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**INTEGRANDO CULTURA EM COMUNIDADES SUSTENTÁVEIS: UMA ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA ENTRE
CANADÁ E EUROPA / INTEGRATING CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: COMPARING
CANADIAN AND EUROPEAN APPROACHES**

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Resumo

A comunicação pretende apresentar os primeiros resultados de um projecto dedicado à análise comparativa entre o Canadá e a Europa, denominado 'Culture in Sustainable Communities: Improving the Integration of Culture in Community Sustainability Policy and Planning in Canada and Europe' (financiado pelo Governo do Canadá, 2011-2012). Este projecto de investigação multidisciplinar integra as perspectivas das ciências políticas (governança e administração pública), política cultural e planeamento, património e sociologia. O projecto analisa as estratégias, as inovações e os desafios colocados na integração da cultura em iniciativas de planeamento local com especial atenção às iniciativas de desenvolvimento sustentável de comunidades. Busca igualmente a identificação de conceitos-chave, linhas de gestão e abordagens estratégicas que implementem sensibilidades e consciências culturais, enquadramentos holísticos de planeamento para comunidades sustentáveis, gestão territorial e desenvolvimento. As fontes de investigação consistiram em documentação especializada e em entrevistas baseadas em diversos tipos de questionários. A comunicação sintetiza os resultados globais deste estudo, tendo em consideração a situação portuguesa e os esforços realizados neste âmbito no Canadá e noutros países europeus.

Abstract

This presentation outlines key findings from a Canada-European comparative project 'Culture in Sustainable Communities: Improving the Integration of Culture in Community Sustainability Policy and Planning in Canada and Europe' (funded by Government of Canada, 2001-2012). This is a multidisciplinary research project, informed by political science (governance and public administration), cultural policy and planning, heritage, and sociology. The project explored the strategies, innovations, and challenges faced in integrating culture within broader planning initiatives at the local level, with a special focus on local sustainable community planning initiatives. It sought to identify key conceptual and policy pathways and strategic approaches that enable the development of culturally sensitive, holistic planning frameworks for community sustainability, territorial planning and development. The project mainly involved document analysis and interviews. This presentation presents the macro findings from this study and considers and reflects on the Portuguese situation in comparison with efforts in Canada and other European countries.

Palavras-chave: sustentabilidade, planeamento cultural, planeamento urbano, comunidades, governança
Keywords: sustainability, cultural planning, urban planning, communities, governance

Introduction

Despite the growing movement to think about sustainability in a more comprehensive and holistic manner (Bostöm, 2012) and the emergence of a four pillar approach or model of sustainability internationally (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012b), the inclusion of culture in sustainability plans, policies and programs continues to be fraught with conceptual and operational issues and challenges. Nonetheless, a variety of promising initiatives that incorporate cultural considerations in planning processes and sustainability discussions can be identified.

At a global level, United Cities and Local Governments is advocating for culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development in the Rio+20 negotiations and final document, which would provide an international platform to advance the recognition and inclusion of culture in sustainable development policies and practices (UCLG, 2012; Duxbury et al., 2012). At the local level, a multitude of regional and local initiatives promise to shed light on both the difficulties and possible pathways for including cultural considerations in community sustainability plans and actions.

Building on a critical examination of Canadian approaches to the adoption of the ‘four pillar’ model of community sustainability (comprising environment responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality) in Canada’s Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010, 2012a, in press), the project examined the multiple policy contexts and on-the-ground planning realities that influence local sustainability planning and actions, challenging or enabling the inclusion of cultural considerations within these initiatives.

The one-year project (2011-2012) enabled the research team to conduct 18 interviews in Ottawa and Vancouver, including representatives from national, provincial and local governments as well as organizations working with them to advance sustainability planning in communities (see Appendix A). This was complemented by a literature review of academic and non-academic resources related to topics of sustainability, cities, and culture; participant observation in culture and sustainability planning processes; small surveys of planners in Canada; other correspondence in Canada and Europe; and presentations in Canada and Europe that solicited feedback and discussion. This paper focuses on the preliminary research findings from the Canadian interviews and the literature review, and compares this material to European observations.

