

## EXPLORING CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Culture as an aspect in sustainable development is increasingly emerging both in academic discourses and policies, but still searching for its place. This paper analyses the essence of culture in sustainable rural development basing on the results of a multidisciplinary PhD research Programme, KULKEMA (2007-2010). The project focused on culture in rural sustainable development in Finland based on nine case studies examining culture in the contexts of rural livelihoods, services, representations, communities and nature. Our analysis revealed that culture has many intrinsic values, which need to sustain in rural development in addition to instrumental values for achieving ecological, economic and social goals of sustainability. We were also able to identify four discourses: continuity, locality, diversity and rights and responsibilities, which frame the sustainable rural development and which need to be carefully considered by policies and further studies on sustainable rural development.

### 1. Introduction

Ever since its introduction, “Sustainable Development” has been part of scientific and political discourse of the rural development. Sustainable rural development has been considered even as a new paradigm (Marsden & Murdoch 2006). The academic research has concerned various dimensions of sustainability, in particular ecological and social sustainability for example related to rural livelihoods (Sonnino et al. 2008; Buttel 2006; Marsden 2006; Järvelä et al. 2005; Carney et al. 1998); landscape (Antrop 2005) and social inclusion (Leeuwis 2000), as well as various assessments of rural sustainability (Hardi & Zdan 1997; Knickel et al. 2008) both in developed and developing countries. Sustainable development has also become a key phrase in the various levels of rural policy. For example, in the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (EC 1698/2005) sustainability is included in all the axis of the policy measures. Yet, despite of its popularity, sustainability in rural development is seldom critically discussed. Rather it is considered as a normative objective of development within a certain research context or policy activity.

Sustainable development is usually considered to be composed of ecological, economic and social pillars, which were established by the Environment and Development Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992. There is a growing interest to consider culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development, not only as combined with social dimension, as it has often been the case (Chiu 2004). Culture as a fourth pillar of sustainability is discussed, for example, in various workshops and documents related to the Rio +20 Summit. There have also been some attempts to place culture in sustainable development framework (Nurse 2006; Chiu 2004, Duxbury & Gillette 2007; Agenda 21 for Culture 2009; Reisch 2005/2006). However, until now there is a wide range of ways to define and approach culture in sustainable development and it can be assumed that a real debate on this topic is only emerging (Soini & Birkeland 2012).

In the rural research culture has been a relatively neglected topic (Bell & Janke 2007). It has usually treated as a way of life or context of studied phenomena, only seldom as a topic of its own. There are some researches, which have focused on certain forms of rural culture, for example on culture of rural youth (Haartsen & Strijike 2010), creative industries and rural cultural economy (Bell & Janke 2010), cultures of marginalisation (Bryant et. al. 2011) or meaning of cultural capital for environmentally sound agricultural practices (Burton & Paragahawewa 2011). European Academy for Sustainable Rural Development has discussed on issues of preservation of culture, mobilising cultural agents, contribution of culture in the local economic development and cultural planning (Euracademy 2007). However, explicit role and meaning of culture in (sustainable) rural development is largely ignored, and considering the multiple roles culture has in any development, culture has not received the attention it would deserve in rural development.

Similar to many other countries the rural Finland is currently under an age of transition (Järvelä et al. 2005; Hyyryläinen & Rannikko 2000). Agriculture, forestry and small scale industry have been the main pillars of the rural areas for centuries and they have had large-scale implications for rural communities and way of life as well as rural landscape (Holmila 2000). In particular during the past decades globalization and modernization of life have dramatically challenged the conditions of rural livelihoods in Finland with a rapid decrease in the employment of the primary production and traditional livelihoods. On the other hand, new forms of livelihoods based on the rural resources and know-how, such as nature-related tourism, services for the part-time housing, bioenergy production and high-technology have started to emerge. Besides changes in livelihood systems, the ongoing reconstruction of municipality structures will change the structures of social and cultural services. Rural Finland has faced dramatic changes many times during its history (Katajamäki 1999). However, the current transition is devastating compared with the previous ones, because of the rate of change and the way the changes challenge the traditional livelihoods, values, citizens' rights and well-being. Moreover, through the global economy and cultural mobility, rural areas face new values and ways of life, which might become differentiated and polarized between the generations and various social groups. Against this background the question of culture in sustainable rural development in Finland is most relevant with a reference to other rural areas facing the same trends across the globe.

