

Unlocking sustainability through culture

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Is culture truly a 'fourth' pillar of sustainability alongside ecology, society and economy? Or is it more central, more fundamental, more essential? How does culture act as a catalyst for ecological sustainability, human well-being and economic viability? What would our futures look like if sustainability was embedded within culture in all of its multiple dimensions, including different worldviews and values, ways of life, and other forms of cultural expression? A cultural transition that embeds sustainability in the cultural understandings and daily practices of society has the power to shift humanity's currently unsustainable trajectory.

Culture plays many roles in (un)sustainability, but the scientific, policy-making and societal spheres have lacked understanding of the essence of culture in sustainability. During a four-year period (2011-2015) European research network *Investigating Cultural Sustainability* (www.culturalsustainability.eu) has sought out state of the art and radical research across Europe and beyond. The network has highlighted this research in order to provide researchers and policymakers with instruments for integrating culture as a key element of sustainable development. The main results of the work are:

- a report, *Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development* summarizing the conclusions of the work and introducing three roles of culture in sustainable development www.culturalsustainability.eu/outputs/conclusions.pdf
- a new book series, *Routledge Studies in Culture and Sustainability* and its first three volumes draw directly from the Action's work, focusing on culture and sustainability in European cities, heritage and regional development. <http://www.routledge.com/books/series/RSCSD/>
- an international transdisciplinary conference *Culture(s) in Sustainable Futures: theories, policies, practices* in Helsinki 6-8 May, 2015 at which the results of the Action were discussed by almost 300 scholars and practitioners. <http://www.culturalsustainability.eu/final-conference/>

Altogether 100 researchers from 25 countries within the EU with additional participants from Israel, Albania, New Zealand, and Australia contributed to the work in different ways. The network incorporated a wide variety of disciplines and fields of research, ranging from cultural, humanistic and social sciences, through political and natural sciences, to planning. The profiles and research interests of the members are introduced in publication, *Investigating Cultural Sustainability: Experts and Multidisciplinary Approaches*. www.culturalsustainability.eu/about-is-1007

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