Arm's Length and 'Hand-shake' Policies:
Community Arts Alternatives to Outcome-based Development
(Insights from Brazil, Bulgaria, and South Africa)

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Abstract: The role of arts and culture in the discourses and practices of 'sustainable development' can be a local, grounded phenomenon in communities around the world using holistic 'hand-shake' cultural policies. The idea of 'hand-shake' policy is derived from a comparative analysis of the Western (Anglo-Saxon) arm's length policy model of project-based funding, which focuses more on quality (aesthetics and outcomes) products than on ongoing art programs, with policy models developed in Bulgaria and Brazil that privilege the regularity and sustainability of social interactions/processes, where nationally distributed basic institutional support for community cultural centres secures the base infrastructure for systems of creative social exchanges. When planning sustainable cities is based on an integrated system of social relations and cultural codes, a community cultural centre in every neighbourhood (potentially the focal point of localized cultural policies) can serve as the community nucleus where anyone can discover and develop creative potential. Such centres, working within national networks of community cultural centres, should be understood as just as essential and socially useful as the community school and the community health centre. Combinations of three main factors that determine the grounding of cultural policies and NGO projects – looseness, lapse of time, and locality – underlie this transition and the long-term qualitative measurement of participatory processes rather than project outcomes. The dilemmas involved in quantifying intangible project outcomes like emotional, psychological, and social transformations resulting from community arts participation inform the need for alternative and/or complementary indicators of outcomes, that support strategies for sustainable socio-cultural development.

Keywords: cultural centre, community, transformation, cultural policy, development projects

Résumé : Cet article s'intéresse au rôle des arts et de la culture et à leurs incidences sur les discours et pratiques du développement durable en mobilisant le concept de « *hand-shake cultural policy* » (poignée de main). La notion de « hand-shake » est un clin d'œil à la notion de financement anglo-saxonne de type « *arms-length* », une formule de financement des projets artistiques qui favorise les mérites esthétiques des projets au détriment des projets communautaires comprenant de fortes retombées sociales. Il s'agit ici de mettre en évidence ce modèle alternatif de financement des arts tel qu'expérimenté en Bulgarie et au Brésil. Ces pays privilégient notamment une formule d'organisation et de financement de la culture et des centres culturels qui favorise le soutien au développement créatif des individus et

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communautés. Dans un tel contexte, les centres culturels peuvent jouer un rôle essentiel pour le développement du potentiel créatif des communautés. La mise en œuvre de ces initiatives locales doit laisser place à une certaine marge de manœuvre, à une conception non restrictive du temps et mettre l'emphase sur le local et ce, afin que les projets communautaires culturels puissent fleurir pleinement. La réussite se mesure dans le long-terme et non sur la base d'une évaluation stricte des programmes culturels. En somme, cette stratégie de développement culturel local s'appui sur des résultats intangibles tel l'investissement émotionnel et psychologique, voire la transformation ou la croissance communautaire et sociale.

Mots clé : centre culturel, communauté, transformation, politique culturelle, projets de développement

Introduction: 'Sustainability' in cultural citizenship?

The overarching question in 'creative' and 'green' visions of local development is whether development is felt as a primarily economic and material matter (better infrastructure, market economy, purchasing power parities, etc.), or as a fundamentally social issue contingent upon fragile systems of sensitivities and relationships. In such sensitive ecologies, economic and material conditions undoubtedly have important effects but do not form the main substance of internal norms of behaviour and exchanges.

If we do not reduce sustainability to only material (financial and tangible) means for the endurance of life, what kinds of social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual – generally intangible – means do we envisage in contemporary society for sustainability in development? In this article, I attempt to address this 'intangible' side of sustainability through the prism of artistic creativity generated, distributed, and consumed in community arts processes, intangible cultural heritage transmission, and local knowledge exchanges.

Within a vision of sustainable cities as a holistic system of social relations and cultural norms, a community cultural centre in every neighbourhood should be highlighted as the local place where anyone can discover and develop one's creative potential, and should be understood to be just as socially useful as the community school and the community health centre. In this sense, cultural policy should not be reduced to heritage preservation, commercial tourism, and the high arts, but broadened to a coherent set of provisions enabling a creative lifestyle for all. Access to the arts should be operationalized across decentralized neighbourhood cultural centres, where the notion of access itself should be widened to motivate active community participation and artistic production. With such a vision and practice of cultural policy, art-based programs could become an integral part of the social, educational, and economic policies in the modern sustainable city, where cultural planning forms the development base.

Colin Mercer (2002) distinguishes *cultural planning* from the *planning of culture* and argues that cultural planning is about "ensuring that cultural considerations are present in all processes of planning and development," where planning embraces "an 'anthropological' approach to cultural resources that links them to broader agendas for economic development, sustainability and quality of life" (p. 7). Holistic cultural planning in Mercer's view leads to the development of "cultural citizenship," where institutions ground their activities and strategies with acknowledgement of,

sensitivity towards, and care for the varied experiences of cultural identity among diverse groups of people. But *where* is such "cultural citizenship" practiced and employed at the community level? Do people bargain for identities and realities in the local coffee shops, pubs, casinos, corner parks, or grocery stores?

