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The maps that shape the roads. On the place of cultural policy actors in the debate on the sustainable development of cities[1]

A paradigm that exists, whether we like it or not

Those responsible for drawing up, implementing and evaluating policies, who we could call cultural policy actors, have a duty to choose the paradigms that frame their work. Today, that difficult task cannot avoid the paradigm of *sustainable development*.

The paradigm of sustainable development or sustainability[2] was defined by the report »Our Common Future«, also known as the Brundtland Report, the result of the work of the *World Commission on Environment and Development* (1987), and by the *Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit* (*UNGA* 1992). These documents enshrined three pillars as the paradigm to be used in local, national and global strategies: economic, social and environmental. In fact, they added a third pillar to the previous paradigm, which had been considered appropriate for most of the 20th century, thus proving that paradigms adapt to the historical capacity to understand realities.

The current three-pillar paradigm summarises the »model of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs«. The three pillars, dimensions or components are far from unambiguous. Reality is more complex than models: this is a well-known challenge in social and human sciences. But some modelling is needed if we want to understand and transform our societies.

The bitter reality is that culture is absent from this triangular paradigm. As Raj Isar (2017) has recently noted, the authors who coined the current definition of

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1 Basis of this article ist the speech hold on the 16th of June 2017 at the 9th Federal Congress on Cultural Policy »World.Culture.Politics. Cultural Policy and Globalisation«.
2 The concepts are not identical. For an in-depth discussion, see for example Mebratu (1998) or Kagan (2011).

sustainable development, and those who have analysed how the paradigm has evolved in the last 30 years, do not include culture, whether understood as way of life or as expression, in their analysis. This absence deserves serious consideration by cultural policy actors. Traditional cultural policies (the arts, heritage, public reading) were constructed in the second half of the 20th century in isolation from wider debates on development. It is very difficult now to reconnect concepts and actors. But there is no other option. Serious consideration and bold action are needed.

Today, in 2018, development is not understood in the same way as in 1987 or 1992, when the current sustainable development paradigm took shape. The concept has evolved. Amartya Sen (1999), Arjun Appadurai (1996), Edgar Morin (1994) and Martha Nussbaum (2001, 2011), to name but a few, wrote their main contributions to what development means now after 1992. Today, development also means freedom, more choice, putting human beings – children, men and women – at the centre of the future. Development – even sustainable development or sustainability – is now human development, i.e. development centred on people. Human beings need to develop capabilities or operational capacities such as tools and skills to understand the world in which we live and to transform it so that it becomes genuinely sustainable in all respects, not only environmental. These capacities include literacy, creativity, critical knowledge, sense of place, empathy, trust, risk, respect, recognition, etc. They can be understood as the cultural component of sustainability.

We know from Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1962) and his analysis of scientific revolutions that paradigms are useful insofar as they explain reality. The current triangular paradigm of sustainability no longer does that. It does not explicitly include essential values for each person in our world, such as well-being, happiness, balance, harmony and identity, which are always explicit and fully integrated into the conception of development that many traditional and indigenous people have. They also appear in new visions of development emerging in Bhutan (Ura/ Alkire/Zangmo 2013), Latin America (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010) and even some Western countries, as in the transition towns movement. 21st-century societies are cultural. When explicit or implicit development actors use metaphors like »cognitive capitalism« or »knowledge society«, they are simply recognising that culture is a key component of realities and futures.

The current triangular paradigm seems to be based on a narrow Western view, which neglects the crucial importance of cultural diversity, not only in the process of globalisation (the plurality of knowledge systems) but also in the process of localising development. The world is diverse and always will be, despite tendencies towards homogenisation. The deep meaning of development can only be understood at a local level. Global models cannot have local agency unless there is an explicit *door*, whereby people and places are not threatened by globalisation, but instead invited and empowered to become actors of globalisation, i.e. to generate new meaning without losing identity. We need culture in order to know more

about ourselves. We must acknowledge culture (as both expression and way of life) and explicitly integrate it into the new paradigm of sustainability. Operationally, mechanisms need to be in place.

Cultural actors are those who develop activities related to expression (creativity, heritage or diversity) that have an impact on the way of life (values, beliefs and meaning). They legitimately claim to master processes and content that bring meaning to people. Cultural actors may wish to reintroduce or reconnect culture in the development debate. In other words, culture needs to be repoliticised; it must become a subject of open public discussion again. Otherwise, culture-related processes and content will implicitly be used to legitimise the current state of affairs or as tools to achieve other objectives such as economic growth, social cohesion or environmental balance.