The multidisciplinary PhD programme "Cultural sustainability of Rural Areas", KULKEMA (2007-2010) examined role and meaning of culture in sustainable development in rural Finland through empirical case studies. In this paper we will analyse and discuss the main results of this project and answer the following questions: How is culture understood in the rural space? What is the role of culture in the sustainable rural development? How can culture be placed in sustainable development framework? In other words, this paper seeks to find means to approach culture in sustainable rural development by multidisciplinary approaches. First, we will analyse, how "culture" and "sustainable development" and "rural" are conceptualized in general terms. After that we will introduce our empirical cases and the main results of the project. Finally, we introduce and discuss two ways to place culture in sustainable development based on the results of the project.

## **2. Conceptualizing culture and sustainable development**

A fundamental issue concerning our research questions is how "culture", "development" and "sustainability" are interrelated in the rural context. This question becomes extremely problematic due to the multidisciplinary, contested and vague character of all these concepts, which are, furthermore, more or less normative.

To start with the concept of *culture*, it is a difficult concept, as widely accepted: it is utterly familiar, but in academic research hard to treat. Understanding of "culture" has varied over time and

across languages, and a number of different definitions have been given (Williams 1985). However, following Williams (ibid.) two main understandings of culture are usually discerned: Culture as a way of life or as network of meanings (“broad definition”) and culture as arts and high culture (“narrow definition”). Depending on the definition or approach applied relevant policy measures for social and cultural policy (Pirnes 2008; Kangas 2004, 29-31 ) and sustainable development need to be determined (Duxbury and Gillette 2007; Agenda for Culture 21).

In the era of modernization *development* was mainly considered as economic growth with quantitative measures (Jacobs 1999). At present, it is rather considered as a qualitative change increasing human well-being: development is a social process that enhances the freedom of the people to pursue whatever they have reason to value. This way of understanding concerns the very basic choices of developmental goals, which vary from case to case and area to area and which are always under constant discussion. Therefore questions, who is the subject of the development and who has power to define the development goals, become critical.

Then, there is a question of the relationship between the culture and development. Culture can be seen as *means* (Heiskanen 1999; Throsby 2001; Sen 2008) or *as a constituent part of* the development (de Bustos 2008; Sen 2008; Throsby 2001; 2008; Heiskanen 1999; UNESCO 1995). Culture *as means to* (or as an instrument) development has been supported in particular by theories of modernization and neoliberalism. Many searchers have pointed out drawbacks of instrumental use of culture in development (Dorsey et al. 2004; Siivonen 2008) arguing that when culture is taken as a bull-van for economic development, questions related to the authenticity of culture and cultural rights of the people, whom the development concerns are often undermined.

*Culture as development* has received less attention probably due to the difficulties to explicitly discern the role of culture in development. However, culture as development is highly relevant in particular for sustainable development, because in the broadest sense the achievement of goals of sustainability depends on cultural development (Ehrenfeld 2008). Here the focus turns from instrumental values to the *intrinsic values* of culture, i.e. on the values, which cannot be determined by any other values. In other words, the value of culture is based on its characteristics, not on what it can afford for something else (Moore 1996). Intrinsic values of Nature have been discussed by the environmental philosophy (Pietarinen 2000); whether nature has intrinsic values and how then can be revealed. Intrinsic values within cultural context have been discussed in particular in connection with multiculturalism (Cox 2004). In this context intrinsic values of culture are understood as individual autonomy and self-determination. In any case, the distinction of instrumental and intrinsic value is a controversial issue, and many scholars seem to admit that within a value system an issue can have both intrinsic and instrumental value (Niiniluoto 2000).

A further challenge for exploring culture in sustainable rural development is brought by the concept of sustainable development itself. Sustainable development is defined by the report of Brundtland Commission as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). In short sustainable development refers to the needs of the people, which are considered to be ecologically dependent and which should be shared equally between generations and within generations (Earth Council 1994). Sustainable development is an oxymoron (Redclift 2005): to “sustain” refers to capability to bear, but development refers to change. Another difficult question related to sustainable development - concerning also our research - is, what the needs that should sustain and what the conditions for sustainable change are. Ehrenfeld (2008, 5-6) argues that it is also important to make a difference between sustainable development and sustainability, which are often used as synonyms. According to him, *sustainable development* is fundamentally a tool that suggests new means but still old ends,

because development remains at the core of this concept. *Sustainability*, instead, refers to the possibility that human and other life will flourish on the planet forever: Rather than a goal, sustainability is an outcome of the way we choose to live our lives (ibid).