Sustainable living is about sustainable relations where continuity and change work together in a dynamic but fairly balanced manner. Thus, identifying the spaces that create environments favourable to the sustainable generation of social capital is key to understanding the sites of formation of the structural skeleton on which sustainable local lifestyle attitudes, or a culture of sustainability, could be constructed. A contemporary culture of sustainability can be understood as an ecosystem of both new and recovered/rediscovered old attitudes revaluing artistic and ecologic practices as the path towards a simpler but more secure, less dependent, and potentially more fulfilling living (see Duxbury, Gillette & Pepper 2007). Community cultural centres are particular kinds of places that promote regular social exchanges where the shared space and praxis nourish a culture of sustainability through entertaining and fairly inclusive collective art activities, both traditional and contemporary. Such activities, usually deemed informal and non-professional, are where "cultural citizenship" is negotiated and gradually linked to "ecological/green citizenship" on the way to an ever more integrated vision of what could be termed *sustainable cultural citizenship*.

Sustainable cultural citizenship, that is, systems of political participation and civil society relations seen through the prism of arts and culture, has multiple dimensions, including but not limited to: issues of cultural homogenization and globalization; local-global conflicts and identity crises; consumption patterns; transmission of (often indigenous but more generally local and community-based) intangible cultural heritage; preservation and socialization of tangible cultural heritage; green and sustainable design, architecture, and urban planning; public art and the animation of public spaces; education; community cultural development, and so forth.

In this article, I focus on community cultural development, specifically on community arts centres as physical spaces of regular, sustainable social interactions rather than scattered arts activities, in order to discuss the importance of space and place in constructing sustainable social mechanisms. On the base of ethnographic participant observation, I define two major cultural (and more broadly social development) policy paradigms, which are not diametrically opposed but exchange elements with one another: the *arm's length* funding approach shaping project-based cultural processes and what I call a *hand-shake* cultural policy approach shaping more program-oriented long-term processes.

Methodology

This article is based on long-term ethnographic research and other shorter-term fieldwork in various countries on four continents over the past five years. The main research was conducted in Bulgaria and Brazil for my doctoral thesis, with additional data from South Africa. In these countries, I examined the social meaning and impact of community cultural centres and their networks in order to comprehend the variety and similarities in the way voluntary artistic activities enhance or impede local development and how they build bridges between cultural policy and civil society. In the process of this research, fieldwork rooted in traditional participant observation methodology shifted

to 'action research' involving hands-on work helping to establish real connections and cooperation between networks of community cultural centres.[1]

Action research holds multiple epistemological and methodological challenges but also enables unique insights for the researcher and generates very tangible impacts and often much-needed support in the studied communities. In action research, knowledge is not understood as an independent and external unit but a dynamic process of social co-creation and negotiation (Bateson 1972;, Geertz 2000; Habermas, Cronin & De Greiff 2000, among others). Action research adds another dimension to 'non-objective' knowledge: the research process itself creates the objects of its study and directly and often purposefully affects the processes that are later objects of analysis. These processes can be very problematic as they can involve asymmetries of power between researcher (a direct actor and producer of realities and knowledges) and interlocutors (as co-creators of knowledges), so they must be carefully and constantly examined self-reflexively, constantly mixing action and reflection (Reason & Bradbury 2001). Briefly, action research is:

> a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuing of worth-while human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at that historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury 2001, p.1)

The interlocutors with whom I worked to collect the data used in this article were quite diverse. The main informants with whom I spent most time doing ethnographic research were related to community cultural centres in South Africa (Johannesburg and Capetown) in the fall of 2009, and in Brazil and Bulgaria between 2007 and 2009. Other informants were coordinators of national networks of community cultural centres, and officers at city cultural departments, Ministries of Culture, and UNESCO. Since the relations between researcher and interlocutors in these cases were very much grounded in common practical projects and endeavours to promote the importance of community arts for social development, the relationship dynamic would best be described as a form of 'collaborative action inquiry' (Torbert 2004) where researcher and interlocutors together produced knowledge about the studied social phenomenon and the knowledge then informed further actions and self-reflexive conceptual frameworks.

Arm's length, hand-shake, fist-grip: Politics and policies of touch

In September 2009, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) organized the 4th World Summit on Arts and Culture in Johannesburg, South Africa. During the first two days, most discussions were about two spheres: high/professional arts funding and the 'good practice' of Anglo-Saxon arm's length cultural funding to projects (rarely long-term programs). On the third day of high-level talks, I 'escaped' to what a friend believed was a 'good practice' – a community arts and agriculture centre located in a peripheral township (low-income neighborhood).