Conceptually, in this reconnection cultural actors need to take account of the paradigm, the triangle of sustainable development. Long-standing change needs to be rooted in current frames and realities. If cultural policy actors want their actions to have some impact in our societies, they (we) have to stop isolation, use the language of general conversation and connect with (while also deconstructing) the current paradigm in a way that is recognisable by all. Operationally, cultural policy actors need to identify the frames of transformation (at a global level, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the New Urban Agenda) and direct practical actions towards transforming realities, towards more radically democratic societies that truly empower people, especially those in need.

Progress is slow but noticeable

In 2001–2002, a number of events relevant to cultural policy-making occurred within the space of a single year.

- Jon Hawkes published his pioneering and foundational book »The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: culture's essential role in public planning« in Victoria, Australia (Hawkes 2001).
- *UNESCO* approved the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in November 2001 (*UNESCO* 2001).
- The German association of cultural policy experts launched the »Tutzinger Manifesto«, pointing out that sustainable development needs a cultural side (Kupoge 2001).
- An attempt to discuss the cultural component of sustainability was made at the 2002 Johannesburg Summit (Rio+10), when France, Mozambique, *UNEP* and *UNESCO* organised a round table on biodiversity and cultural diversity during which the idea of »culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development« was suggested (*UNEP* and *UNESCO* 2002).

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Over the last 15 years, cultural policy actors have influenced a gradual global recognition of culture as an integral factor in sustainable development. This is proved by an increasing number of reports, statements and commitments from international institutions, national and local governments, civil society actors, experts and other stakeholders.

- The 2004 edition of the United Nations Development Programme's »Human Development Report« (UNDP 2004) argued that cultural liberty was essential in allowing people to lead a life of their choice, and thus in ensuring human development.

- The »*UNESCO* Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions« (UNESCO 2005) recognised that the protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity is an essential requirement for sustainable development. Also in the *UNESCO* framework, the 2003 »Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage« stressed the connection between communities, identity, continuity and sustainable development (UNESCO 2003). Both conventions state that international human rights instruments should be the basis for building a stronger place for culture in sustainable development (i. e. preventing any kind of cultural relativism). Two very useful reports on »Re|shaping cultures« have been produced under the 2005 »*UNESCO* Convention« (2015 and 2017).

- Cultural rights have appeared as a key narrative. Building on the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[3], as well as on the work of academic and civil society groups (with a special mention of and tribute to the 2007 »Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights«), the *UN Human Rights Council* decided to establish a post on cultural rights (2009 and 2012). The outstanding work performed by Farida Shaheed, the post-holder from 2009 to 2015, has helped to strengthen recognition of cultural rights as an integral part of human rights: universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent (Shaheed 2014)[4]. When Farida Shaheed's mandate ended in December 2015, Karima Bennoune was appointed as Special Rapporteur and published her first document in February 2016[5].

- The »*UN* Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples« (2007) established rights linking indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices to sustainable development. The Indigenous Peoples Major Group at the Rio+20 conference and in the leadup to *Agenda 2030* and the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* explicitly asked for culture to be recognised as the fourth pillar of sustainability (Indigenous Peoples Major Group, 2012 and 2014).

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3 Note that the title of the covenant neatly refers to three categories. Culture is a stand-alone category in the human rights debate.

4 The post of Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights was created in 2009. It was replaced in 2012 by the more significant post of Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. For further information on the Special Rapporteur's role and activities, visit www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/CulturalRights/Pages/SRCulturalRightsIndex.aspx.

5 In it the Special Rapporteur announced that the focus of her first report to the *UN* General Assembly would be the intentional destruction of cultural heritage as a violation of human rights (Bennoune 2016).

- The *UN* Conference on Sustainable Development held in June 2012 (Rio+20) introduced, albeit timidly, a link between culture and sustainable development in conceptual and practical terms (*UNGA* 2012; Pascual, 2013). The *UN General Assembly* (*UNGA*) approved consecutive resolutions that recognised the role of culture as both a *driver* and an *enabler* of sustainable development (UNGA 2013).
- Several *UNESCO* studies and reports have analysed the relationship between culture and sustainable development. Emphasis should be placed on the report »A new cultural policy agenda for development and mutual understanding«, which calls for a rethinking of cultural policies and places emphasis on democracy and good governance (*UNESCO* 2011), the report »Gender equality, heritage and creativity«, inexplicably ignored by cultural actors (UNESCO 2014), and the three consecutive »Creative Economy Reports«, which logically focus on the economy. *UNESCO*'s work in this field was evaluated in the very comprehensive, must-read report »*UNESCO*'s Work on Culture and Sustainable Development. Evaluation of a Policy Theme« (UNESCO 2015).
- Several academic reports have accurately analysed the place of culture in sustainable development. Key landmarks include the works of Nancy Duxbury (2011, 2012), the European Research Action »Investigating Cultural Sustainability« developed in 2012–2015 (Dessein et al. 2015) and the report »Culture, Cities and Identity in Europe« (EESC 2016).