*Culture and sustainable development* was recognised as a topic during the UNESCO Decade of Culture and Development (1988-1998). For example, in the forwords of *Our Creative Diversity*, which is the main report of the Decade published by UNESCO Commission on Culture and Development it stands: “[Each Member of the Commission recognised] that culture is a central variable in explaining different patterns of change and an essential determinant, if not the essence itself, of sustainable development, since attitudes and life-styles govern the ways we manage all our non-renewable resources” (UNESCO 1995). However, in this report – as well as in the other reports and conventions followed by the Decade – the promotion, conservation and preservation of cultural diversity seemed to be the most dominant issue related to sustainable development. In the academic research there is a growing interest in the essence of culture in sustainable development, but until now, the theoretical understanding of this topic is only started to evolve. As an indication of this, there are multiple ways to understand cultural sustainability (Soini & Birkeland 2012). However, two main approaches to treat culture in sustainable development can be distinguished: culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development parallel to social, economic, and ecological; or culture in the heart of sustainability, as a prism, through which sustainability should be viewed.

Our research concerns sustainability in rural development. The concept of rural is also under a constant debate (Cloke 2006; Bell 2007). Territorial approach for “rurality” is related to the physical and functional characters of rural areas and setting “rural” and “rurality” as opposite for urban. In particular the Anglo-Saxon research considers rurality as a social construction. Here the meaning of the term is floating, changeable and contextual and the key question is, how we come to perceive ‘the rural’ in a certain way. British geographer Keith Halfacree has introduced “a third approach” for rurality by applying Lefebvre’s architecture, the theory of social production of space, in the rural context (Halfacree 2006). He divides socially constructed rural space between the experienced space (space of representations) and space produced by the experts and policy (representations of space).

As shown above, exploring culture in sustainable rural development is more than a challenging task due to the multiple and normative character of the key concepts. Our project can be characterized as inductive study seeking to build up understanding of culture in sustainable rural development through multidisciplinary empirical case studies: Being aware of these diverse conceptualizations, we aimed for creating a new framework based on our empirical studies.

### **3. Empirical material and analysis**

A multidisciplinary PhD Programme, Cultural sustainability of Rural Areas, was carried out by the University of Jyväskylä and University of Eastern Finland during 2007-2010. Altogether nine PhD studies on rural development with different thematic focus, context and theoretical and methodological approaches were conducted (Table 1.). Following Flyvberg (2006) these studies can be considered as independent case studies, which were used for generating a hypothetical model of culture in sustainable rural development. The analysis introduced by this paper is based in particular on the summaries of these PhD studies. In addition, other material collected during the PhD programme, like articles published by the PhD students, group work and notes of the workshops and seminars were exploited. utilised. Each study was based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions, and had slightly different approach and scope for “culture” and “rurality”. However, when synthetizing the results borderlines between disciplines became

blurred, and finally – it can be argued - we ended up with not only multidisciplinary, but an interdisciplinary (Augsburg 2005) understanding of culture in sustainable rural development.

**Table 1.** Case studies of KULKEMA.

Social space of a rural town	Kivitalo Mari, Social Policy
Cultural activities of rural youngsters	Joela Anni, Cultural Policy
Rural village actions	Kumpulainen Kaisu, Cultural Policy
Rural entrepreneurship, networks and locality	Puupponen Antti, Social Policy
Traditions in the constitution of sense of continuity of farmers	Hangasmaa Leena, Ethnology
Bioenergy production and rural entrepreneurship	Pellikka Timo, Social Policy
Forests in the everyday life of the Finnish people	Vaara Matti, Forest Economics
Rural representations in visual culture: the case national imageries	Vallius Antti, Art History
Landscape and biodiversity perceptions of rural residents'	Soini Katriina, Human Geography