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[1] This work was gradually consolidated into a global network of national networks called the International Council for Cultural Centers (I3C).

The drive of almost an hour across dry plains of small metal and cardboard houses, called "matchbox houses" by local residents, made the poverty and its related problems look of massive proportions. In Johannesburg I kept asking myself what kind of holistic but also innovative, creative thinking about development policies – in particular, policies sensitive to complex, embedded cultural codes – could the government put in place to enable so many people, entangled in various economic and social vicious cycles, to start thinking and acting outside the box of institutionalized poverty. Could the arts be the shock therapy that could shake the deeply rooted taken-for-granted plagues? And how could such 'shock therapy' grow into a sustainable transformation of the community quality of life?

A former electric power plant chimney rising above the shacks splashed the monochromatic landscape with colours. The municipality had commissioned artists to paint graffiti of local heritage icons such as Mandela and Desmond Tutu, who had lived in the Soweto township, and in the centre, a black Madonna with Christ looking peacefully over the plain. A beautiful and powerful image – a big-scale piece of professional art that could, but did not, have smaller-scale, regular community continuation. The government had handed over a one-time sum of money, but the locals never really shook hands with the authorities: much like the outcome-oriented, project funding of the Anglo-Saxon arm's length model. Were there any community cultural centres where cultural funding was more regular and long-term and the management more decentralized and open to participation?

A dirt road finally arrived at the wide-open gate of the Arekopaneng community cultural centre. From a block away I heard the music, and inside saw people wearing colorful indigenous dresses and T-shirts covered with images of Mandela and hip-hop stars roaming in and out of the few one-storey houses surrounded by rows of vegetables and trees. This bright vitality stood in stark opposition to the burnt yellows and concrete grey along the road, except for the painted chimney whose images of smiling people seemed to have come to life on the T-shirts at the community centre. It turned out to be National Cultural Diversity Day – one of Mandela's post-Apartheid initiatives to formally celebrate the unity in diversity of the nation – and a mix of various indigenous groups who had been forced to live in the desert areas during Apartheid were at the centre celebrating with some white urban youth of Jewish and Anglo-Saxon origins, volunteers with the Jewish organization Ma Afrika Tikkun that had started the centre.

Arekopaneng had its own vegetable garden and orchard; it had organized local women to cook together for their children and families as an economic, efficient, pleasant, and healthy cooking and eating method. Local volunteers taught crafts workshops and, after training, were leading sexual and general health education. The buildings had been built with local volunteer labour and only the core management group had their salaries paid by external donors, but the centre developed its own small commercial activities, such as selling vegetables and crafts, and self-financed some of its activities and maintenance. An external skilled manager (from Ma Africa Tikkun) had teamed up with a local charismatic woman, the current Director of the centre, to organize logistics and social relations so as to make the locals believe that change was possible but that a big part depended on their hands and hearts. Ma Africa Tikkun had come as an external 'shock therapy' to enable people locally to see their routine from another angle and search for ways to construct it differently – by constructing a real microcosm as a lab for shifting lifestyles. Of course, the centre was also a site of

conflicts and various problems as most of it was run by volunteers with little money, and some volunteers kept coming in and out with shifting commitments of their time. Therefore, for reasons of sustainability, community cultural centres like this one should be receiving regular, basic funding from the government in order to secure their sustainable operations, which is much more useful than application-based funding for short-term projects.

While some of the people were playing music and dancing, most were crowded around a few tables, their arms covered in bread dough up to the elbows, laughing while learning to braid Jewish hallah bread and to boil South African Xhosa pot bread. The bread smell made my heart jump! Arekopaneng was the first cultural centre I had so far seen that functioned like a bakery, where bread is not only shared (I had visited a few community cultural centres in Bulgaria and Brazil where people bring in home-made breads and foods to share at the centre) but also collectively made.

In retrospect, I discovered structural (not only culinary) similarities between these types of community centres, mostly in their common position at the borderlines between an independent centre and the state-supported national network of community cultural centres, in Bulgaria called *chitalishte* and in South Africa *community arts centres*. It is fairly easy and cheap to enable people to start generating social capital locally under two major, simplified but basic, conditions of generating symbolic capital. First, the designation of a particular, permanent place that a practice can inhabit so that people can psychologically connect a social place with a participatory and flexible social practice that is open for people to enter and exit. Second, the designation of regular timed and themed meetings, semi-formally organized but also flexible to enable free participation and flexibility of attendance and commitment so as to fit the event in the structure of weekly routines and allow people to start perceiving it as one of their natural, needed, and even 'traditional' activities.

