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EUROPEAN CITIES AS CULTURAL PROJECTS: THEN, WHERE IS CULTURE IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY POLICY?

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Resumo

Nas iniciativas políticas globais, ao reconhecer o importante papel da cultura no desenvolvimento sustentável e a sua integração nos contextos das políticas a todos os níveis, as cidades são identificadas como lugares chave de acção e progresso. No contexto Europeu, a cultura teve um papel director no desenvolvimento urbano de muitas cidades, tanto nas estratégias económicas e de marca como nas iniciativas de inclusão social. Mas quão forte é a ligação entre cultura e sustentabilidade urbana? Partindo de uma perspectiva das políticas públicas, a presente comunicação examina as directivas e enquadramentos das políticas sobre sustentabilidade urbana europeia, e investiga de que forma as questões culturais são (ou não) nelas incorporadas. A análise das mensagens chave das cidades europeias, dos ministros do desenvolvimento urbano dos vários Estados da Europa, e da Comissão Europeia desde meados dos anos 1990, mostram que (1) a cultura é reconhecida politicamente como uma dimensão importante do desenvolvimento sustentável local/urbano; (2) existe uma ênfase crescente nas estratégias de planeamento urbano e desenvolvimento integrados; e (3) a cultura é entendida como qualidade social, sinónimo de diversidade cultural. As necessidades identificadas incluem um enquadramento conceptual abrangente que conjugue os múltiplos aspectos culturais referidos, assim como directrizes operativas sobre como incluir a cultura numa aproximação integrada ao planeamento urbano sustentável.

Abstract

In global policy initiatives to recognize the important role of culture in sustainable development and advance its integration in policy contexts at all levels, cities are identified as key sites of action and advancement. Within Europe, culture has played a driving role in urban redevelopment, economic and branding strategies, and social inclusion initiatives in many cities. But how strong is the link between culture and urban sustainability? From a policy perspective, this paper examines European urban sustainability planning/policy frameworks and guides, and investigates how cultural considerations are incorporated (or not) in them. Analysis of the key messages from European cities, national ministers for urban development in Europe, and the European Commission since the mid-1990s shows that (1) culture is recognized politically as an important dimension of local/urban/sustainable development; (2) there is a growing emphasis on integrated strategies for urban planning and development; and (3) broad planning frameworks to encourage or enable this integration are being built. Three cultural dimensions are emphasized: (1) the built environment; (2) culture as social activities; and (3) culture as a social quality (i.e., cultural diversity). Identified needs include an overarching conceptual framework to bring together the multiple aspects of culture discussed as well as operational guidance on how to include culture in an integrated approach to urban sustainability planning.

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1. Introduction

In the context of global policy initiatives to recognize the important role of culture in sustainable development and advance its integration in policy contexts at all levels (e.g. UNESCO Hangzhou Declaration, 2013), cities are identified as key sites of action and advancement. Within Europe, culture has played a driving role in urban redevelopment, economic and branding strategies, and social inclusion initiatives in many cities. A variety of European-level policy statements include references to the important cultural roles played by European cities, and there is a generalized refrain of 'European cities as cultural projects' (Duxbury et al., 2012). But how strong is the link between culture and urban sustainability? To what extent are cultural dimensions included in policy/planning frameworks for 'sustainable city'-building in Europe? How do these policy frameworks and pathways point to current perceptions of the roles of culture in building a sustainable urban future? What policy and programme pathways for building more explicit linkages can be identified?

For European cities, Europe-wide policies, regulations, guidelines, and EU funding programs form an influential conceptual and financial network overarching urban development. City network and event-related declarations form a parallel layer of collective statements, articulating cities' perspectives on desired, more sustainable, development trajectories. While urban sustainability policies and plans that explicitly integrate cultural considerations are still rare, the overarching recognition of the cultural importance of European cities provides a multidimensional, although sometimes vague, overlay to policy thinking about urban sustainability. From this perspective, 'sustainable city' policy and planning may be viewed as in service of an (implicit) *cultural* goal, and this recognition may open pathways to more explicit considerations of urban design, architecture, heritage, art, and intangible cultural dimensions within 'sustainable city' policy.