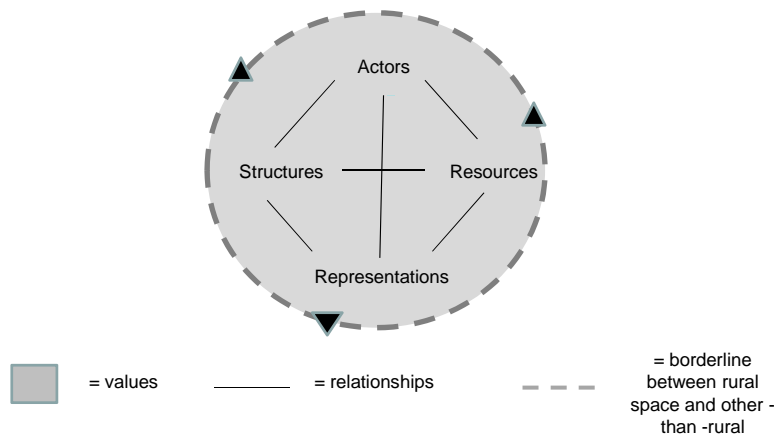
## 4. Results

### *4.1. Understanding of culture in rural space*

In order to be able to examine “culture” in respect to sustainable rural development, we developed a working model for rural space from the basis of the empirical case studies (Figure 1). In this model rural space is understood as connected with the broader society through many practical and symbolic bonds. The borderline between the rural and “other-than-rural” is transparent. It follows that rural space, on one hand, reflects and on the other hand influences the development in regional, national and global scales. Culture in rural space is co-produced by actors, resources, structures and representations, the elements of which we briefly describe in the following.

*Rural actors* are people living in rural areas, who have different roles in rural space and development. Some of them are getting their livelihood from rural resources, some others from other livelihoods. As any other society among the actors there are retired people, youngsters, children and immigrants. For some people rural area acts only as a living place, permanently or part-timely. People also have different roles in the rural development, some of the rural dwellers are active in associations, others may participate in the social life and policy at regional, national or even international level.

*Rural resources* are categorized under the topics of natural, social, cultural and financial capital, and from the sustainability point of view, it is crucial to maintain all these capitals. Historically, natural capital, i.e. natural resources have constituted a basis for rural development and culture: Although the economic meaning of natural resources has been decreasing for rural livelihoods during the past decades, natural resources is the capital, which is most strongly making a difference between rural and urban areas. Natural resources constitute also an important source of financial capital, not only for rural areas but for all society. Social capital refers here to the various forms of social life and co-operation, trust, networks, natural and cultural heritage, creativity, sense of place and place-based knowledge. Considering the production and reproduction of rural cultural capital, rural people are naturally most important resources.



**Figure 1.** Culture in rural space is co-produced in the relations between actors, resources, structures and representations.

*Rural structures* can be understood as physical, economic, social and cultural factors, which enable or disable human activities. They are various policies affecting rural development, but can also be related to local regional or national administrative structures. Also a farm or rural village can be considered as a structure, which regulates activities in rural space. Finally there are *representations*: *representations* of rural and rurality in art, media, research, maps are interpretations of 'rural' reshaping and constructing (new) ideas and sense of rurality affecting the behavior of rural actors, formation of structures and resources, as well as the image of rural space.

In our model *culture in rural space* is seen co-produced in relations between actors, resources, structures and representations. In that sense, our understanding of culture in rural space is neither based purely on methodological holism (structures) or purely on individualism (actors) (Heiskala 2000). Moreover, in our model borderlines between actors, resources, structures and representations cannot be defined and they may also represent different elements of rural space: For example rural actors, can also be considered as structures, resources or representations.

Production and reproduction of rural culture is conducted by *values*, which we consider relatively stable compared with attitudes (Schwartz 1997). Values are existing everywhere in the rural space and they are understood as factors affecting on behavior and decision making of the actors, but also how the structures are maintained and representations interpreted. Our cases reveal that a rural space manifests a special set of values that are shaped in particular through the history of relations between rural actors and nature.

Values conduct actors within structures that are embedded with *power* relations. Power, which is also existing everywhere in the rural space, shapes and defines relationships between actors, structures, resources and representations. For example, how rural is represented in the art, is affected by power relationships. Depending on the power actors hold, they are able to shape values

and even define new values contributing to the cultural reproduction. Culture in rural space co-produced by actors, structures, resources and representations, and affected by values and power relations, is heterogenous in spatial terms, and in a constant change (Fig 1. arrows on the circle).

In our project, the role and meaning of culture in rural space was examined, and its essence in sustainable rural development was analysed. Out of the research material we constructed two main approaches: 1) culture having intrinsic value in sustainable development and 2) culture as an instrument for achieving the ecological, economic and social dimensions of sustainability of rural development.

#### *4.2. Intrinsic values of culture in sustainable rural development*

Rural culture is essentially expressions of the arbitrary relation between rural people and the given environment. Therefore many of the intrinsic values of culture in rural areas lies on the proximity between human and nature marking in that sense a remarkable difference to urban culture. Living close to the nature has created a special kind of, and usually *place-based knowledge of nature*, which is produced through generations and cultivated through families, neighborhoods, local communities, and expressed by various traditions and rites. This knowledge it is a part of the local residents' sense of place and local identity (Soini, Kivitalo).