Along with a basic understanding of the importance of embedded and *em-placed* practices, (Savova, forthcoming a) of homeless arts brought home, and of animated places rather than ephemeral 'cultural animation', a sustainable cultural policy for development is also contingent upon two major conditions: (1) creating a *sense of sustainability* – what people at the centres often dream about as 'security' – by providing *regular*, basic funding for maintenance and/or activities at community cultural infrastructures both nation-wide and at a local-level; and (2) fomenting a *sense of unity* among local cultural centres, which strengthens each centre's understanding of its scope and importance and provides a sense of self-reliance and support.

Both the South African network of *community arts centres* I will discuss below (launched in 1994) and the Bulgarian network of *chitalishte* (created in 1856) are embedded in cultural policies that are flexible and creative enough in their policy rationale to understand the need for a community cultural space in each neighborhood and to provide some basic regular funding for such local arts organizations. This type of cultural policy strategy is what I will call *hand-shake* policy funding, playing on the notion of *arm's length* cultural funding.

The idea of the arm's length model is to keep a healthy distance (securing independence of funding decisions) from direct, top-down impositions and control by, for example, the Ministry of Culture. Thus, an arm's length arts council is imagined as a fairly impartial body of decision-making on funding beneficiaries, avoiding undue government interference through operating 'at

arm's length' in allocating funds received from the government. At the same time, a distance between funders and beneficiaries also results because of a lack of long-term engagement/financial support which limits the abilities of many organizations and initiatives to sustain their actions. Funding is usually on a project-by-project basis, temporary and focused on the product, and offering limited possibilities for long-term programs that sustain ongoing processes to engage the creativity of various people. Supporting such ongoing processes is much more the strength of the *hand-shake* policy model of long-term government commitment to support local cultural centres.

Compared to *arm's length* policy approaches, *hand-shake* policy is characterized by four particular main aspects. First, funding is regular (although often insufficient) and provides for a fairly sustainable existence for cultural organizations and their community activities. Thus, cultural activity is not dependent on temporary *project* applications but rather is part of state *program* funding. Second, funding is basic: enough to cover main maintenance costs. Third, funding does not have too many tightly attached strings and allows free space for the funding to be flexibly spent depending on shifting local needs. Fourth, regular funding depends on the sustainable, good performance – on the reciprocally strong hand-shake – of each beneficiary (even if in some cases funding is given to traditionally popular centres, not due to their performance).

While the inequitable, market-based Anglo-Saxon arm's length funding benefits mostly efficient project writers, the public funding systems of social democracies such as France and the former socialist governments of Eastern Europe and Russia, the still socialist Cuba, and Brazil (which is reviving its totalitarian cultural infrastructure) regularly support community cultural centres, although support is often insufficient to enable sustainable cultural development. A problem with the hand-shake policy approach, however, is that some centres lack innovative thinking and initiatives precisely because of the regular (even if small), secure funding and are thus not pressed to constantly seek project funding. Regular funding could be thus equally an impediment or a propeller for ongoing action and innovation.

An example of a participatory, *hand-shaking* policy of 'unity in diversity' – locally grounded and lived through the participative arts, not popular performances – is the Brazilian cultural policy of *pontos de cultura* (points of culture) although it has its own internal controversies. Former Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil imagined in 2004 how to weave one united (not homogenously unified) network by bringing under the new *pontos de cultura* two main groups of community cultural organizations: the *casas de cultura* (houses of culture), built in the first half of the twentieth century but used by the former totalitarian regime to censure and control, and a group of independent, civil society-based local cultural initiatives, which were often much more active than the traditional *casas* and usually were registered as NGOs. With recognition as *pontos* and annual funding for major infrastructural innovations and activities, these organizations started operating as a network with common meetings, projects, and the important symbolic capital of belonging – although there continued to be conflicts with the Ministerial program as to the criteria for recognition as a *ponto*. Nevertheless, Gil's cultural policy managed to secure a certain sustainability for the operations of such community-based centres (and, indeed, helped many previously 'homeless' organizations become 'centres' with their own building) by balancing the amount of central basic funding with care so as to not to set up structures of complete dependency.

The community arts funding models of Brazil (*pontos*) and Bulgaria (*chitalishte*) differ substantially from practices in Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia, or the Anglo-Saxon model of arm's length cultural funding through semi-independent arts councils. The arm's length model is based on the assumption that whoever needs money will search actively for it, is knowledgeable about available programs, and will then apply. As the arts agency is not directly part of state bureaucracy, it has a certain level of independence from state censure and control with regard to funding decisions. The funds managed by an arts council are (supposedly) awarded impartially. Applying for support through this system requires expertise in applying for project funding and access to information. Difficult application processes that require applicants to fill in linear charts instead of thinking cyclically, spatially, and in longer temporalities challenge the accessibility of these programs. A *hand-shake* policy approach, in contrast, addresses these issues by creating a more propitious, sustainable environment for local cultural activities, particularly in lower-income areas like Brazil where people do not otherwise have the means to develop arts and cultural ideas.