From a policy perspective, this paper examines European urban sustainability planning/policy frameworks and guides, investigates how cultural considerations are incorporated (or not), and assesses the potential for developing more explicit connections with culture. This analysis includes a review of EU policy frameworks relating to sustainable city planning and development, as well as 'sustainable city' charters, declarations, and guidelines. In so doing, the chapter aims to contribute to bridging a divide often observed at the local level: in general, municipal cultural administrations are still not integrated into large urban development processes and issues, and cities continue to struggle to understand how culture can be integrated into urban sustainability.

2. European urban sustainability policy/planning frameworks and guides: An overview

European-wide frameworks concerning urban sustainable development have been informed and structured through collective statements and initiatives from three main sources: *European cities,* primarily developed through meetings/conferences and advanced by associations of cities as well as the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; *national ministers of EU member states with responsibilities for urban development*, meeting under the auspices of the Council of Europe or the European Union; and the *European Commission,* through EU policy, reports, and funding programmes. In addition, particular European research programmes, intended to inform and advance good policy and practice, are cited in policy documents from time to time. Extra-European reference points such as Charters and principles collectively developed by cities are also cited in European cities' statements.

This section outlines the major European-level policy initiatives that relate to sustainable cities or urban development more generally, with a view to investigating to what extent and how culture is included. The analysis was guided by two questions: How are cultural considerations incorporated (or not) in these documents? How does this text point to potential pathways for developing more explicit connections with culture in urban sustainability policy and initiatives?

2.1. The Aalborg Process: The European cities movement

The origins of the trail of city-driven efforts to conceptualize urban sustainability and advance policy and planning practices are found in the Aalborg Charter (1994) and Aalborg Commitments (2004), which were

developed and carried forward through the Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign (1994-2013) and, since 2013, the Movement of Sustainable Cities and Towns. This city-driven movement is currently encapsulated in the European Sustainable Cities Platform, a project launched in 2013 to serve as an information hub/portal that brings together "all relevant partners working on issues around sustainable cities" and provides a one-stop shop for local communities (European Sustainable Cities Platform [ESCP] website).

The Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign (1994-2013) was a bottom-up movement with a three-fold mission: "to support the exchange of experience between cities, collect information on the activities undertaken at the local level and serve as interface between the European Union and the local sustainability movement" (ESCP website). The Campaign played a key role in "defining what a sustainable European city should look like" (through producing the Aalborg Charter, 1994) and in "setting out a process for making this vision a reality" (the Aalborg Commitments, 2004) (ESCP website). The Aalborg Charter and the Aalborg Commitments together form a framework for movement toward sustainability for cities/towns, and are generally referred to as the *Aalborg Process for Local Sustainability*. The European Union (2008b) credits these efforts for introducing the *sustainable city* concept into the European policy realm.

The *Aalborg Charter* was an urban *environment* sustainability initiative, declaratory in nature, which was approved by participants at the first European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in Aalborg, Denmark, on May 27, 1994. The Charter was inspired by the Rio Earth Summit's Local Agenda 21 plan, and was developed to contribute to the European Union's Environmental Action Programme, 'Towards Sustainability'. In the *Aalborg Charter* (1994), European cities and towns are described as "centres of social life, carriers of our economies, and *guardians of culture, heritage and tradition*" (p. 1, emphasis added). Cities and towns are also viewed as "key players in the process of changing lifestyles, production, consumption and spatial patterns" (p. 1) – dimensions very closely related to cultural expression, activities, and related dynamics. However, when the Charter goes on to note local authorities' intentions "to integrate people's basic social needs as well as healthcare, employment and housing programmes with environmental protection … [and] work towards improving the quality of citizens' lifestyles …" (p. 3), there is no explicit mention of culture as an aspect of these "basic social needs".

Ten years after the release of the Charter, the *Aalborg Commitments* (2004) were developed at the 4th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns (Aalborg) to articulate "a common understanding of sustainability" and, consequently, "to develop a framework to be used at the local level that would better articulate how to embed sustainability across municipality sectors" (ESCP website). The Commitments comprise a list of 50 qualitative objectives organized into 10 themes and represent a more structured approach, requiring the signatory to comply with "time-bound milestones": "Each local government is asked to produce a baseline review within a year of signature, conduct a participatory target-setting process and arrive at a set of individual local targets addressing all 10 themes within two years, as well as committing to regular monitoring reviews" (ESCP website). The Commitments have about 700 signatories, with local authorities from Spain and Italy dominant and including some cities and towns from outside Europe (in Niger, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Senegal). The development of the Commitments was positioned in reference to Local Agenda 21 and a forthcoming EU Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment.