1. Canada’s Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs)

Canada is a constitutional monarchy and a federal state with a democratic parliament. It comprises ten provinces and three territories. Jurisdictional relationships are complex: provinces have responsibility for municipalities, which are considered ‘creatures of the provinces’ under the Canadian Constitution, but the federal (national) government has the power to intervene in ‘urban’ issues such as public transportation, housing and infrastructure (Gattinger, 2008).

In 2005, the federal government introduced Gas Tax Agreements with the provinces to share a portion of gasoline revenues, which were to be transferred to municipalities using a per capita formula. The 2005 federal budget provided \$5 billion in gas tax funds over five years, allocated on a per-capita basis to the provinces with targeted amounts for PEI and the three territories. The funding was to be spent on environmentally sustainable municipal infrastructure to achieve three outcomes: reduced greenhouse gas emissions, cleaner air, and cleaner water. Monetary transfers were conditional upon local preparation of ICSPs.

As defined in the Gas Tax Agreements, an ICSP is “a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members, for the community to realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity” (Canada-Alberta, 2005, no page; see also Infrastructure Canada, 2005-2006). The rationale for the ICSP initiative was to accelerate a shift in local planning and decision making toward a more long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieving

sustainable communities and to help communities plan and manage resources, achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address priorities within an integrated four-pillar framework.

Between 2006 and 2011, over a hundred ICSPs or similar reports were produced, with smaller communities being most responsive. Nonetheless, the role of culture continues to present conceptual difficulties and, operationally, an integrated approach to implementing plans is still a challenge.

2. Challenges in integrating the cultural pillar within the ICSPs

Integrated planning and the cultural pillar of sustainability were generally new to both provinces and municipalities. Several provinces and organizations developed guides to help municipalities prepare ICSPs. As of 2009, 17 guides had been developed by provincial municipal associations, municipal affairs ministries of provinces, and other organizations working in the area of sustainability planning (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012b).

A review of the inclusion of culture in these guides revealed that only about half defined *culture* and fewer than half mentioned key aspects or local contexts of culture (see Table 1). While most had a rationale for including culture in the ICSP (usually based on the four-pillar model), most failed to discuss the need to incorporate culture into vision statements or sustainability principles.

Table 1. Overview of inclusion of culture in ICSP guides (n=17)

<i>Conceptual aspects:</i>	
Definitions of culture	9
Key aspects/notable contexts of culture	6
Rationale for inclusion of culture	15
<i>Operational aspects:</i>	
Guidance on integration of culture	16
Key mechanisms for integrating culture	13

Source: Duxbury & Jeannotte (2012)

In a subsequent review of a selection of individual ICSPs across the country, conceptually, culture was most often linked to: (a) community identity, distinctiveness, attractiveness and ‘sense of place’; and/or (b) sociability, public participation, voluntarism and social networks. The consideration and integration of cultural aspects within a local sustainability planning context was new for all communities, and in some cases also represented the first attempts at any planning for culture. The general lack of direction on culture from the guides meant that the local cultural integration attempts reflect diverse bottom-up/grassroots processes and thinking about how culture should be fostered and sustained within particular communities (see examples in Table 2). However, an array of policy and implementation issues were observed when moving from high-level statements to concrete action plans.

Table 2. Examples of ICSP approaches

	City of Kingston	City of Williams Lake
Population (2006)	117,207	10,744
ICSP title and year	Sustainable Kingston (2010)	Imagine Our Future (2010)
General description	• Vision of Kingston - “Canada’s most sustainable city” • ICSP included guiding principles, themes, indicators and goals to help achieve vision • Organized under four separate pillars but recognized the need for integration	• ICSP used as basis of Official Community Plan “Creating Our Future!” (2011) • Identified 25-year objectives, key performance indicators, and five-year transition strategies for each priority area • Official Community Plan translated ICSP into specific goals and objectives over 5-10 years
Culture	• Cultural pillar includes four themes: arts, creativity and entertainment; history and heritage; active citizenship; and diversity • Cultural tourism is included separately under economic pillar	Identified 10 strategic priority areas including three relevant to cultural pillar: • Distinctive arts and culture • Partnering with First Nations • Lively downtown
Participation/Partnerships	• Extensive public consultation including a community sustainability charette, several “community conversations” and public open houses, and a sustainability summit. • Established community partnerships to help implement ICSP with an ongoing inventory of actions featured on <i>Sustainable Kingston</i> website	• Held over 50 events to elicit public participation, with about 1,200 people (over 10% of the population) providing input • Attempts to integrate arts community and First Nations as full partners in sustainability plans hampered by resource limitations and unsettled treaty negotiations