 In addition to the regular funding of local arts spaces, the second 'hand-shaking' element in the *pontos de cultura* model is the idea that national unity can be comprised of the sharing of difference – as each centre is valued for its locally embedded cultural specificities, rather than for the homogeneity that totalitarian regimes produce through *obligatory* 'voluntary' community arts at a massive scale, as practised in factories, schools, and clubs for retired people. These totalitarian policies of control through imposed 'volunteer' engagement and controlled, non-innovative 'creativity' could be denoted – if we are to keep using the metaphors of the arm and hand – as totalitarian *fist-grip* cultural policy within the broader, explicit national control strategy known as 'Iron Fist' politics.

The socialist system of national state-funded 'houses of culture' in the Eastern Bloc was developed, polished, and exported around the world by the Soviet Union, but the Soviets under Lenin based their model on the successful and wide-spread Bulgarian *chitalishte*, which was a democratic network. What socialism did in Bulgaria was to co-opt the network, adopting and controlling the centres by centrally funding them and regularly checking their artistic 'quality and content'. For half a century the *fist-grip* cultural policy of control tied to easy and secure money created a culture of dependency and passivity as the centres forgot their traditional way of operation which was to actively attract local contributions and commitment to the centre's vitality. In any case, funding continues to be an issue, being either too small and insufficient for activities and maintenance – forcing the centres to depend on project-funding – or fairly sufficient and regular – creating another form of dependency, this time not on project funding but on state funding.

Steven Sachs, Director of the Culture Department of the city of Johannesburg, has observed that South African cultural policy is slow and inefficient because of its three-tiered (or multiple-tiered) funding system. The three tiers refer to the three levels of administration that are responsible for three different aspects of the cultural centres' maintenance: at the national level, the Ministry of Culture covers the construction of the cultural centre; the provincial/regional level takes care of infrastructure and maintenance; and the municipal level provides the wages for the administration

team.[2] Unlike the South African weak *hand-shake* efforts hampered by uncoordinated funding tiers, in the Brazilian *hand-shake* model support for local cultural initiatives is sent directly from the Ministry of Culture's budget to each municipality, pre-allocated for each *ponto de cultura* (so there are no local power asymmetries in the distribution of funding), and then distributed to each centre to spend. In a similar fashion, the well-intended South African *hand-shake policies* could be re-structured as a lump-sum amount that the centre could use at its discretion based on regularly proven merit, as each centre would have to defend its right to support on the basis of monthly and yearly activity reports. Furthermore, the network of community arts centres could become consolidated with other independent cultural initiatives and centres developed by NGOs, such as the Arekopaneng centre. The merging of the independent centres with state arts centres could encourage more active relations and cooperation among previously isolated centres, as is happening within the unified Brazilian *pontos de cultura* network.

Cultural citizenship in local and trans-local network points

The young township artists in Johannesburg, showcasing their work before world policy and art experts, would not have understood the terms used during the Summit but were de facto living and producing "cultural citizenship" with their regular creativity. It was for people like them that Paulo Freire (1970), Brazilian intellectual and teacher, developed the "pedagogy of liberation" hoping to stir movements of "social conscientization." Freire's pedagogy goes back to the "experiential learning" planted in John Dewey's works (1916). These methods of community engagement reached full synergy with the art field in Augusto Boal's (1993) "theater of the oppressed" approach to community development, which initiated a movement of "arts for social change" now spread around the world.

The Latin American Network of Arts for Social Change, or *Red Latinoamericana de Artes para la Trasformación Social* (RLATS, www.artestransformador.net), evolved from an informal network of cultural organizations to an active non-governmental organization based in Argentina and uniting eight countries with dozens of non-governmental organizations dedicated to opening access to the arts for underprivileged communities in disciplinary areas ranging from theatre and dance to painting, circus, ballet, and martial arts.[3] RLATS expanded the methods of the "theater of the oppressed" to the much broader genre of "arts of the oppressed" or "art for social transformation." The terms for the field of *arts for social change*, as defined in Latin America, find many modifications among countries and cultural institutions: community arts, as in the Community Arts Network (www.communityarts.net); social art practice, focused on social change; art education;

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[2] Interviews by author in September 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.

[3] In 2009, the Latin American Network of Arts for Social Change officially became an associated member network in the International Council for Cultural Centres (I3C), which had been evolving for two years as a trans-continental network of national networks of community cultural centres (www.international3c.org). The first similar organization, developed on a continental scale, was the European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC) (www.encc.eu), which became I3C's first continental member network in the spring of 2009. The I3C now helps coordinate links with the Latin American Network and the African Arterial Networks in trans-continental partnerships.

applied art; amateur art; voluntary arts; community public art; mainstream art outreach; art therapy; talent development; websites such as www.cultureshapescommunity.org, and so forth. The unifying thread among these terms is that ultimately they all point to what I call a shift in cultural thought from "aesthetics" (the form) to "kinaesthetics" (the moving, dynamic substance) of arts and culture (Savova 2009); a move from the traditional elite emphasis on 'art for art's sake' towards a more anthropological vision of 'art for people's sake' where the focus is perception, participation, production, and circulation.

