an artistic process, but may move on to more intentional and conscious cognitive activity in processing this information and applying the acquired knowledge in other contexts.<sup>4</sup>

New forms of understanding that evolve in the most focused mode – raw "chunks" or emanating patterns of rudimentary cognition – may have an impact on ways in which the participant subsequently perceives his or her connection to, and being, in nature (the grey dashed arrow in figure 1). (In reality, I believe the

movement in two opposing directions – the narrowing or expanding of focus – can happen simultaneously and it may in fact be impossible to neatly disentangle them from one another.)

Paradoxically, intensified attentiveness through partaking in AEE activities can in some cases also bring about a *diminished* sense of felt connection to the natural world. At some point during the activity, for example, this can happen when elements of the living world are suddenly identified by their proper scientific names. The label that the name constitutes can unwontedly pop up in the individual participant's *mind's eye* or be pointed out by one of the other participants. Their mere utterance, however, could be a kind of "context marker",<sup>5</sup> that starts to "overrule" more fuzzy understandings stemming from intuitional perception. Then the hazy rudimentary cognitions may have to yield to more established, and therefore likely more reassuring, rational explanations.

At the other extreme, there might also be cases when we go astray exactly *because* something does impress us very deeply, like for example when we for the first time become aware and are in awe of the intricacy of a spider's web. At such instances, we are, quite literally, *moved*. Such an experience may trigger a reaction that is emotional (from the Latin *emovere*, to move out), and then our perception usually isn't very clear. Overwhelmed, we no longer perceive very keenly and sensitively – for this seems to require a certain degree of detachment.

In artful empiricism, with its aim to foster a receptive and aesthetic awareness of the natural world, the imaginative part seems to be mostly delimited to sensory imagination in service of an unprejudiced way of looking. These kinds of activities undoubtedly offer new understandings of the natural world. But in my view they mostly lack the quality of improvisation. One may add that conceptualisations of "art" are limited to notions that stem from Goethe's time and which have a rather Romantic ring to them, such as the idea that art is "nature's worthiest interpreter". Contemporary understandings of art are of course much more comprehensive, complex and ambiguous.

On the other hand, participants who engage in art-making in which the emphasis is more on a dynamic *acting upon* the world (with the aim or effect of evoking emergent properties, such as in the example of the little-me making), may miss out on certain phenomena that they simply overlook, as they are more preoccupied with meaning-making in its own right. The first orientation is an attempt at meeting of nature in an almost intuitional if not naïve sense, at least initially unclouded by reason or prior knowledge. In the second orientation there is a shift from the object of the participants' creative engagements – the environment with which they engage – to the artistic process itself and the objectified shapes that stem from it: the angels that talk back, and that start to surprise their creators during and through their unfolding.

Perhaps the true challenge for arts-based environmental education is to explore how our heightened sensitivity to nature through combining art and environmental education can be expanded by allowing our artistic creations to "talk back", and conversely, how our defamiliarization through the encounter of emergent properties can be grounded and embedded in a receptive contemplation, a delicate

empiricism in relation to the natural world, thus enriching our understanding in unexpected ways.

If we recall the participant in the little-me making session who perceived the drinking of the water with his eyes closed as a threshold moment before commencing the final part of the session, which was the moulding a miniature head in clay, we may assume that his understanding of his head, his bodily processes and the relationship of his body to the a wider context was thoroughly impacted. Most likely this was done in ways that would not come about by “merely” contemplating the phenomenon intentionally in a Goethean sense.

The relative differences in the point of gravity in the relation between undergoing and doing in artful empiricism and “improvising with the unforeseen” in AEE may be expressive of the weight that is lent in time to the each of the poles of receptive undergoing and active doing. As we saw, for Dewey these are actually two parts of *one* experience of art. More-over, he argued that transformative experiences *require* both (Dewey, 1934). In Wong’s explanation, an aesthetic experience, for Dewey, is a transactional phenomenon where both the person and the world are *mutually* transformed:

We do something, we undergo its consequences, we do something in response, we undergo again. And so on. The experience becomes educative as we grasp the relationship between doing and undergoing. The experience is transformative as we have new thoughts, feelings, and action, and also as the world reveals itself and acts upon us in new ways. (Wong, 2007, p. 203)

In fact, Dewey held that although undergoing may be receptive, it has no existence separate from active doing. Both intentional and spontaneous activity are part of his aesthetic perspective on learning. But that does not preclude that when we are in the grip of a compelling experience, we relate to it for a large part without exercising conscious thought and effort. Its meaning, Dewey held, is immediate and immanent, and its quality may be perceived as “a gift of the gods”. As Philip Jackson (1998) mentions in his *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art*, “The added meaning is not sought. It happens effortlessly and without notice – like a bolt from the blue.”

In my view, the skill of oscillating from receptive undergoing to acting upon in artistic processes in relation to nature could be seen as expressive of an ability to engage in what Gregory Bateson called the principle of “double description”. With this he meant that two or more information sources come together to give information of a sort different from what was in either source separately (Bateson, 1980). Double description looks past superficial similarities and differences to consider the underlying processes. For Bateson, the essence of *aesthetic* was being responsive to “the pattern, which connects”. “The richest knowledge of the tree”, he would argue, “includes *both* myth and botany” ((Bateson, cited in G. Bateson & M.C. Bateson, 1987, p. 200).

Or, as I am tempted to paraphrase this insight in light of the explorations presented in this article: the richest understandings of nature comprise both an

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artful empiricism and a radical openness to emanations that come forth in and through an artful process that actively “invites the unforeseen”.

#### NOTES

1. The development of this four-stage process is attributed to Johannes Bockemühl, former director of the Natural Science Section of the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, the international centre of the Anthroposophical Society (Davis, 2006).
2. The names of the four stages in the Goethean process as they are described in the following are derived from Irwin (2012), “Audit of Goethean Process: As Outlined by Leading Experts in the Field.”
3. I learned to do this – myself being a participant – from sculptor Antony Gormley in 2006. Gormley had come to Schumacher College in Dartington, England, to co-teach a course on art and ecology.
4. James Elkins pointed at something similar when he observed that “emptying of the brain through painting creates a vacuum that attracts real spontaneous knowledge” (Elkins, cited in Lipsett, 2009, p. 44).
5. Bateson found that organisms tend to respond differently to the same signal if it is presented to them in a different context. He thought that this may be due to recognition of the particular context they have entered. Consequently, he held that the experiment always puts a label on the context in which one is (Brand, 1973).

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