Sources: Sustainable Kingston (2010); Williams Lake (2010, 2011)

3. Changing contexts for ICSPs

A change in government in 2006, soon after the federal-provincial Gas Tax agreements were signed, resulted in the Gas Tax Transfers being made permanent in 2008. Although the federal-provincial agreements remained in force, this weakened the federal incentive for local governments to develop these plans within the five-year window. Also in 2008, the financial crisis resulted in federal withdrawal from active encouragement and funding of ICSPs. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) provided support for ICSP development under its Green Municipal Fund until 2011. The FCM now only supports sustainable neighbourhood action plansⁱ, community brownfield action plans, and greenhouse gas reduction plans.

Nonetheless, ICSPs seem to have taken on a life of their own beyond the original Gas Tax transfers (interview [N3]ⁱⁱ), with communities continuing to develop community sustainability plans and to integrate culture into these and other planning initiatives. However, we believe the 'ICSP period' (2005-2012) has essentially ended. Consequently, during the course of the research our gaze became more focused on what has changed because of this initiative, what will remain, and the impacts of this period on future local sustainability planning and related actions.

4. In addition to and around plans

5.1. Insights from literature

In the literature we analyzed, the dominance of the actual planning process is clear; much of the Canadian literature focused on the ICSPs but Local Agenda 21 plans were also mentioned. The literature included guides and practical tools for effective planning but also reflective pieces looking at different ways of examining the steps to completing a plan. But we also observed three other processes that complement planning and that were seen as effective ways of integrating the cultural pillar into broader planning processes:

- Developing a common vision and a common understanding before the planning process
- Governance practices – to enhance the planning process
- Public participation – to drive acceptance and adoption of the plan

Common vision. Several of the texts argued for the need for a common community vision and a common understanding of culture and the way it would be integrated into the planning process before starting planning. Broad-ranging community dialogue around common visions relevant to the particular characteristics of the community can help to set the general directions for the plan in ways that will facilitate the integration of culture.

For the most part the literature that dealt specifically with the building of a common vision linked this question to the leadership needed to develop the common vision. Interesting debates were outlined with different perspectives about which type of leader was the most successful: elected officials, a private sector business leader, a community leader, someone from the cultural sector.

Governance practices. The second process that was highlighted in the texts was that of governance, of building multiple forms of partnership to enhance the likelihood that the plan will be able to build a coalition supporting a common vision around the inclusion of culture. First of all, there were multiple examples of trying to build partnerships across departments at the local level. This is one of the areas in which the literature review and the interviews correspond closely, both underlining the ways in which planning departments had built horizontal partnerships within the local government. The next set of governance arrangements was once again horizontal but this time between the organizations of civil society and the local government. Some of these were with organizations in the cultural sector, others more broadly with the health and social sectors. The third area of governance arrangements was the vertical intergovernmental partnerships built across multilevel political structures. The texts looked at successful practices and challenges of establishing, maintaining and enhancing governance partnerships.

Public participation. Our final category of processes seen to enhance the planning process is that of public participation. The texts tended to be of two types. The more theoretical texts saw public participation as a bottom-up citizen commitment to a holistic vision of society which promoted public understanding and municipal adoption of the plan. The second type of document dealt with concrete examples of public participation and many of these took the form of tools for planners to enable them to organize and structure public participation. These tended to be more top-down than bottom-up, illustrating the complexities and ambiguities of public participation. The greater number of top-down illustrations is also, we feel, an indication of the limited amount of research being done on practice.