Community arts have also been moving away from the term *amateur*, which implies low, non-professional aesthetic quality. Such a tag is not correct for two reasons: first, because many of these art forms are created in cooperation with professional artists or by people with high levels of proficiency and, second, because the primary concern of these arts is not aesthetic to begin with and thus the emphasis should be placed on their social, kinaesthetic essence and function. A more accurate term is *voluntary arts*, already common in the U.K. (e.g., the Voluntary Arts Network [VAN]) and in Bulgaria. The kinaesthetics of community arts defines a process where the *tools* and the creative *process* are much more important than the *form* and the *product,* and the quality of deeper, human (*kinaesthetic*) relations is much more significant than the external, often superficial and formal (*aesthetic*) quality or quantity of the final product. While both *process* and *product* begin with the same syllable and same meaning – with *pro* implying movement forward, similar to the way *development* (or *prosperity*) is taken to denote *growth* and *movement forward* – the two are very distinct approaches to this 'projected' (precisely, with projects after projects) movement. In fact, often if attention is placed on the process, which then frees people to evolve and change in their interactions and actions, the planned final product(s) is, in most cases, quite modified. This freedom for community participation in the process to affect and transform the projected product is crucial. However, it is often missing, with pre-determined unsustainable projects and their products feeling external – products that are passively projected onto the local reality rather than being actively produced. In the sphere of community arts and social transformation, such passive projection can be avoided (and often is even if not particularly sought) due to the intrinsically deeply engaging and interactive nature of any creative – indeed, productive – process.

Tim Prentki, renowned expert on community theatre, defined four types of 'community art': "art In," "art For," "art With," and "art By" the community, where it is key to understand that any community *context* is different and particular, and that the *content* of the artistic activity is highly locally contingent (Prentki & Selman 2000, p. 32). Such particularity of content defines the diversity of *process* and *form.* Both Prentki & Selman (2000) and Van Erven (2001) emphasize that the centrality of local context in community arts is interrelated with the notion of *locality*, which I have previously developed (see Savova, forthcoming b) and will further expand below as one of three main factors in the operations of cultural networks: *locality* together with *lapse of time* and *looseness*. These three factors affect policies and local development depending on the ways they are mixed, separated, modified, preserved, twisted, and straightened. When the combinations of factors are performed at the policy level, the metaphors of the arm, the hand, and the various forms and distances of touch previously discussed in the *arm's length*, *hand-shake*, and *fist-grip* policies illustrate the levels of cross-pollination between policies and local realities.

Income and outcome-based measurements; *in-reach* and outreach strategies

Many community cultural centres and organizations working with art-based projects face the problem of measuring the impact of their work. The main issue is that the output of their work as a goal and result is predominantly the formation of social relations and a more vibrant social environment, or what social scientists call active accumulation and exchange of social capital (a discourse set by Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam in the 1980s). Relevant in particular to the issue of measuring social capital accumulation and exchange is Helen Gould's (2001) understanding of social capital as "the wealth of the community measured not in economic but in human terms. Its currency is relationships, networks and local partnerships. Each transaction is an investment which, over time, yields trust, reciprocity and sustainable improvements to quality of life" (p. 69).

In the methodology and process of outcome measurement, Gould's notion of measuring community wealth in 'human' rather than 'economic' terms and viewing relationships as a form of 'currency' speaks directly to the non-monetary economy of exchanges and the social gift economy in community arts practices where the 'intangible' is hard to quantify. This economy of symbolic capital, as described by Marcel Mauss (1990), forms the foundations of cultural anthropology and is relevant in any contemporary social system.

Culture as a field considered seriously in the measurement of development came about with the re-thinking of the 'triple bottom line' (economic, environmental, and social spheres of development) into a four-pillar model of sustainability that includes the fourth sphere of *culture* as equally important as the others in affecting social processes of change (Hawkes 2001; Rana & Piracha 2007). Most of the writing on the key role of culture in sustainable development has come from Anglo-Saxon social scientists and was first recognized to various degrees among policymakers and municipal cultural planners in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, even though much more conceptual and applied work is required. Thus, although influenced by community cultural development practices, the importance of culture in the four-pillar model has been emphasized and framed mostly within a broader context of arm's length policy strategies. However, for the four-pillar model to truly support sustainable community building and a stable community house (metaphorically but also in real terms) as a community cultural focal point, the model needs to include *hand-shake* approaches of long-term government commitment to support local cultural centres.

In order to reconcile the extremes of reductivism as well as of generic indefinites, the four pillars of sustainable development need to be seen not solely as vertical forms channeling top-down directives or bottom-up lobbying and feedback, but as bridges connecting platforms of exchanges between state and civil society. These platforms can (and often do) further shift positions when local initiatives feed into regional and national policies, as in the cases of the *chitalishte* in Bulgaria and the *pontos de cultura* in Brazil.