Cities lead the way

Globalisation has brought cities to the centre of the debate on sustainable development. They are clearly the arena where a number of key battles are fought, including the quest for economic progress, the fight against poverty and for a fairer society, the struggle for environmental balance and the battle for the right of citizens to choose their freedoms and decide their future. Cities are forums of encounter and debate, of citizen participation and freedoms, and the places where solutions are found and collectively worked out.

There are many very good examples all over the world of ways in which culture can be successfully operationalised in urban sustainable development (the examples are taken from Duxbury et al. 2014).

- In cities, cultures are dynamic, not static. Culture is multi-faceted, incorporating a range of expressions and values embodied in built heritage, intangible heritage, collective activities and the contemporary arts, as shown explicitly in the formulation of the cultural policies of Vancouver and Amsterdam.
- Human rights include cultural diversity, which is an asset and a source of innovation for cities. Freedom, innovation and transformation are integral and necessary to the functioning and evolution of societies, as stated in the policies of cities like Barcelona, Buenos Aires and Milan.

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- Cultural ecosystems balance the roles and participation of public, NGO and private actors, as in Montreal and Angers.
- Cultural actors have been successfully involved in memorialisation processes, to preserve memories of people or events, and in upholding cultural rights in divided and post-conflict societies, as in Bogotá and Johannesburg.
- Local cultures and built heritage are core elements of distinctive urban development and identity, as the experience of cities like Kanazawa proves.
- Urban regeneration strategies have included an explicit cultural dimension, which successfully combines basic cultural public services for all, new infrastructure and respect for civil society initiatives, as in Medellin and Bilbao.
- Traditional local knowledge and building technologies are often best suited to local environmental conditions, as proved by post-tsunami policies in Banda Aceh or the urban planning of Saint-Louis de Senegal.
- Urban development can be informed by international practices but they must be adapted to the specificities of local resources, values and frameworks, as in the policies of Lille-Métropole and Mexico City.

With these examples, it should come as no surprise that cities and local governments have also decided to contribute vigorously, with the best of intentions, to the global conversation on »culture in sustainable development«. The work of the *Culture Committee of United Cities and Local Governments* (*UCLG*) has achieved international visibility because it has given a coherent narrative to what cities and local governments are already doing.

- In 2002, cities and local governments related to the Porto Alegre movement began to draft a declaration, approved two years later as »Agenda 21 for culture«, and then immediately adopted by the newly-created world association of *United Cities and Local Governments* (UCLG 2004). The foundation of *UCLG's* work on culture, Agenda 21 for culture describes the relationship between local cultural policies and human rights, governance, sustainable development, participatory democracy and peace.
- In 2010, the policy statement Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development (UCLG 2010) affirmed that the combination of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance no longer reflected all the dimensions of global societies: culture had to be recognised as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. The document urges local governments to explicitly include culture in the sustainable development paradigm. Operationally, the document suggests a dual approach: developing a solid cultural policy and promoting a cultural dimension in all public policies.
- The approval of the practical toolkit Culture 21: Actions (UCLG 2015) confirms that culture in sustainability is a narrative that can be implemented with local policy actions. It was the result of a year-long consultation process with the participation of cities and experts around the world. The Culture 21: Actions toolkit explicitly supports culture as a component, dimension, pillar or

sphere of sustainability and builds on previous *UCLG* documents in this field, approved in 2004 and 2010. Culture 21: Actions is simply a proposal to make the cultural component, dimension, pillar or sphere more operational in cities and local governments. It contains 100 measurable actions for culture in sustainable cities (UCLG 2015) which enable local governments to carry out a self-assessment of their current policies and programmes. The toolkit goes beyond the comfort zone of cultural policies, moving towards a cultural perspective in local development, and is helpful for identifying the current balance of powers in the cultural debate in cities.

- In 2016, the Statement of the *World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments*, held in Quito, contained a commitment »to integrate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development«[6] (World Assembly 2016). The *UCLG* World Congress also approved the Bogotá Commitments, which include a commitment »to promote local heritage, creativity and diversity through people-centred cultural policies« (UCLG 2016).