5.2. Insights from interviews

The project included 18 interviews with representatives from local, provincial, and federal governments. This section reports insights on two aspects: (1) overarching policy contexts that may influence local efforts to integrate culture into sustainability planning and action, and (2) local planning realities and challenges in integrating culture into broader planning. These dimensions reveal the contextual and on-the-ground influences that enable or constrain the inclusion of culture within broader community sustainability planning.

5.2.1. Overarching policy contexts: National policy

Among the federal government interviews, three tendencies characterized the operating atmosphere influencing departments' ability to engage with sustainability as a framework for culture:

1. The Federal Sustainable Development Act, which gives rise to departmental Sustainable Development Strategies, focuses on 'greening' internal operations, reinforcing the 'sustainable development = environment only' mindset within government thinking, policy, and programs (interview [F3]).ⁱⁱⁱ
2. Economic development is the guiding motivation at the moment. In the context of financial crisis, the Economic Action Plan funds projects based on economic development and creation of jobs, not sustainability. Consequently, cultural funding requests are couched mainly in economic terms, with ICSPs or the holistic language of community sustainability rarely referenced, and thus having little role in federal cultural funding decisions (interview [F4]).
3. There is pressure to show short-term results (while sustainability outcomes are long-term and hard to measure) and "to tell a better outputs story" with emphasis on short-term measurable impacts (interview [F3]). This translates into programs that prioritize pilot projects over continuity of cultural initiatives, that do not allow enough time for projects to show meaningful medium- and longer-term results, and that tend to discourage innovative funding partnerships (interview [M7]).

All three tendencies work against holistic, multidimensional considerations of sustainability and long-term planning and decision-making. Nonetheless, we found a few promising initiatives underway at the federal level.

Sustainable development of Aboriginal communities. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (DAAND) recently began working on a Community Sustainability Framework that includes culture. This inclusion reflects three underlying dimensions: (1) the inherent cultural diversity among aboriginal communities and groups, and the desire to maintain separate and distinct identities; (2) streamlining and potentially integrating the current requirement for local communities to develop separate reports for 70 different policy centres within DAAND; and (3) the need for DAAND to learn from communities where culture is at the heart of their sustainability plans and where understanding and restoring their culture is allowing them to move away from dependency and beyond the trauma inflicted by the residential school era^{iv} (interviews [F1] and [N4]). In developing the Community Sustainability Framework, discussions with communities across the country reconfirmed that cultural considerations, such as language, the role of elders, traditional knowledge, and family structures, are interconnected (i.e., they are not viewed as 'separate' in the European sense) (interview [F1]). This provides a distinct and intrinsically interconnected basis for thinking about and acting towards holistic community sustainability.

Culture. In recent years, the Department of Canadian Heritage has also tried to put more emphasis on communities – promoting access to the arts at the community level and becoming more informed about how Canadians consume culture (interview [F4]). The Canada Council for the Arts is similarly putting emphasis on access to the arts in communities and on better understanding the "arts ecology" of various disciplines and the broader array of systems and supports necessary for cultural vitality (interview [F2]). This broadened perspective appears to signal an appreciation for more holistic approaches, although not always reflected in policy and practice. Bilateral explorations between arts and other sectors, such as arts and health, education, and environmental agendas (interview [F4]) may be a first step towards more integrated understanding of the

role of the arts in other sectors of society, but are less holistic than the ideal that integrated planning approaches promise.

Infrastructure. Cultural infrastructure is eligible for funding through Infrastructure Canada's funding programs. Since provinces and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over municipal affairs, the development of municipal ICSPs is a commitment made by the provinces/territories when they signed GTF agreements. The provinces/territories must report to the Government of Canada on the progress made in developing these ICSPs (interview [F5]). Due to a delay in receiving this input, we are still in the process of following up with Infrastructure Canada regarding the status and content of progress reports received.