To better understand the four-pillar (house-shaped) system with mixed horizontal and vertical structures, it is useful to analyze it through the metaphor of the *shekere* musical instrument, which I have already examined as a metaphor for cultural networks in the Brazilian context (Savova, forthcoming b), and will here expand this analysis based on South African realities. The *shekere* was suggested to me as a useful symbol for networks by a *shekere* player in one of the Carnaval

groups I studied in Salvador de Bahia in 2008. The more I analyzed its structure and playing methods, the more I discovered its relevance to network building and developed the framework of the three "Ls" – *lapse of time*, *looseness*, and *locality* – as major factors in the relations between any cultural network (or any civil society organization) and the state.

The first thing to consider about any network is that it is a net that works only due to the connections among the nodes and not the nodes alone: a network is, indeed, the net threads and not the net-weight (quantity) of its members. The hand that shakes the net could be the *arm's length* cultural policies as well as the *hand-shake* cultural policies and, of course, the hand could be that of international cultural policy-makers, non-governmental donors, or civil society groups. When the hand starts shaking the *shekere*, the net(work) moves and the beads (the interconnected community cultural centres in this particular case) along the *shekere* net travel some distance before they hit the gourd and produce a sound, so the player needs to anticipate the rhythm. This *lapse of time* between policy/project idea/civic action and the effect reveals the needed prospective vision for long-term and not immediate results and thus for a more flexible and less temporally bounded measurement approaches. Indeed, such a long-term vision away from rigid donor requirements to see immediate and quantifiable indicators is what many community development workers desire

The bowl and the box – the organically circular and open space and the artificially angular and closed space – define two perspectives on the *lapse of time* in transformative action that are distinguished by their ultimate relation to touch and matter: the *outcome-based box* striving to hold tangible and measurable phenomena and to also confine and enclose them (thus limiting 'sustainability' as an inherently dynamic process of change and growth); and the *income-based bowl* approach open to holding 'intangibles' and their flexible interactions and multiplications. Rather than 'outcomes' and tangibles, this model stresses the inner psychological, emotional, and spiritual enrichment and transformation inside people, which can take a long time to come out and expand in tangible social outcomes. It is thus a model centred on 'income', indeed an alternative *income-based evaluation model.* The assumption is that the 'income' of accumulated new ideas and potentialities for action will gradually start pouring out and rippling within the social circles around each individual, in everyday interactions and possible organized projects and programs.

Lapse of time also references the need for long-term program planning rather than the short-term cycles of beginnings and ends of limited-duration projects, which by their unstated core impede sustainability and encourage *project jumping* rather than *project grounding*. Thus, to think sustainably about development is to be able to plan regular activities (often self-sustained), requiring a shift from *project* to *program thinking*, and to be able to plan for the *lapse of time* between action and effect, thus focusing first on the intangible, psychological *income* generated in people – *income-based evaluation* – and later, in the long run, observing the multiplication of outcomes from it.

Alongside the *lapse of time*, the second key factor in the sound of the *shekere* is the right amount of *looseness* of the net in order to let the beads hit the gourd. The open and flexible space 'in-between' reflects the opinions I have collected among heritage-bearers, community organizers, and government officials who have learned from practice that any policy or funded project needs to be loose enough to be able to respond to the local environment and needs; otherwise, stiff control stifles local initiatives and the rootedness of the action as a sustainable practice. Without *looseness,*

a machine-made box-shaped, top-down cultural policy and program that does not coordinate with the community particularities is usually doomed to inefficiency, and in many cases is even harmful to the local cultural ecosystem.

Looseness is a key factor not only for good (local) grip, but also for the free flow of information along the net strings among the various agents in cultural development, policy, and planning. The third core area within *looseness*, in addition to the looseness in the local grip and in the flow of information between the local points, relates to space and architecture. The house/community cultural centre is important as a symbolic, physically present locus for the artistic engagement of the community (Savova, forthcoming b). In this third context, *looseness* denotes the importance for the cultural house's space to be open and welcoming to various people and activities deemed important by the community, inviting in fresh air and new people.

Finally, the third main factor for the *shekere* sound is *locality,* which is not related to the net itself but to the shape of the gourd, whose curves and irregularities affect the sound as each net nodule hits it at a different angle. The specific gourd surface illustrates the particular cultural topography of a place and the degree to which policies and projects comprehend, acknowledge, and factor in its specificities of *context* for the *content* of the programs. *Locality,* or the myriad of local specificities, if overlooked, is open to a high potential for failure and thus requires a tailor-made net(work).