Within the *Aalborg Commitments,* culture is mentioned within two themes: (1) urban planning and design (no. 5) in reference to urban cultural heritage, and (2) social equity and justice (no. 9) in reference to equitable access to cultural activities:

- Planning and design (no. 5) – "We are committed to a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and *cultural* issues for the benefit of all."
- o Sub-item no. 4: "ensure appropriate conservation, renovation and use/re-use of our *urban cultural heritage*."[i]
- Social Equity and Justice (no. 9) – "We are committed to securing inclusive and supportive communities."
- o Sub-item no. 2: "ensure *equitable access* to public services, education, employment opportunities, training, information, and *cultural activities*." (*Aalborg Commitments* 2004, no page, emphases added).

In 2013, building on the 20 years of the Campaign, and recognizing the array of initiatives in relation to sustainable cities now in play, the *Movement of Sustainable Cities and Towns,* also referred to as "The European Sustainable Cities Movement," was launched. This new framework is rooted in four principles of "Sustainability DNA":

1. Holistic thinking – In light of the many environments to take account of in a city – "global, local, *cultural*, urban, rural, political and social … [the] necessary ingredients of our holistic environment" (ESCP website, emphasis added) – policy initiatives should span across multiple dimensions of the city with decisions made across sectors to further "the interests of the whole as defined at city level" and to "represent the city's vision in its entirety" rather than the advancement of one particular area (ESCP website);
2. Sustainability skills – The knowledge to make responsible choices and be knowledgable about consequences of choices, with regard to the interests of both current and future generations;
3. Partnerships – Among municipalities and across sectors; and
4. Research – Although focused largely on hard science and technology, the social sciences are seen to play an important role in providing "a better understanding of the social processes that cause people to change their behaviour for the good" (ESCP website).

In this framework, the cultural environment is explicitly viewed as one of the "necessary ingredients" within a holistically conceptualized city, and should be considered when making policy and decisions.

In closing, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, an additional player among the "city" voices, must also be mentioned. The Congress is a political "bridge," encouraging cities to take advantage of European programmes and funding opportunities, and expressing cities' perspectives and priorities to the EU. This political conduit complements the more operational focus of the Campaign/Movement.

2.2. National ministers with responsibilities for urban development: The urban agenda

An explicit "European consensus" on the principles of urban development, referred to as the *Acquis Urbain*, has emerged through an ongoing, intergovernmental process of more than two decades and the practical experiences gained through the projects financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) via the programmes Urban Pilot Projects (1989-1999) and URBAN and URBAN II Community Initiatives (1994-2006), and then mainstreamed in the ERDF programme. The political trail features a series of informal ministerial meetings on urban development (2000, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2010), which have "shaped common European objectives and principles for urban development" and helped to forge "a culture of cooperation on urban affairs" among member states and various European bodies as well as "urban stakeholders" through European organizations of cities (European Commission-Regional Policy, 2011, p. 7). The chief outcome of this process has been the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007), consequently linked to the objectives of Europe 2020 through the Toledo Declaration (2010), and the operationalization of the Leipzig Charter through the development of the Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (2011-2013).

Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007)

In the wake of the Aalborg Charter launched a few years earlier, the European Ministers responsible for urban development signed the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities on May 24, 2007. With this charter, the 27 member states, for the first time, "outlined an ideal model for the European Sustainable City and laid the foundations for an integrated urban policy" (RFSC website). The Leipzig Charter stated that to achieve the objective of sustainable cities, an integral approach to urban issues must be chosen, and that European structural funds should be made available for local projects that embrace this integral approach (European Union, 2007).