5.2.2. Overarching policy contexts: Provincial policy – Province of Quebec

The Quebec Ministry for Culture, Communications and Women's Issues (MCCCF) has spearheaded a provincial policy initiative to put "culture at the heart of our sustainable development." The Agenda 21 for Culture was adopted by Quebec as a blueprint because it recognizes cultural diversity and is concerned that culture becomes part of environmental, economic, and social development (interview [N1]). The initiative is a means of ensuring that culture is better integrated into all Quebec policies in a way that promotes the sustainability of Quebec society (interview [P1]). *Loisur le développement durable*, MCCCF's initial action plan, was approved in 2006, covering the period 2006-2013, and comprises 15 actions including the development of a new framework for municipal cultural plans that incorporates sustainable development. In December 2011, *Agenda 21 de la culture du Québec* was released with seven of its 21 objectives relating to local and regional planning and development.

5.2.3. Local planning realities

While acknowledging a wide diversity of situations within communities of all sizes, the size and growth profile of communities influenced the nature of planning initiatives, discussions about community sustainability, and how cultural considerations were taken up in these broader planning contexts.

Small, rural communities. Small, rural communities facing declining populations and the challenge of "devitalization" (interview [N1]), tend to view revitalization as tied to employment and to a re-assertion of pride in identity. Although sustainability planning tends to be largely about maintaining population and the local economy (interview [N4]), discussions about culture and sustainability centre on the continuation of their way of life, with culture broadly defined. Two key areas of culture-nature interconnections within local integrated sustainability plans are heritage and local food production. Heritage protection is key in community attempts to assert its identity.

Small communities face a challenge to include small volunteer-staffed non-profit cultural organizations in planning processes and, if they are consulted, to ensure that this is done in an effective manner (interview [N4]). As well, now that many small communities have completed an ICSP, they are uncertain about the 'next steps'. Longer-term commitments to continued resourcing will be required because many of these plans have time horizons that stretch far into the future, but it is unclear whether any support will be available (interview [N4]).

Cities. Key conceptual challenges to integrating culture into sustainability discussions and planning are: limited understanding of culture's role in liveable communities or in sustainability; difficulties in distinguishing between 'cultural sustainability' and 'culture's role in sustainability'; and limited understanding about how sustainability planning might relate and contribute to cultural life and a sense of place (interviews [M5], [M6], [M4], and [N4]). Some leading municipal practices focus on identities and cultural diversity, including considerations of values, inclusivity, and representation. Nonetheless, the variety of ways of conceptualizing culture, as well as its fluid and dynamic characteristics, continue to challenge more traditional planning practices.

We found that working across organizational lines in the city is common for cultural staff, but integration in planning is difficult. While there is growing *recognition* of the need for integrated city planning, action is not always forthcoming as it is easier to fall back into planning silos (many interviews). Further, sustainability offices usually focus solely on environmental conditions and may dismiss more holistic views on

sustainability. Cross-departmental collaboration requires ongoing efforts, with cultural planners proactively making connections, ‘inviting themselves’ to internal multi-departmental meetings and projects, and continually scanning for opportunities internally and externally. We found that while impressive plans may be developed, their actual implementation is highly subject to political change and available resources.

Interviewees also discussed good practices in integrating culture within sustainability plans and programs. Some cities are developing spaces and opportunities for sharing traditions cross-culturally. Others are recognizing community pioneers. Environmental arts practices are also a fruitful way of making the linkages tangible, enabled by artist residencies in parks and heritage restorations. Festivals related to local environment and history also encourage culture-sustainability linkages. Although there is limited funding, some cities are making space for innovative non-commercial practices that may drive change towards a more sustainable future.

5. Comparisons with Europe

The primary focus of the study, in line with the purpose of the research funding, was on investigating and synthesizing Canadian approaches and case studies. These findings were then used to inform a comparative analysis with European situations. We began with an examination of the prevailing messages regarding culture that are embedded in European sustainable development approaches, guides, and related resources.^v This section highlights some preliminary comparisons.

