

2. Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The area of culture has grown in salience in global development issues on account of the rising share of cultural goods, services and intellectual property in world trade as well as the threats to cultural diversities and identities associated with contemporary globalization. Also there is increasing awareness that the protection and promotion of cultural diversity is vital to universal human rights, fundamental freedoms along with securing ecological and genetic diversity. This standpoint is premised on the view that sustainable development is only achievable if there is harmony and alignment between the objectives of cultural diversity and that of social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability.

The aim of this paper is to elaborate on the notion of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development along with the social, economic and environmental dimensions. The key premise of the paper is that culture is more than just the manifestations of culture, for example, 'the arts', and should be viewed instead as the 'whole social order' (Williams 1983). From this perspective even the construct of sustainable development needs to be interrogated because particular conceptions of the global social order are prioritized in its various interpretations.

The paper therefore examines both the "culture of sustainable development" in terms of how it has evolved as a global agenda and how the cultural arena can be facilitated by the construct of sustainable development. In this way the paper operates from the methodological standpoint that "it is the meaning of sustainability in the different contexts to which it is being applied that should be the central concern" (Jacobs 1994: 241). This is done with a specific focus on the issues for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) because of the priority these countries have given to the concept of culture in sustainable development¹.

Sustainable Development in Global and Historical Context

Sustainable development entered the development discourse in the early 1970s. The 1972 UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment may be argued to be the first international conference that brought the concept of sustainability to the international arena. However, there is a general consensus in the literature that it was the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) that was largely responsible for providing the normative-conceptual bridge between environmental concerns and development outcomes (Langhelle 1999: 145). Sustainable development was further legitimised following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 (known as Earth Summit); the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in 1993; and the World Summit for Sustainable Development which was held in Johannesburg in 2002. These conferences facilitated the globalization of the concept and the establishment of an international consensus on the concept of sustainable development by the formulation of such action plans and guidelines such as the Brundtland Report and Agenda 21.

¹ The issue of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development was addressed at the Mauritius International Meeting for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (also known as 'Barbados +10') whose purpose was to review the implementation of the programme of action for the sustainable development of SIDS. At the meeting a number of new and emerging issues were outlined which SIDS identified as indispensable to their sustainable development. Culture emerged as one of these new issues and was identified as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

Owing to what Meadowcroft (2000) describes as the “sweeping nature of this ideational construct”, a variety of definitions have been conferred on the concept of sustainable development. However, the most popularly employed definition, provided by the Brundtland Report (WCED1987), argues, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Another often-quoted definition of sustainable development is the one provided by Caring for the Earth: “improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems” (cited by Munro, 1995, p.29).

Among the multiplicity of definitions and interpretations there is a general view that identifies ecological and environmental factors as the limiting factor on development. At the core of these views is the notion of an “inter-temporal conflict of interest” between the development practices of present generations and the perceived needs and capabilities of future generations (Langhelle 1999: 133). Critical to this agenda is the requirement of compromise between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’, hence the idea of limitations placed on the development process in order to sustain or improve the balance between homo-centric and nature-centred development (Galtung 1996: 129).

Sustainable development has traditionally been focused on an environmentalism framework that gives priority to the issue of ecological degradation. One can safely argue that environmental concerns are the cornerstone of sustainable development. Until recently, sustainable development was viewed solely through the lens of the environmentalist but as the concept has matured, increasing emphasis has been placed on its interconnection to social and economic dimensions of development (Kadekodi 1992). Indeed, contemporary mainstream notions of sustainable development portray it as a tri-dimensional concept featuring the interface between environment, economic, and social sustainability” (Bell, 2003; OECD 2001).

The economic dimension of sustainable development (economic sustainability) reflects, according to Munro (1995), the need to strike the balance between the costs and benefits of economic activity, within the confines of the carrying capacity of the environment. Economic progress should not be made at the expense of intergenerational equity. Therefore, resources should not be exploited to the extent that their re-generative ability is compromised.

Social sustainability relates to the maintenance of political and community values. Social values and norms, being largely intangible, relate to the “ethics, value systems, language, education, work attitudes, class systems” and so on, that influence societal relations. Social sustainability also speaks to the satisfaction of basic human needs within the society such as food, clothing, and shelter. The sustainability of social needs and values alludes to the quality of growth that occurs in the economy. Equity in the distribution of resources is integral to social sustainability. According to the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987: 54) “economic and social development should be mutually reinforcing”.

The main concern and criticism emanating from advocates and theorists of sustainable development have been that economic conceptions of development are dominant and that they are particularly problematic in relation to sustainable development. For example, Gottlieb (1996: 27) argues that some of the core problems are:

- (a) the failure of positivist economics to insure that the spread of benefits reaches those most in need of them;
- (b) its failure to factor ecological costs (e.g. the costs of depleting stock resources) into social debts;
- (c) the view that social welfare embodies products rather than rights, and
- (d) conventional economics' inability to assess endogenous capacity for cultural, institutional, political and ecological recovery.