In the Leipzig Charter, the Ministers declare that:

all dimensions of sustainable development should be taken into account at the same time and with the same weight. These include economic prosperity, social balance and a healthy environment. At the same time attention should be paid to cultural and health aspects … [and to] the institutional capacity in the Member States. (European Union, 2007, p. 1)

European cities are described as possessing, among various dimensions, "unique cultural and architectural qualities" and functioning as "centres of knowledge", but also suffering from an array of social and environmental problems. The Charter argues that to fulfill their functions as "engines of social progress and economic growth" (cf. Lisbon Strategy), the social balance within and among them must be maintained, cultural diversity must be ensured, and high quality in the fields of urban design, architecture, and environment must be established.

In the Leipzig Charter, the concept of the *Baukultur* of a city's living environment is introduced into the European policy trajectory, understood in a broad sense as "the sum of all the cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological aspects influencing the quality and process of planning and construction" (p. 3). The Charter argues that this holistic approach should not be limited to public spaces, but is needed for the city as a whole and its surroundings. This approach was seen as "particularly important" in the context of the preservation of architectural heritage such as historical buildings, public spaces and their urban and architectural value.[ii]

Toledo Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development (2010)

In 2010, an informal meeting of Urban Development Ministers was held in Toledo, Spain, to discuss the topic of "integrated urban regeneration." The background reference document for the meeting, prepared by Spain, was structured using the "classical viewpoint of the multiple dimensions of sustainability (economic, social, environmental, cultural and governance)," indicating an elevation of the place of culture within sustainability. European cities and heritage are positioned as both *key elements* and *repositories* of "the rich and varied European history and culture" (European Union-Spain, 2010, p. 4). Within a section outlining "the key features of the integrated approach," the adoption of a holistic approach and thinking is primary; this involves considering the city as a whole, incorporating transversal or multidimensional approaches, and aligning different policy areas and resources across "all the multiple dimensions of sustainability— economic, social, *cultural* and environmental" (p. 5, emphasis added).

Despite this elevated inclusion of culture in the sustainability framework, the report has difficulty going beyond a focus on physical heritage and public space rehabilitation for the interactions of local residents. In a section entitled "From the urban planning, architectural and cultural viewpoints…," the report notes that preservation of "the historical and cultural heritage of the city, particularly its architectural heritage and the 'Baukultur'" is generally understood as necessary to keep alive "the collective memory that is characteristic of the European city model" (European Union-Spain, 2010, p. 4). The "inhabitability and attractiveness" of this physical heritage is also necessary to "keep it really alive" (p. 4). The report goes on to discuss topics of building rehabilitation and improvement of degraded public spaces to raise the attractiveness and local attachment to the urban environment and community (i.e., physical place and people). It then states that this process of rehabilitation and physical improvement will (somewhat miraculously) contribute to "cultural enrichment" and creating/recreating citizenship among local residents through fostering "the values of democracy, coexistence, exchange, civic progress, diversity, living together and freedom … key factors in the culture of the European city, which are expressed most effectively in the public realm" (p. 4). No mention is made of cultural creation and expression nor access to culture for citizens.

Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (2013)

In 2008, the European Ministers decided to build "a reference framework for the sustainable city, in a spirit of solidarity, for the application of the Leipzig Charter" (European Union, 2008a, p. 5). This free tool would promote and "translate into practice the common sustainability goals and the Leipzig Charter objectives" (RFSC website), and give cities a tool to help them reach "a European vision of 'integrated urban development'" (personal communication, C. Guichard, CEREMA, France, March 18, 2014; see also Nationale Stadt-Entwicklungspolitik, 2013).

Self-described as "a toolkit for the integrated approach," the Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities (RFSC) is designed for local authorities and "intended to offer guidance and support for improving decision-making and action on sustainability" (RFSC website). Acknowledging that each city has its own history, cultural identity, economic background, and specific issues, the Reference Framework is not designed to give a normative or prescriptive response, but to offer selected questions to be answered and indicators in order to make sure that every political dimension, including cultural ones, had been taken into account (personal communication, C. Guichard, March 18, 2014).

In the development process, workgroups studied more than 70 existing tools, methods, and reference frameworks from different cities and 12 of them were assessed in depth (RFSC website). As well real projects identified as "good practices" were examined. These analyses formed the basis for building the question grid and indicator list in the RFSC (personal communication, C. Guichard, March 18, 2014). The testing phase, with 60 cities, occurred in 2011, and the 'final' version of the tool was released in January 2013.