The *UCLG* Culture Committee has a number of other significant activities, briefly described in the following paragraphs.

- A global *Summit*. The *UCLG* Culture Summit has been held twice, in Bilbao (2015) and Jeju (2017). The third edition will take place in Buenos Aires in 2019. The Summit is conceived as the place to openly discuss who the actors are and what they do in the global conversation on culture in development. The conversation connects local and national governments, civil society and international organisations. Providing practical examples from cities on all continents, one of the main aims of the Summit is to ensure that the global conversation on culture in development is both more accountable (less patronised by institutionality) and more transparent (openly discussing what are the best narratives).

- An international *Award*. The world is full of cultural awards in fields such as literature, visual arts, architecture, theatre, cinema, multimedia, music, heritage, videogames, crafts, folk and design. Awards create a community of practice. The approval of Agenda 21 for culture fostered the emergence of a global community devoted to elaborating or developing cultural policies at a local level. Policies do not exist in a vacuum. They exist because some key individuals stuck to fundamental values and spent time finding evidence. They exist because some key cities took the decision to listen to communities and respond to their demands. They exist because some key people in local government and in civil society organisations designed innovative programmes. In 2013, *UCLG* and the City of Mexico had the courage and the will (and the resources) to create the first-ever global Award on cultural policies. The Award has two categories, worth 50 000 euros for cities and local governments, and 25 000 for individuals. It was awarded to Belo Horizonte in 2014 and jointly to Timbuctoo

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6 The World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments is a *UN* body. It is, therefore, significant that, for the first time, a UN body accepts to promote the narrative of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability.

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and Vaudreuil-Dorion in 2016. The individual Award winners are Manuel Castells and Farida Shaheed (2014) and Jon Hawkes and Silvia Rivera- Cusicanqui (2016). The third edition of the Award will take place in 2018.

- Long-term *advocacy*. The global campaign »The Future We Want Includes Culture«, also known as Culture2015Goal, united several global cultural networks, including cities associations, civil society organisations and national arts councils, jointly advocating the place of culture in the *UN* Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. In a very short period of time, the campaign attracted support from more than 900 organisations and networks, as well as from thousands of people from 120 countries. It produced four very practical documents containing proposals for a Culture Goal (September 2013), culture-related targets (May 2014) and indicators (February 2015), as well as a closing document with the self-explanatory title »Culture in the SDG Outcome Document: progress made, but important steps remain ahead« (September 2015). Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals can certainly be regarded as a step forward in the recognition of culture as a dimension of sustainable development (UNGA 2015). Agenda 2030 includes 17 goals and 169 targets and will guide sustainable development policies and strategies in the next 15 years. The preamble and four of the targets explicitly mention culture, while references to culture-related issues can be found in another four targets. The Culture2015Goal closing document affirms that »when compared to the Millennium Development Goals«, Agenda 2030 »represents a significant step forward with regard to the acknowledgement of the role of culture in development processes« but also notes that »the Outcome Document falls short of a full understanding and affirmation of the importance of culture to sustainable development«. Advocating culture in sustainable development is not easy, but it is fundamental and strategic.

- A database of *good practices*. Any policy domain needs to identify examples of good practices in a way that is easy to retrieve. They need to be useful for policy-makers, researchers and activists. The *UCLG* Culture Committee published an initial catalogue of good practices in 2014 and the database contained 124 cases in 2017. Most of them come from bids identified as good practices by the jury of the International Award *UCLG* – Mexico City – Culture 21. The database thesaurus (catalogue of concepts) contains 75 keywords. Each good practice is indexed with 8—10 of these keywords. The identification of good practice is based on six criteria: innovation, participation, sustainability, efficiency, transversality and reproducibility. The database is also searchable according to the 17 SDG and the 9 Commitments of Culture 21 Actions.

- *Capacity-building*. Whereas a wealth of knowledge and examples of good practice exist, much remains to be done to enable effective self-evaluation and promote peer-learning. The *UCLG* Culture Committee has launched several programmes (Culture 21 Lab, Pilot Cities and Leading Cities) providing opportunities for cities to participate in a learning process on the basis of the

principles and actions included in Culture 21 Actions and on the experience and expertise of cultural actors from civil society. One of the interesting results is a radar-shaped graphic that expresses the areas in which the participating city feels it is strong and confident, as well as the areas in which progress needs to be prioritised.

What's next?