As such the addition of sustainability to the development equation is reflective of a shift away from the narrow concerns of mainstream economics and modernization theories that emphasize economic growth to the disregard of other concerns such as the relationship between the ecology, inter- and intra-generational equity, and social justice (Langhelle 1999). This is very much reflected in how sustainable development became part of the critique of neo-liberal development models that came to dominate the development discourse in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Haque 1999). In this sense the sustainable development paradigm should be viewed as not a stand alone construct but part of the growth of new social movements and the rising wave of discontent with conventional development theory and practice (Cohen and Rai 2000).

There is also the view that mainstream notions of sustainable development co-opt rather than challenge, for example, neo-liberal economic hegemony because it shares a similar foundational premise as hegemonic development approaches in that it still prioritizes capital accumulation, for example, concepts like growth and efficiency remain part of the sustainable development discourse. (Lele 1991; Haque 1999). So although the sustainability paradigm questions the "limits to growth" there remains a high level of coherence with the core features of contemporary development thought and practice. As such mainstream notions of sustainable development fall within the narrow confines of modernization theories of development which prioritizes an image and vision of development scripted in the tenets of Western technological civilization that is often promoted as the "universal" and the "obvious" (Aseniero 1985). What it does is to legitimize so-called modern Western values and to deligitimize alternative value systems thereby constructing a global cultural asymmetry between the "West" and the "Rest" (Banuri 1990).

Culture and Sustainable Development

The area of culture is often narrowly defined and thus made irrelevant to the wider development debate. For example, in one of the only publications that makes the linkage between culture and sustainable development the focus "addressed the social and economic opportunities and requirements to mainstream investments in cultural heritage and the living arts" (Serageldin and Martin-Brown 1999: ix). It is on this basis that Jon Hawkes (2006: 1) argues, "the tacit acceptance of the arts and heritage version of culture 'has marginalized the concept of culture and denied theorists and practitioners an extremely effective tool.'" What Hawkes is alluding to is that there are several interpretations of the word "culture". Indeed, as Raymond Williams (1983: 11 - 13) points out in his book entitled "Culture", there are at least four contested definitions of culture:

1. A developed state of mind – as in a person of culture', 'a cultured person';
2. The processes of this development – as in 'cultural interests', 'cultural activities';
3. The means of these processes – as in culture as 'the arts' and 'humane intellectual works';

4. And, lastly, as ‘a whole way of life’, ‘a signifying system’ through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored.

Most usage of the word culture relate to definitions 3 and 4. Often the two are conflated and made indistinguishable. However, for the purpose of this paper all four definitions are useful and critical. For example, when discussing sustainable development it is critical to move beyond talking about preservation of ‘the arts’, “heritage” and ‘cultural identities’ to also include the broad civilizational notion embodied in culture as a ‘whole way of life’ because it informs the underlying belief systems, worldviews, epistemologies and cosmologies that shape international relations as well as human interaction with the environment.

From this standpoint it is useful to also engage with definitions 1 and 2. Under the latter, the notion of cultural activities, such as ‘agri-culture’, which is one of the earliest usage of the word culture, also relates to the sustainable development issue in that some agricultural practices are deemed to be more eco-friendly than others on account of culturally informed patterns (e.g. integrated farming versus slash and burn agriculture). And those who see themselves as being more enlightened on the sustainable development issue may view ‘others’ as being less ‘cultured’ which has implications for the environmentalist social movement and how it mobilizes. These examples are given to illustrate how pervasive the concept of culture is and how it impacts on notions and practices of sustainable development.

The other key thing to note is that when it comes to sustainable development not all cultures are equal, some cultures are more equal than others, depending on the political and historical context. At one end of the sustainable development discourse western science is viewed either as the cause or the solution to the problem. At the other end of the spectrum, traditional or localized, particularly non-western knowledge is either seen as ‘backward’ and problematic or romanticized as ‘sacred wisdom’ and therefore valued for its future value. So that when we speak of the promotion of cultural identities, cultural pluralism, cultural industries and geocultures as key elements of the fourth pillar of sustainable development it refers to a need to redress the global imbalance in the cultural arena.

What needs to be underscored is that sustainable development as practised in the developing world is largely informed by Western notions and is often funded in accord with the agenda of multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental and philanthropic donor agencies from the developed countries. This is viewed as problematic because it creates new dependencies for the developing world and raises concerns about whose agenda is being served. One analyst, for example, argues that

Global environmentalism and its supportive science come to be seen as at least partly the product of particular, Western-dominated cultural traditions and relations of power. The imposition of global orthodoxies and analysis over different environmental values and notions of sustainability can infringe not only on local livelihoods, but also on cultural freedom, in a deeply decivilizing process (Leach 1998: 103).