The RFSC is built around 25 core objectives derived from four pillars of sustainability: economic, social, environmental, and governance (RFSC website). The RFSC tool contains three main pathways of use:

1. *Develop your strategy/project* – The user picks from a list of "actions" (the core objectives and sub-objectives) that best suit local priorities (or additional actions/objectives can be created), indicates their level of commitment to each objective (on a three-level scale of: Initiation – Commitment – Maturity), and then can "check the relevance" of the chosen objectives. If some domains of sustainability are not addressed, the system advises the user that the strategy "is likely to be unbalanced regarding urban sustainability." The inclusion of cultural objectives within the suite of Core Objectives means this system analysis or reminder may lead some users to consider avenues to add cultural objectives or dimensions into projects that may not have been considered in the initial planning phases.

2. *Check the integrated approach* – the user lists the "priorities" of an 'integrated planning' initiative (using the same list of objectives), and ranks each by level of importance (Low – Medium – High). In this pathway, the system provides blank fields, tied to each Core Objective, to add the user's own comments. At the end, the system provides a 'results' analysis and plots the positioning of each of the selections on a circle graph with 22 axes, providing, at-a-glance, a visual representation of the balance and importance given to each selection, and a profile of the balanced (or unbalanced) nature of the overall project. As with the first pathway, a deficiency of attention to the cultural objectives and sub-objectives will result in a 'gap' in the resulting graph.

3. *Monitor progress* – This section of the tool suggests an array of indicators, linked to each Core Objective and each sub-objective, with the user's choice to select each or not. It is in this section that the conceptual ideas are translated into operational monitoring strategies.

The RFSC promises to shape the basis for sustainable development planning practice going forward, as a minimum of 5% of EU funding support is now earmarked for integrated sustainable urban development, with an expectation that the use of the RFSC will be integrated within this work (RFSC Conference, 2013).

Among the core objectives defining "a European vision of the sustainable city," culture is explicitly referenced in three ways: (1) as a social quality (cultural diversity), (2) as social activities, and (3) as a dimension of the built environment:

Objective 12 is "Promote cultural and leisure opportunities and ensure access for everyone", with four sub-objectives:

- Encourage and value cultural diversity
- Support and encourage cultural and artistic creation and exchange
- Ensure broad, affordable and equal access to culture for everyone
- Provide leisure and sports facilities

Objective 17 is "Preserve and promote the high quality and functionality of the built environment, public spaces and urban landscape," with two of four sub-objectives referencing heritage and architecture respectively:

- Identify, preserve and promote the existing heritage according to the local and cultural context
- Promote and enhance the architectural quality of urban landscapes, public spaces and the built environment

Linked to the cultural objectives, the RFSC system also provides an array of indicators to measure conditions and monitor change. The RFSC cultural indicators (from no. 185 to no. 196) were inspired by a number of sources, such as the Urban Audit data from Eurostat, the Global City Indicators Framework, and the U.K. Audit Commission, among many others (personal communication, C. Guichard, March 18, 2014). A full analysis of these indicators is ongoing, and is beyond the scope of this current paper.

2.3. The European Commission and sustainable urban development

Sustainable development is a fundamental principle of the European Union (EU) set out in the Treaty, and promoting sustainable urban development is a key element of European Cohesion Policy (RFSC website). The EU "territorial agenda," which ran parallel with urban policy processes, is also linked to urban development. From 2007, with the introduction of the EU Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter, the European Commission's growing attention to local planning has been noticeable (Campos, 2013). By 2011, territorial development was of much greater importance at the EU level, marked by the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020* (European Union, 2011). Looking forward, greater emphasis will be put on "place-basing of policy", including the coordination and integration of sectoral policies (Campos, 2013). The groundwork for this is reflected in the 2011 *Territorial Agenda*, the development of the RFSC, and other efforts to inform thinking around integrated planning and development.

In this context, two recent examples of European Commission initiatives are highlighted here to illustrate the nature of efforts that may provide pathways to link culture and sustainable urban development. In 2010, a major research initiative, "European Cities of Tomorrow," was undertaken to inform the development of policy for European cities, providing key strategic lines through which to envision and act on key issues for urban areas. From a more tactical perspective, a *Policy Handbook* was developed in 2012 to raise awareness and inform local, regional and national authorities on the potential of cultural and creative sectors in regional and local development, and to help them formulate integrated strategies for these areas.