European cities as cultural projects. In literature on sustainable development and cities, European cities are identified as cultural projects in themselves, tightly linked to national and regional identities and historic city roles and traditions. Culture is there, implicitly, and typically embedded in discourses on heritage.^{vi} However, branding imperatives and inter-city competitiveness also propel contemporary ‘creative city’ developments and consequent changes in ways of life. Flagship projects based on enhancing or aggregating several dispersed museum collections; festivals of arts, music, theater, cinema, and literature; and international fairs of cultural products like books, gastronomy, and antiquities are used to associate a city with a cultural project and have helped several cities to be ‘put in the map’ or to change their ranking in the ‘European Cultural Map/List’. The creation of annual events like the Long Night of Museums (in 1997) or the ICOMOS Day of Monuments have helped anchor citizens to each city network of museums and to their own historic centres. However, sometimes cultural considerations are not ‘grounded’, and do not have a connection with the daily life of residents. Documents regarding urban renewal and the development of ‘new’ neighbourhoods/districts, as well as European Union guidelines for urban development, reflect these conflicting dynamics. In reality, practices can be very different from idealistic visions reflected in these documents. The challenges inherent in translating visions and policies to practices are visible even in some World Heritage-listed historic centres. In comparison, while heritage also holds importance in sustainability planning in Canadian cities, cities in themselves are not typically viewed as ‘cultural projects’ and the level of support for heritage projects is not as developed.

Sustainability. Europe seems to be ahead of Canada on environmental (green) practices, reflective of the political and monetary support allocated by the EU to environmental infrastructures and systems. Significant EU investment programs for urban interventions aimed at environmental improvement and green sustainability have ‘eclipsed’ cultural considerations and heritage preservation due to the considerable imbalance between the budget allocated to those programs and the national/local budget allocated for culture (in countries such as Portugal) (Mateus, 2011). Integrated sustainability discussions in Europe seem to occur within the rubric of ‘sense of place’ and identity rather than within discourses on ‘holistic sustainability’. Canadian emphasis on community ‘liveability’ also sometimes supplants references to sustainability (interview [M8]). In both Canada and Europe, holistic considerations of sustainability are often more pronounced in smaller communities in moments of ‘crisis.’

Cultural criteria. Cultural criteria are included in the literature on urban renewal/regeneration in Europe through conceptual linkages between heritage conservation, preservation, integration of cultural facilities in citizens’ daily life, and sustainability. On the other hand, a prevailing change of discourse from

‘conservation/preservation’ to ‘rehabilitation’ is creating a situation where the focus is shifting from ‘cultural value’ to ‘function’ as the main criterion of urban renewal decision making.

Cultural indicators depend on the definition of culture used and also the type of planning. In the literature, we can find cases where the evaluation of the cultural cohesion of a community is important. In other cases, cultural criteria are used to evaluate cultural creativity and cultural facilities or the level of heritage preservation. Very often these criteria are used to measure the impact of other urban programs focused on social or environmental sustainability. In general, cultural criteria are diffusely present but very often not clearly mentioned or outlined. Dominant cultural criteria in European urban policies can only be found at the level of a protected and well-defined heritage site or neighbourhood. In Canada, sustainability planning processes tend to lack cultural indicators, which makes reporting and follow-up difficult. Nonetheless, some communities are developing multidimensional checklists (including cultural elements) to guide development, which may be a base for future indicator development.

A further complicating factor is that culture is typically very much associated with cultural infrastructure or facilities. In Europe, there tends to be a divide between the somewhat autonomous worlds of technical/urban planning and architecture and culture/art history/cultural management with limited integration in practices of planning and operational management. In Canada, infrastructure also forms a key element of public discussions about culture, although in some places there is a backing away from the ‘bigger is better’ mentality.

Participation/inputs. In both Europe and Canada, planners are placing greater attention on increasing the amount and substance of public participation; on balancing complementary knowledge inputs from well-informed ‘experts’/professionals and from ‘people who live in a place every day’; and on informing residents/public beforehand so they can knowledgeably participate in public decision-making and planning processes. Ongoing challenges are evident in integrating public participation and expert-made policies in both areas.

The meaningful inclusion of cultural considerations in this process partly depends on who is involved in policy-making processes. The involvement of ‘cultural sector’ actors is needed, but not sufficient (Hájek et al., 2011). In including culture as part of participatory sustainability planning, the community as a whole must be involved in thinking about culture, and the ‘cultural actors’ must think about the broader community. However, cultural actors are also viewed as ‘cultural experts’ and thus encouraged to focus primarily or solely on cultural matters (Jeannotte & Duxbury, in press).