Closeness to nature has not only produced place-based ecological knowledge, but also a *practice of transferring* this knowledge forward horizontally within the local community and beyond and vertically between generations (Kivitalo, Soini, Hangasmaa). Transformation of this knowledge has many cultural functions and implications. As this transformation is now challenged by the social fragmentation of the communities, the role of various associations and scientific knowledge in the reproduction and transformation this knowledge has become more important.

Local communities are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility of maintenance of rural services and infrastructure (Kumpulainen). However, more professional, organised and economically driven activities, is a target, which is not always fully supported by all the rural actors. A project-based development activities are considered even as a threat to the spontaneous, voluntary small-scale activities, which has provided *joy and well-being* for the residents (Kumpulainen). In this sense *freedom and individual autonomy* in respect to their individual and development can also be considered as an intrinsic value, which should be sustained.

Besides place-based ecological knowledge farming culture revealed also another intrinsic value: *appropriateness* (Hangasmaa, Soini). Farmers seem to think that appropriateness of the farming and their profession is derived from the continuity from generation to generation, but also for doing ethically right thing: producing food and feeding people. This results a kind of *pride* of being a part of larger system of reproduction. Against this background it is understandable that the farmers tend to consider landscape as a side product of their work rather than as an object to be maintained (Soini, Hangasmaa).

Rural entrepreneurs are often pioneers in the adaptation and generating of innovations (Puupponen). *Learning* new practices like adapting a new crop for cultivation (Pellikka) or new roles in the local food system (Puupponen) presumes, but also creates new knowledge. Sometimes learning is hindered by old traditions, which are not easily thrown away. Learning also concerns the ways rural landscape and its ecological values are perceived (Soini).

Cultural activities are important part of the *well-being and health* of rural youths (Joela). In addition, the cultural activities or rural youngsters constitute a link between youth culture and local culture creating a special kind of youth subculture, which is valuable in itself. Moreover, cultural

activities in the rural area ensure the spatial continuity of cultural capital across rural and urban space.

Rural imaginaries, in our case “rural” and “rurality” represented by the visual arts from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to our days, have intrinsic values as *artistic expressions* representing the values and conventions Western canon of visual arts. Rural imaginaries have intrinsic values as such in addition to the aesthetic experience and meanings they portray of “rurality” and human-nature relationship for those, who look and interpret them (Vallius).

#### *4.3. Culture as an instrument for rural sustainable development*

In addition to the intrinsic values, our case studies revealed that culture has multiple roles in achieving objectives related to the ecological, economic and social sustainability. It should be noted that although these three pillars are established and commonly used by academic research and policies, they are also – similar to cultural sustainability – to some extent vague.

*Ecological sustainability* is usually used to refer to the conservation, preservation and sustainable use of ecological systems. Rural residents’ perceptions of nature, biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources are culturally determined similar to knowledge and practices related to them. In that sense, culture becomes a critical factor on the path to rural ecological sustainability (Hangasmaa, Vaara, Soini). The case studies also showed remarkable differences between the perceptions of nature and ecologically sustainable practices within and between various socio-economic groups.

*Economic sustainability* is concerned of economic viability and how it is achieved taking into consideration social and environmental aspects: Economic development should not take place on the cost of nature or social systems. If we consider rural livelihoods from the economic sustainability point of view, our studies revealed that tangible and intangible rural culture provide assets for new livelihoods, primary production and services (Pellikka, Puupponen, Hangasmaa, Soini). Moreover, rural cultural heritage is used as a source for tourism (Kumpulainen), and in the design of local food products (Puupponen). Culture is also an instrument in the learning processes related to development of sustainable economic activities (Puupponen).

*Social sustainability* is usually understood as equality between people in respect e.g. to participation and social inclusion, work, education and health. Our studies revealed that culture is also an important component needed for achieving these goals, because sustainability of these social aspects and practices are regulated by cultural customs and norms (Kumpulainen, Kivitalo, Vaara). In addition, collective sense of cultural heritage constitutes an important aspect of well-being (Kumpulainen). The cultural activities or rural youngsters constitute a link between youth culture and local culture creating a special kind of youth subculture. They also increase the cultural capital of the rural youngsters, which is important for the reproduction and transformation of cultural capital from one generation to another. (Joela).

#### *4.4. Cultural contradictions in sustainable rural development*

Although culture is a key component in achieving other dimension of sustainability, as proved above, the case studies also revealed that culture underpins many contradictions related to continuity, locality/localisation, diversity and (cultural) rights.