Envisioning European cities of tomorrow

Organized by the European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy (Urban Development, Territorial Cohesion Unit), the "cities of tomorrow reflection process" brought together urban experts and representatives of European cities to think about the future of cities in Europe. Three workshops were organised in May, June, October, and December 2010, and written contributions were received in the form of issue papers or responses to expert consultations. The policy context for the exercise was to perform a SWOT analysis and to articulate the challenges and desired trajectories for cities in meeting the objectives of Europe 2020 strategy – smart, green and inclusive growth (European Commission-Regional Policy, 2011).

A European vision of "the cities of tomorrow" was set out as an integration of factors marking them as places of:

- Advanced social progress – e.g., where the elderly can participate in social and cultural life[iii];
- Democracy, cultural dialogue, and diversity – i.e., a diversity rooted in "culture, identity, history and heritage" incorporating "social diversity and different cultural expressions" (pp. 34, 36);
- Green, ecological, or environmental regeneration; and
- Attraction and engines of economic growth – bringing together "a high quality of *life*, high-quality *architecture* and high-quality functional user-oriented *urban space, infrastructure and services*, where *cultural*, economic, technological, social and ecological *aspects* are integrated in the planning and construction, …" (p. 11, emphasis added).[iv]

A subsequent vision of the *creative city* highlighted: "clearly visible" cultural activity produced by a rich and diverse array of both established and grassroots groups; the expressive ways in which "inhabitants 'live' their city"; creative use of public space; and an openness to the cultural diversity of newcomers, reflected in new social events and "in a constant political and cultural effort to weave links not only within communities, but also with the rest of the world" (p. 36). From an urban environment perspective, it also outlined how, within the creative city, culture is "mainstreamed into the provision of public services" such as distinct urban design and wayfinding signs and systems; urban infrastructure such as street furniture and street lighting; high visibility of public and community amenities and services in promotion spaces; and visualization of place-specific urban legends and stories by "statuettes, messages or signs on the asphalt" (p. 36). Altogether it presented an attractive and compelling vision, with some sense of integration, but not one that is readily recognizable as a core component of sustainable urban development.

Integrating culture in regional and local development

Between 2007 and 2013, the European Commission estimates that it invested more than 6 billion euros in cultural infrastructure, cultural heritage, and cultural services through the EU Culture and Structural Funds (European Commission – Culture and Regional Development website). The current challenge, it observes, is to "further integrate the cultural and creative sectors into regional and local development strategies" (EC-CRD website). Towards that end a *Policy Handbook* (2012) was developed to "better sensitize local, regional and national authorities on the potential of cultural and creative sectors in boosting regional and local development, and help them formulate integrated strategies for these sectors" (EC-CRD website).

The *Policy Handbook* notes that Cohesion funding (2014-2020) is concentrated on the objectives of Europe 2020, and the key challenge is how to further integrate cultural and creative sectors into "regional innovation strategies for smart specialization, which … will be an ex ante conditionality to access funds" (Working Group…, 2012, p. 19). Smart specialization is an innovation policy of the European Commission designed to boost regional innovation through identifying and building on (economic) strengths and "high-value added activities which offer the best chances of strengthening their competitiveness" (European Commission – Research and Innovation website).

In the *Handbook*, while an array of interesting recommendations for action is provided as suggestions for possible projects, few items refer to *sustainable development* or *sustainable cities.* However, *sustainable development* is listed as one of 12 policy areas with which cultural and creative industries have links. A discussion on cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and *environmental* sustainability is situated within the conceptualization of all landscapes (even degraded territories) as embodying environmental, cultural and other values that are worth valuing and preserving. Noting that the "specific intervention of CCIs on the environment can contribute decisively to its future preservation" (p. 53), two Spanish organizational case studies are presented[v] which use cultural approaches to exploring and understanding the relationship between art and nature/environment, providing spaces for debate and discussion and platforms for exhibitions, publishing, and other activities. While the examples are inspiring, the overall approach does not give much guidance to planners who are looking for strategies to integrate culture within sustainable city/region policies and plans.