The understanding of sustainable development today involves a wide range of interconnected cultural, social, environmental, political and economic factors. Interdependencies need to be acknowledged in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Culture can no longer be a secondary aspect of approaches to sustainable development, but should become a core factor of the equation. It would be naïve to think that culture is simply part of the solution. Let's be bold and say that culture is also part of the problem.

In the coming years, culture will contribute to a reformulation of the sustainability paradigm. As Dessein et al. (2015) have rightly pointed out, »incorporating culture into the sustainability debate seems to be a great scientific and political challenge«. It is a challenge that cultural policy actors must explicitly address. There is no way to make the case for culture as an operational dimension of sustainability unless it is based on the acknowledgement of weaknesses, including our own. This reformulation could be effective if actors concerned by the role of culture in sustainability, including cultural actors, are aware of and decide to clarify some major bottlenecks. They include the different meanings of *culture*, the lack of serious long-term planning and hence an aversion to evaluation of the strategies of cultural actors, very often too sectoral or corporate, and the naive approach that disconnects culture from power. A fuller list of these bottlenecks is given in Duxbury et al. (2016) and in Pascual (2016).

It is also important to defend the reasons why the consideration of culture as the fourth or the first stand-alone component, dimension, pillar or sphere of sustainability is the best strategy, not only for the agency of cultural actors but also to ensure that the paradigm of sustainability is suited to the challenges of our times.[7]

Conceptual benefits
- It is inclusive. Sustainability is becoming people-centred. It is also more holistic. It does not involve any hierarchy.
- It is new. It shakes up an outdated concept of development. It shows that paradigms are historical and that they change, as they must. It forces traditional players to react. It forces the reconnection of the traditional three pillars.
- It connects theory with practice. It forces sustainability to be more localised. It offers a clear and beautiful image, easy to memorise, easy to use.

7 This list is taken from »Culture as a pillar in sustainability: the best is yet to come« (Pascual, 2016). It is an updated version of similar lists written by the author. See Duxbury et al (2012) and Pascual (2009).

Benefits related to the agency of the cultural sector

- It does not instrumentalise culture and hence becomes acceptable to cultural actors. It preserves the intrinsic values of culture (heritage, creativity, diversity, dialogue, rituality, critical knowledge) as the core of cultural policies.
- It is easy to implement and can be immediately operational. The actors concerned by the role of culture in sustainability should be invited, on an equal footing with others, to take part in all policy-planning and evaluation exercises on the future of societies, whether local, national or international. Their vision should be taken into consideration, right now.
- It allows cultural actors to be regarded and respected on the same footing as economists, planners or ecologists in the field of sustainable development. As a consequence, it invites cultural actors to become active in wider debates. In other words, culture can be repoliticised, i.e. it can once again become a subject of open public discussion.
- It extends an invitation to the conceptual and operational self-criticism of cultural actors, and an obligation to engineer new capacity-building mechanisms for the cultural sector.

Platform for connections

- It strengthens the relationship between culture and human rights.
- It aligns with the movement that promotes the existence of global and local commons.
- It allows artistic and cultural actors to connect to ecological actors and jointly work on different aspects of sustainability, such as artists' activism on climate change and the ecological footprint of cultural projects. Sustainability concerns everyone, not only ecological actors.
  It recognises the arts and culture as assets for the economy within an integrated vision of sustainable development. The more *industrial* sectors of culture cannot escape a reassessment of how they use resources (material and immaterial).
  It allows a differentiation between social and cultural actors. Many social movements are genuinely interested in cultural processes, but their keyword is equity, which could dangerously turn into frozen identities and a paternalistic approach to freedoms. Cultural actors value dynamic identities and use keywords such as risk, provocation, freedom, critical knowledge, etc.
- It aligns with and supports an integrative approach to urban planning, based on heritage, creativity and citizen participation, and it enables a special focus on public spaces.

Policy/planning

- It leads to the involvement of civil society in the framing and implementation of policies. A sustainability lens encourages wider access to and active participation of inhabitants in culture.

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- In a context of crisis, it provides a new tool for rethinking traditional mechanisms to support culture, rather than the traditional response of cutting budgets.
- When culture is growing as a priority in international relations and diplomacy, it gives coherence to the challenges of globalisation.
- When new programmes on international cooperation are being prepared, based on Agenda 2030, it gives a strong argument to those working with culture.

The place of culture in sustainability will have to evolve considerably over the next 15 years. This global debate, still too institutional, will be joined by new actors such as cities and civil society. Welcoming and constructively critical platforms for discussion and delivery on culture in sustainability will have to be created and nurtured by all and for all. Please, be active.

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