Policy to action. In Europe, policy pronouncements on cultural heritage tend to be strongly articulated, but can often be undermined by lack of enforcement of legal or regulatory powers. The redevelopment of historic districts can be influenced by the application of regulations that favour function over historic integrity, coupled with the ‘non-action’ of the heritage regulation-enforcing agencies. In Canada, the main barrier in translating policy into action appears to be the tendency to put plans ‘on the shelf’ or to postpone action on cultural priorities until after ‘harder’ sustainability initiatives, such as water treatment systems, are implemented. Regulatory conflicts sometimes also skew cultural investments, especially in circumstances where communities are growing rapidly and priority is being given to development, rather than redevelopment.

City-regions and neighbourhoods. While regions may be an appropriate scale for many sustainability initiatives, especially in rural areas (interview [N4]), we have observed an increasing emphasis on the neighbourhood as the site of intervention in city-regions. This may be a reaction to the complexity of many city-regions, both in Canada and Europe. Daily life is inherently imbedded in locality, which may have fostered a turn toward the local as the most meaningful venue for sustainability planning. However, neither the city-region nor the neighbourhood has a clear governance structure, forcing interventions to be made using governing instruments of a more complex or ambiguous nature to achieve sustainability goals. As one of the Canadian interviewees noted, service delivery mechanisms are not geared to the neighbourhood level, making it hard to “connect dollars with initiatives” (interview [M3]). In some European cities, government

cutbacks in recent years have eliminated neighbourhood-based offices and regulatory and other services previously available.

6. Conclusions

7.1. Absences and gaps

Research gaps and conceptual challenges. A continuing gap in Canada, expressed by many interviewees and also evident in the literature, is the limited research evidence on the role culture plays in sustainability. Interviewees at all government levels also wished to see better communication of the research evidence that does exist to address lack of understanding and clarity on this topic. A similar ‘lack of clarity’ about the role culture plays in sustainability also exists in Europe, in part due to the embryonic and emergent character of this multidisciplinary area of research, characterized by diverse research perspectives and narrative threads. Mapping the state of the art to address this issue is the mandate of COST Action IS1007: Investigating Cultural Sustainability, though this is just a beginning point towards developing more integrated research and policy-relevant knowledge on this topic.

Policy leadership. In Canada, senior levels of government, both federal and provincial (outside of Quebec), appear to have backed away from the longer-term vision and leadership that characterized the early years of the ICSP initiative. While some federal officials are actively listening and responding to communities, from a cultural policy perspective, incentives are lacking at the federal program level to ensure that sustainability requirements are met. More broadly, the lack of federal and provincial funding for continued sustainability planning at the local level serves to discourage and limit the potential benefits of viewing community sustainability in a holistic manner.

In Europe, initiatives to incorporate culture into local sustainability planning and development are largely bottom-up, local initiatives, in many cases informed by United Cities and Local Government’s Agenda 21 for Culture. However, the European cities of the UCLG Culture Committee that have proactively taken up A21C are largely from France and southern Europe, indicating that developing a stronger resonance with other traditions of city-planning and cultures still requires work. Cross-European leadership will most likely arise from the European Union or the Council of Europe.

Local capacity challenges. At the local level in Canada, continuing capacity limitations mean that even communities with ICSPs may not be able to achieve the vision and goals set out in those plans. We are especially concerned about the lack of resources to move from including culture in policy statements and planning documents to actions on cultural goals. High expectations are often created by sustainability plans, but disillusionment can follow if these expectations are not at least partially fulfilled. Another potential problem that may arise in the shift to neighbourhood sustainability planning is that service delivery mechanisms are not usually geared to the neighbourhood level. Integrated planning seems most present during development projects or new neighbourhood development, but not usually a part of ‘normal’ operations. More research on the place of culture in broader city planning in European cities is required.