##### *Continuity*

Rural residents read and signify the cultural signs of their environment. They act in a way that they recognise their roots and the logics of the things and actions, which establish a basis for sense of



continuity (Kivitalo). Therefore, continuity of the structures and resources is important for the rural actors. Cultural heritage, which is “a group of resources inherited from the past” (European Commission 2010, article 2), acts as a resource for constituting continuity. It is an important mental and economic resource for rural actors for example in the village actions (Kumpulainen) or developing local food products (Puupponen), as noted earlier.

Although continuity is an important value and resource for rural actors and an aspect of their wellbeing, it is sometimes challenging to treat the continuity in the changing environment. This is the case for example in agriculture, where continuity has a special meaning (Hangasmaa, Soini). Sometimes farmers have to “break” some of the traditions, which they consider important for themselves in order to be able to maintain some other values important for them (Hangasmaa). Moreover, cultural heritage, and in particular traditions becomes sometimes constrain for adapting new way of acting for example in the local food system (Puupponen) or adapting a totally new crop for cultivation (Pellikka).

### *Local, locality*

Locality is spatially diverse for the rural actors: for some people “a local place” is the most intimate surroundings of the home, whereas for some others it referred to the whole municipality or beyond (Kivitalo, Soini). Local places and locality were often positive resources for local actors and local activities. For example, the studies showed that there is a lot of place-based knowledge, capabilities, memories and history, which constitute a resource for e.g. to village activities and formation of social capital, and personal identity and well-being (Kivitalo, Hangasmaa). Locality in the food production was seen as a “shelter” from the globalisation of the food production and market, and locality combined with a small-scale production could be used as an added value in the food market (Puupponen).

However, we also found some drawbacks related to locality. Locality might sometimes lead to the protection of place and exclusion of incomers, who might be of crucial value considering the cultural reproduction and vertical transformation of rural culture. Some incomers had found it difficult to access for example in the local hunting association (Kivitalo). Commodification of local places and cultures, or *place-branding*, in turn, may favour the use of stereotypes of rural culture, while parts of the diversity of local culture is excluded resulting a feel of otherness (Kumpulainen). Rural imaginaries often favour local, place-based rural culture disconnecting rural from the general societal development (Vallius), leading to consider rural as stable and even static place. Local landscape development including biodiversity loss is often accepted as “natural” development and “unavoidable” and therefore introduction of global concept of biodiversity can be seen useful for rural nature conservation (Soini).

### *Diversity*

Rural areas are usually characterised as culturally homogenous and relatively stable places compared with urban areas. Our case studies revealed the fact that there is no single culture or way of life in the rural areas, but cultural diversity and increasing cultural differentiation at the level of actors, structures and resources. There are cultures that present cultural mainstream, cultures that are representing new cultural elements, but also cultural traditions that are in the margin (Kivitalo). Cultural diversity brings many possibilities to rural areas: it provides opportunities for developing new rural livelihoods, like options related to the local food and enhance maintenance of cultural heritage (Hangasmaa, Pellikka, Puupponen, Soini). Cultural diversity among youngsters promotes cultural communication between global and local cultures (Joela).

However, diversity of ways of life means diversity of perceptions of, for example, how rural landscape should be like (Soini) and how natural resources should be used (Vaara, Kivitalo) resulting in challenges in local decision making and governance of rural space raising also up a question, who is “local”. In this respect the strongest contradictions were found between the part-time residents and permanent residents (Vaara, Soini), and between incomers and “original” local residents (Kivitalo).

Rural cultural diversity is not very well represented by the rural imaginaries (Vallius). However, diversity of representations of rural culture often shrinks into some themes and stereotyped pictures, which construct and maintain the romantic, idyllic and stable image of rural and rurality (Vallius). On one hand culturally relatively homogenous image of rural culture might provide a good basis for constructing national identity, but on the other hand, if rural culture is represented in a stable and homogenous way, it may even prevent rural development (Vallius). Cultural diversity is needed for the cultural reproduction, but as shown by the case studies, cultural diversity is also bringing tension caused by power relationships in the rural space, which needs to be managed.

### *Rights and responsibilities*

Rights and responsibilities of individuals were in particular present in respect to the community-based development. In the recent policy documents local communities and associations have been encouraged to take more responsibility of local development, including production of local services and maintenance of landscape and local infrastructure. However, a case study of community activities showed that it is not necessarily easy to find people to take financial and managerial responsibility of rural development (Kumpulainen). In particular, it was often challenging to commit the part-time residents to take responsibility of local development (Kumpulainen, Vaara, Soini).