3. Observations and reflections

This analysis has outlined the key messages and developments from three main groups of actors: European cities, national ministers for urban development in Europe, and the European Commission. From these sources, we observe three key points: (1) culture is recognized politically as an important dimension of local/urban/sustainable development; (2) there is a growing emphasis on integrated strategies for urban planning and development, involving holistic thinking, planning, and acting; and (3) broad planning frameworks to encourage or enable this integration are being built.

Within this policy context, three cultural dimensions are emphasized (but not consistently): (1) the built environment (i.e., heritage, architecture, and urban design of public spaces); (2) culture as social activities (in relation to creation, exchange, and access); and (3) culture as social quality (i.e., cultural diversity). Although

not detailed in this paper, an array of suggested indicators to monitor changes and impacts have also been put forward to support planning efforts and investments in these areas. However, in the middle of this picture we find a "black box" – the issue of *how* to integrate culture into sustainable urban development is not addressed, with operational pathways or methods not yet articulated to support this practice.

The issue of integrating culture into sustainable development requires both *conceptual* and *tactical or operational* support and capacity development. To advance in this direction, two types of city-level tensions must be addressed. The first source of tension relates to the availability or development of a knowledge base and skills training to support integrated approaches and practices that include culture in order to build capacity within local planning systems to take on this challenge. The second tension resides within planning systems that continue to support departmental or discipline-specific silos rather than integrated teams. Such "separations" must be viewed from two perspectives: On one side, is 'culture' invited to be part of broader (sustainable development) planning decisions? On the other side, can 'culture' see itself in these (sustainable development) planning contexts?

From a research perspective, two major gaps require attention and would inform this work. On the conceptual level, the cohesion of the multiple aspects of culture into an overall framework would be helpful in order to have a common starting point from which to consider the various dimensions and roles of culture in urban development. On the operational level, the issue of *how* to integrate cultural considerations into integrated planning for sustainable urban development should also be investigated. Previous research on topics such as 'heritage and historic centre planning' or 'cultural events and urban revitalization', not focused specifically on urban sustainability, should be revisited and might be adapted for this new urban development context. As well, local experiments of current practice should be examined in a context-sensitive and interdisciplinary manner, as they may illuminate possible pathways and contribute to the development of an array of 'bottom-up'-informed approaches to articulating, clarifying, and advancing this issue.

4. Postscript

In July 2014, related to the research presented here, I will launch *Culturalizing Sustainable Cities*, a research project that addresses the question: "How can artistic-cultural practices be embedded within the planning and development of more sustainable cities?" The overall aims of the project are: to inform the design of symbiotic *in situ* systems of practice to build more culturally and environmentally aware sustainable cities; to inform and advance the integration of culture within urban sustainability initiatives; and to outline bridges between public policies in the fields of culture, sustainability, and urban development. Within three strands of research activity, one dimension will examine policy/planning mechanisms integrating culture into sustainability policies/plans. The project is funded by FCT. The scope is international and aims to catalyze translocal learning through cooperation with a wide variety of organizations and international networks. For more information, please email me (duxbury@ces.uc.pt).

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[i] While this statement on *urban cultural heritage* implies physical/tangible heritage resources, this limitation is not explicit and could be extended to incorporate intangible elements.

[ii] The European Commission report *Cities of Tomorrow* notes that the German context for *Baukultur* also includes greater attention to citizen inclusion in planning processes (European Commission-Regional Policy, 2011).

[iii] The report puts forward a vision of a multi-generational metropolis, supported by public cultural centres that "develop experiences of the local and of the whole world with the participation of the community. They are places for learning, imagining and experimenting with new technologies. These centres will be public spaces in their openness, like a theatre or a cinema or a café, but private/public partnership in ownership, like cultural institutions" (p. 40).

[iv] This dimension also highlights the heritage and architectural value of historic buildings and public spaces in improving the urban landscape and scene, linked to the nurturing of places where "local residents identify themselves with the urban environment" (p. 11).

[v] The Beulas Foundation's Centro de Arte y Naturaleza, in Huesca, and the César Manrique Foundation, in Lanzarote, Las Palmas, Spain.