Locality speaks directly to what has become known as the 'bottom-up' approach in development, which argues for active community participation in the decision-making processes about its own present and future, its perceived 'development'. UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is among the UN instruments most strongly supportive of 'community participation' in the drafting of policies, project, and programs.[4]

At the IFACCA World Summit on Arts and Culture in South Africa, the World Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen (COP15) and the parallel Culture|Futures (Sustainability and Art) Conference in December 2009, and the First Summer School on Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation (ASSiST) organized by the International Council for Cultural Centers and Cultura 21 in Gabrovo, Bulgaria in August 2010, environmental scholars and artists mentioned *locality* and *touch* in multiple discourses and unanimously affirmed that the core of environmental tragedies is an overall "loss of touch" with the surrounding world (see Logan 1999). Indeed, such extreme forms of 'looseness' and 'non-locality' – not in physical terms but in ecological, social, and cultural perceptions that underpin the human-to-nature and human-to-human relations – have both led to socially detrimental phenomena. And it is precisely these phenomena that cultural social networks try to offset with 'looseness' and 'locality' in their inverted, alternative forms that aim to recover and enrich our touch with the world.

The *income-based approach* is partially measurable through qualitative methodologies grounded in one-on-one interviews, informal conversations, focus groups and, perhaps most importantly, keen observations of what people do not say but how they interact with their environment. A notable example is the unspoken but visible change noted by the coordinator for the

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[4] Some successful examples of such participatory local models can be found on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention website: www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=home

Peruvian network within the Latin American Network of Arts for Social Change. After months of circus workshops[5] with youth from the underprivileged peripheries of Lima called *pueblos jóvenes,* the coordinator noted that after a series of workshops the children began to look her in the eyes when they spoke. "Simply that, being able to lift their eyes up from the dirt and the feeling of inferiority, simply this is the greatest 'indicator' of outcome!" she said.[6] In the same vein, the director for the Latin American chapter of the YMCA argued that quite often one can measure the impact of development work by estimating the amount of food people give as gifts to the development officers/coordinators: these 'outcomes' are somewhat equivalent to the income that people perceive to have gained and that they are eager to make up. To sum up, the sustainable success of any community cultural projects requires looseness in the notions of *cultural indicators* and *measurement,* recalling Helen Gould's (2001) notion of social capital as the human, not economic, wealth of a community.

Conclusions

The role of arts and culture in the discourses and practices of 'sustainable development' can be a local, grounded phenomenon in communities around the world with what I have called holistic *hand-shake* cultural policies. When planning sustainable cities is sensed as an integrated system of social relations and cultural codes, having a community cultural centre (potentially the focal point of localized cultural policies) in every neighbourhood as the community nucleus where anyone can discover and develop one's creative potential, working within a national network of such community cultural centres, would be understood as just as essential and socially useful as the community school and the community health centre. The dilemmas involved in quantifying project outcomes, where those are intangibles like emotional, psychological, and social transformations resulting from community arts participation, inform the need for alternative and/or complimentary indicators to the outcome measurement, which I denote *income* indicators and *in-reach* (rather than outreach) strategies for sustainable socio-cultural development. Combinations of the three main factors determining the grounding of cultural policies and NGO projects – *looseness, lapse of time,* and *locality* – define the shift from a box to a bowl-shaped concept of time which, in turn, underlines the transition from outcome-based to *income*-based project planning and long-term qualitative measurement of participatory processes rather than projected products.

The article drew comparisons between the Anglo-Saxon arm's length cultural funding model and the cultural funding strategies in countries supporting national networks of community arts centres, such as the European Network of Cultural Centres, the Latin American Network of Arts for Social Change, and the growing African Arterial Network. It advocated more broadly linking all kinds of professional and community arts, using the case of the South African community arts centres to draw lessons about community cultural development. *Hand-shake* policies, in particular cultural policies on community cultural centres (and their networks), however, still lack conceptual research and practical implementation and improvement. *Hand-shake* policy mechanisms – regular

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[5] I observed this work first hand while conducting research in Peru (four months between 2005 and 2009).

[6] Paloma Carpio, shared in conversations at the Dresden Workshop of *Red Latinoamericana de Artes para la Trasformación Social* (RLATS), May 2008.

and nationally distributed basic institutional support for community cultural centres and programs emphasizing a community's social meaning and sustainability of engagement – provide a distinct alternative (as a concept, method, and in results) to irregular arm's length policy funding schemes where the focus is much more on quality projects, aesthetics, and outcomes.

In either case, multiple inefficiencies exist, and the issue is not about finding the 'best' policy model, which is impossible and even dangerous to frame, but to understand the need to explore various angles of the arts in both professional and non-professional contexts and how they can be flexibly put together to produce policies and politics of touch that do not suppress and crush, as do totalitarian fist-grip cultural strategies, but flexibly move the hands of the state toward both arm's length and hand-shake policies engaging in decision-making and local policy/project implementation with much community participation and feedback. Overall, development projects needs to shift from a one-directional 'giving' approach to a two-directional, reciprocal cycle of exchange when all sides give and take. Only cycles create and *sustain* movement.

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