7.2. Impacts and advances

In Canada, we have observed two areas where we believe the ICSP initiative has had an impact:

Neighbourhood planning – ‘the new frontier’. Many communities are now accessing the FCM’s Green Fund to encourage neighbourhood sustainability planning (interview [N3]). This movement ‘downward’ may simply be the result of a shift in the availability of funding, but it may also reflect the necessity of working from the ‘bottom-up’ when doing sustainability planning and developing programs that impact daily living. The most successful ICSPs and Agenda 21 for Culture consultations appear to have been those that involved citizens at all stages of the planning process.

A new discourse of sustainability. ICSPs have shifted the discourse on sustainability in Canada in a number of ways. For example, federal cultural organizations, such as the Canada Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage, are becoming more interested in community-level cultural development. We have also

found evidence that planners are adopting a more holistic approach to sustainability and viewing themselves as ‘connectors’ among the various stakeholders.

The extensive grassroots participation efforts that accompanied the development of the ICSPs, the creation of long-term visions and (at least in part) *integrated* approaches to local community planning, and the inclusion of cultural considerations within a more holistic vision of the community and its future sustainability should influence the communities’ planning approaches going forward. While environmental aspects are primary, broader considerations of social, economic, and cultural sustainability are increasingly being incorporated.

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Appendix A. Interviews

Interviews were held with representatives of the following organizations and government departments:

Federal:

[F1] Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada – Sustainable Communities Directorate, Sustainable Development Division, Ottawa, ON (19.10.2011)

[F2] Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, ON (14.10.2011)

[F3] Department of Canadian Heritage, Gatineau, QC (13.10.2011)

[F4] Department of Canadian Heritage, Gatineau, QC (20.10.2011)

[F5] Infrastructure Canada (*written responses to interview questions, received 23.05.2012*)

Provincial:

[P1] Province of Quebec, Agenda 21 for Culture, QC (12.10.2011)

Municipal:

[M1] 'Choosing our Future' Capital Region initiative, City of Ottawa (7.03.2012) (multiple municipalities and regional agencies were involved in the initiative)

[M2] Cultural Services, City of Ottawa, ON (18.10.2011)

[M3] Sustainability Practice and Neighbourhood Liveability, Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability, City of Ottawa, ON (20.10.2011)

[M4] (City and District of) North Vancouver Arts Office, BC (17.01.2012)

[M5] City of Richmond, BC (13.01.2012)

[M6] City of Surrey, BC (16.01.2012)

[M7] Arts, Culture and Environment Division, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, BC (18.01.2012)

[M8] Cultural Services, City of Vancouver, BC (19.01.2012)

NGOs:

[N1] Conseil Régionale de la Culture de l'Outaouais, QC (12.10.2011)

[N2] Culture Montreal, Montreal, QC (21.10.2011)

[N3] Natural Step Canada, Ottawa, ON (02.11.2011)

ⁱ A sustainable neighbourhood action plan builds upon an existing municipal sustainable community plan or strategy, such as an integrated community sustainability plan, Local Agenda 21 plan, or official municipal plan. To be eligible for GMF funding, a sustainable neighbourhood action plan must include: (a) a vision, and environmental, social and economic goals and targets; and (b) actions to achieve the goals and targets in all areas of municipal activity, including energy, waste and water management, sustainable transportation, land use, and brownfield remediation (FCM, 2012). Notably, there are no references to cultural dimensions of sustainability.

ⁱⁱ Details of interviews are listed in Appendix A.

ⁱⁱⁱ This narrow focus corresponds with the popular perception that sustainable development equals only environmental protection, which was seen as the biggest barrier to implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture in Quebec (interview [P1]).

^{iv} For more information about the residential school era in Canada, see the websites of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (<http://www.trc.ca>) and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (<http://www.ahf.ca>).

^v In addition to the literature review, case studies of some European cities and regions were initiated, and this work continues. We intend to expand the number and geographic coverage of these cases in future.

^{vi} Annual programs to sustain heritage buildings and neighbourhoods began with EU pilot projects in the 1990s and are now a common practice in many cities through the creation of neighbourhood technical support offices for conservation and rehabilitation of private housing projects.