Questions of rights and responsibilities became evident also in rural entrepreneurship. The rural entrepreneurs seem to feel that the rights and freedom that had traditionally characterized their professions and livelihoods had remarkably decreased, in particular due to the EU regulations (Hangasmaa, Soini, Puupponen). Less emphasis was given by the actors to the opportunities that EU and the open markets provided. Farmers, who work most closely with nature, experienced their rights and responsibilities in respect to nature most strongly (Hangasmaa, Soini). Although farmers are increasingly heterogeneous group in their nature relations, most farmers seem to think that they have responsibility to care the land in a way that the future generations can also make use of it, and they considered themselves as natural resource managers. Furthermore, sometimes their ideas of good farming practises and place-based ecological knowledge seem to be in conflict with the agri-environmental measures introduced by the EU agri-environmental schemes, structures that guide the farming. Here a question raises; who has the power to define the ecological sustainability of agriculture at the local level?

The farmers, but also some of the active villagers felt high responsibility towards to the previous generations and their work, the traces of which they tried to maintain and continue (Kumpulainen, Hangasmaa, Kivitalo). This leads sometimes to the contradictions at the individual as well as at the community level: there might be willingness to maintain these traditions, but not necessarily enough resources.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Intrinsic and instrumental values of culture in sustainable rural development

In KULKEMA -project sustainable development was considered as a value of development, which is composed of ecological, social, economic and cultural dimensions. The focus of the project was in the cultural dimension and its relations to other dimensions of sustainability.

The results of the project suggest that culture has both intrinsic and instrumental value in sustainable rural development. First, culture involves many intrinsic values critical for sustainable development. The intrinsic values, like place-based ecological knowledge, sense of appropriateness, pride, freedom and joy, are essential for a “flourishing” rural culture. Secondly, culture has “instrumental” role in achieving the objectives of ecological, social and economic sustainability. If the role of culture is not understood, there is a danger that the objectives related to for example in the ecological sustainability cannot be achieved. This is already been shown by the nature conservation projects, which often ignore local culture leading conflicts between local livelihoods and objectives of conservation. Due to the intrinsic and instrumental values culture have, we suggest that culture should definitely be incorporated in the framework of sustainable development as an aspect of its own, not as a part of social sustainability.

### 5.2. Two ways of placing culture in sustainable development

As far as the relationship between cultural dimension and other dimensions of sustainability are concerned, culture can be placed in the framework of sustainable development in various ways depending on the roles and meanings it is given. Following the results of KULKEMA project, we propose two ways to place culture in sustainable development: First, deriving from the intrinsic values of culture in sustainability we come up with a model, where ecological sustainability is in the middle indicating the importance of the sustainability of ecological system for the human systems, which is evident in particular in the rural context. Economic, social and cultural sustainability are representing various levels of human activity, which produce certain kind of capitals communities. Cultural capital is referring to the cultural knowledge, customs, traditions and their reproduction. Considering cultural reproduction, local communities, cultural institutions and families are in the key position. In this model power, which is composed of positions of single actors or institutions, determinates the relationships between various capitals and defines how resources are divided between various actors and sectors and how they are represented. This model, which emphasizes the intrinsic values of culture related to sustainable development, is called *sustainability of culture* (Fig 2.).

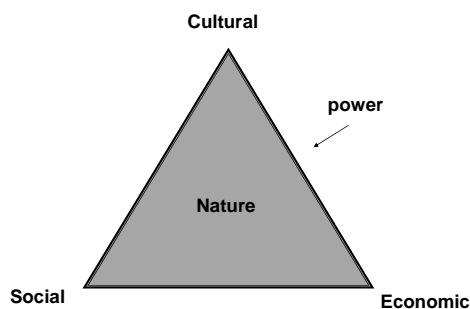
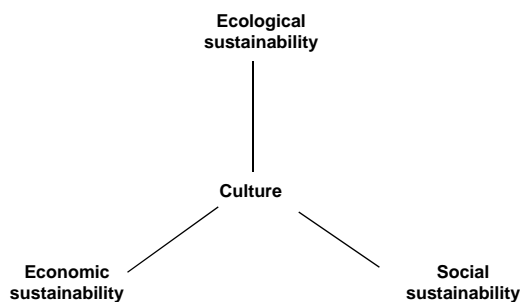


Fig. 2. Sustainability of culture.

Second approach places culture as an integrating dimension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions (Fig 3.). Ecological dimension is on the top of the hierarchy, because it sets the ultimate limits for sustainability. Social and economic sustainability are parallel dimensions and interacting. Culture is in the middle and it is linking the other dimensions: the humans with nature as well as economic and social activities. The ecological, social and economic dimensions are interrelated through culture also in the sense that change in any of them will affect to other dimensions of sustainability. This means, for example, if agriculture is ecologically unsustainable, it becomes also socially and economically unsustainable in the long term. This model, which places culture in the heart of sustainability, is called *culturally sustainable development* and it suggests that transformation towards more sustainable society presumes changes in the cultural systems.



**Fig 3.** Culturally sustainable development.

The intrinsic and instrumental values, and consequently the two models, can also be seen as interlinked: If the intrinsic values of culture do not sustain, the role of culture as an instrumental and mediating element between the other dimensions of sustainability decreases. This might lead to changes in the power relationships between various dimensions of sustainability: For example if relative importance of culture in the middle of sustainability decreases, the importance of the economic sustainability to determine ecological sustainability might increase.

### 5.3. Four critical discourses

Continuity, local/locality, diversity and rights and freedom often represent normative good within sustainable development discourse. However, our study showed that there might be many contradictions related to these discourses that need to be critically considered and discussed.

The idea of *continuity* can be derived from the etymology of sustainability: to sustain is to bear in time and space. Changes in society, environment and culture challenge this continuity: something ceases to exist, something new appears. In the rural space, change concerns actors, structures, resources as well as representations. Change treats each actor and each community in a very different way and they have different capabilities to affect and adapt to the change. Our study revealed that although continuity was considered important by the rural actors and communities, sometimes “breaks”, i.e. changes were needed to maintain sustainability.

Another common discourse related to sustainable development concerns local and locality. Usually globally driven development in market and human mobility is often seen as a threat to local development and culture, and local-, place- and community-based development and local

governance and activities related to sustainable development are favoured (Local Agenda 21, Agenda for Culture 21; Järvelä et al. 2005; Soini & Birkeland 2012). In most cases, locality can be considered as a factor, which positively enhances sustainability, but our results showed that this is not always a case: Strong locality may also lead to social exclusion or unsustainable ecological practices.

Cultural diversity has been emphasized in the reports drawing on sustainable development and culture (UNESCO 1995; UNDP & UNESCO 2003). Usually, a reference is made to the biological diversity: the more diverse the system is the more adaptable (=sustainable) it is to changes. Cultural diversity has been considered as a source of creativity and innovations and therefore diversity constitutes a basis for cultural reproduction, and in other words, cultural sustainability. It has also been suggested that diversity within the nature enhances cultural diversity and that cultural diversity supports biodiversity. This is evident in particular among the indigenous people, where certain way of life maintains biological diversity and vice versa. Here our results show, that although cultural diversity can be seen as crucial for local cultural reproduction, cultural diversity may challenge some forms of rural culture and cultural practices, which have traditionally been relatively homogenous causing contradictions within communities and between actors.

Finally, cultural rights and freedom both at individual and community level are also emphasized by the reports related to culture and sustainability. At the same time, however, sustainable development implies an idea of responsibility of environment and other people within and between generations. Finding balance between rights and responsibilities, duties and freedom is one of the most critical questions related to sustainable development. Our research revealed that there are differences, how the rural actors view their rights and responsibilities in respect to nature and local community. In addition, based on the results we suggest that rural actors' perceptions of rights and responsibilities are shifting along with the changes in the rural resources and structures.

## **6. Conclusions**

KULKEMA project aimed to explore the essence of culture in sustainable rural development. The objective was ambitious, due to the complex essence of "culture", "sustainable development" and "rural". However, following Sen (2008), this exercise was "worth trying". With a help of nine case studies, we were able to trace how culture can be understood in the rural context in terms of sustainability.

First, our work confirmed that culture has both intrinsic and instrumental values in sustainable rural development, and therefore it cannot be ignored or seen as a part of social sustainability. We also identified two ways to place culture in sustainable development. The main difference between the models is, whether intrinsic or instrumental values are emphasized. We also suggest that the intrinsic and instrumental values are completing each other: intrinsic values of culture need to sustain, otherwise culture will lose its meaning as an instrument in rural sustainable development.

The study also revealed that culture in sustainable development is context-related, i.e. time and place specific. This notion is self-evident, one could say, but this is, however, the case. In order to promote the understanding of operational role of culture in sustainable development, we argue that it is necessary to identify contradictions, processes, conditions and borderlines, where culture is practiced and negotiated in respect to sustainable development. We identified some of these contradictions that emerged from our studies: locality, continuity, diversity and rights. Although they are good goals for sustainability, for sure, they are inclined to cause contradictions in sustainable development at the community and even at the individual level implying that they should be carefully considered by the future research and policy related to sustainable development and culture.

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