The above quotation encourages us to view the insertion of culture into sustainable development from more than an additive framework. In this sense, culture is not just a fourth pillar to be integrated into the well-settled notion of sustainable development. Alternatively, it is a basis for interrogating the meaning and practice of sustainable development at its epistemic core so that culture does not become just a palliative.

Culture as the Fourth but Central Pillar of Sustainable Development

As the concept of sustainable development has matured it has opened up the debate for further reflection. This is a welcomed development and explains why culture is being considered as a key element of the sustainable development framework. Culture should be viewed not just as an additional pillar of sustainable development along with environmental, economic and social objectives because peoples' identities, signifying systems, cosmologies and epistemic frameworks shape how the environment is viewed and lived in. Culture shapes what we mean by development and determines how people act in the world.

This perspective on the incorporation of culture into sustainable development presents a challenge because both words, 'culture' and 'development', are complex in usage and interpretation. For instance, Raymond Williams (1981: 87) argues, "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language". He does not indicate what are the other two most complicated words but based upon his comments about development it would suggest that it is a good contender to top the list. He therefore cautions that

What is often the unexamined idea of development can limit and confuse virtually any generalizing description of the current world economic order, and it is in analysis of the real practices subsumed by development that more specific recognitions are necessary and possible (Williams 1976:104).

The key point being made here is that the conceptual framework used determines what we see and how we act in the world. For example, according to Galtung (1996: 131), when most people think about development they are principally operating with one or both of the following theses:

- (A) Development = Western development = Modernization, and
- (B) Development = Growth = Economic growth = GNP growth.

If Galtung is correct, then in spite of all the various theories that abound, at the core, development in theory and practice, is still about the emulation of the Western European Road to Development (Addo 1996). In practice development establishes a hierarchy of knowledge and a demonstration/emulation effect that suggests that the "leaders" know what is best for the "followers" and that all that is required of the "followers" is to apply the formula of development faithfully (Aseneiro 1985).

How does this relate to sustainable development? As indicated earlier, the main aim of sustainable development is to strike a balance between competing and conflicting interests, intra and inter-generational. In this regard, global inequality and the development discourse are at the forefront of the ecological problem because of the uneven growth and the emulation effect that it generates. The following quote from Langhelle (1999: 137) illustrates the nature of the dilemma:

If the poor nations were to consume the same amount of fossil fuels as the rich nations, this would likely result in an ecological disaster. At the same time, however, the *goal of development* demands an increase in energy consumption in developing countries (a presumption which is also expressed in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

When one examines the contemporary development context there is much admiration for the economic successes of China, India, South Korea and Taiwan which together account for almost half of humanity and over 70% of manufacturing value-added from the South. A critical concern is that many developing countries are busy trying to catch-up with these countries and it raises the question whether the achievements of these countries can be emulated (i.e. is it attainable) by other developing countries and whether this is indeed a desirable goal given what we know about the level of economic despoliation and social debt that has come with these trends (Nurse 2003).

The key point being made here is that sustainable development is intricately linked to the geocultural construct of development (Wallerstein 1991). The possibilities for an ecologically sustainable future depend on how “production cultures” and “consumption cultures” are altered and adapt to the changing ecological, socio-political and technological context. For example, Haque (1999: 202) argues that sustainable development is “threatened by the dominant mode of development thinking that emphasizes a growth-oriented industrialization”. He also hastens to add that “related to this profit-driven production and growth, there is also the diffusion of consumerist values and life-styles”. As Banuri (1990: 83) argues, the implications of this approach to development is that:

While it provides for a tremendous (perhaps temporary?) increase in the ability to control nature, it is also the cause of a myriad of problems including loss of meaning in peoples’ lives, increase in alienation and anxiety, creeping disenfranchisement, an unprecedented rationalization of violence, and destruction of the environment.

Such critiques call for an alternative framework for sustainable development. The argument in this paper is that culture must be placed as the central pillar and fully integrated into that of the other pillars of the economy, the social and the ecological (see figure 1). Thus, it is proposed that an alternative approach to sustainable development prioritize the following values:

- Cultural identity (the social unit of development is a culturally defined community and the development of this community is rooted in the specific values and institutions of this culture).
- Self-reliance (each community relies primarily on its own strength and resources).
- Social justice (the development effort should give priority to those most in need).
- Ecological balance (the resources of the biosphere are utilized in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems as well as the global and local limits imposed on present and future generations (Friberg and Hettne 1985: 220).

This framework for sustainable development is of particular importance for developing countries and especially SIDS. By putting culture at the centre of the sustainable development paradigm this framework allows for greater diversity in policy choice. In effect, what is proposed is a non-deterministic approach that breaks out of progressivist, universalistic and dependency-creating development thinking and promotes self-reliance, social justice and ecological balance. This view accords with the maxim that:

The countries of the Third World that have a real option to choose indigenous rather than Western solutions to their problems are those with access to a strong cultural heritage (Friberg and Hettne 1985: 220).

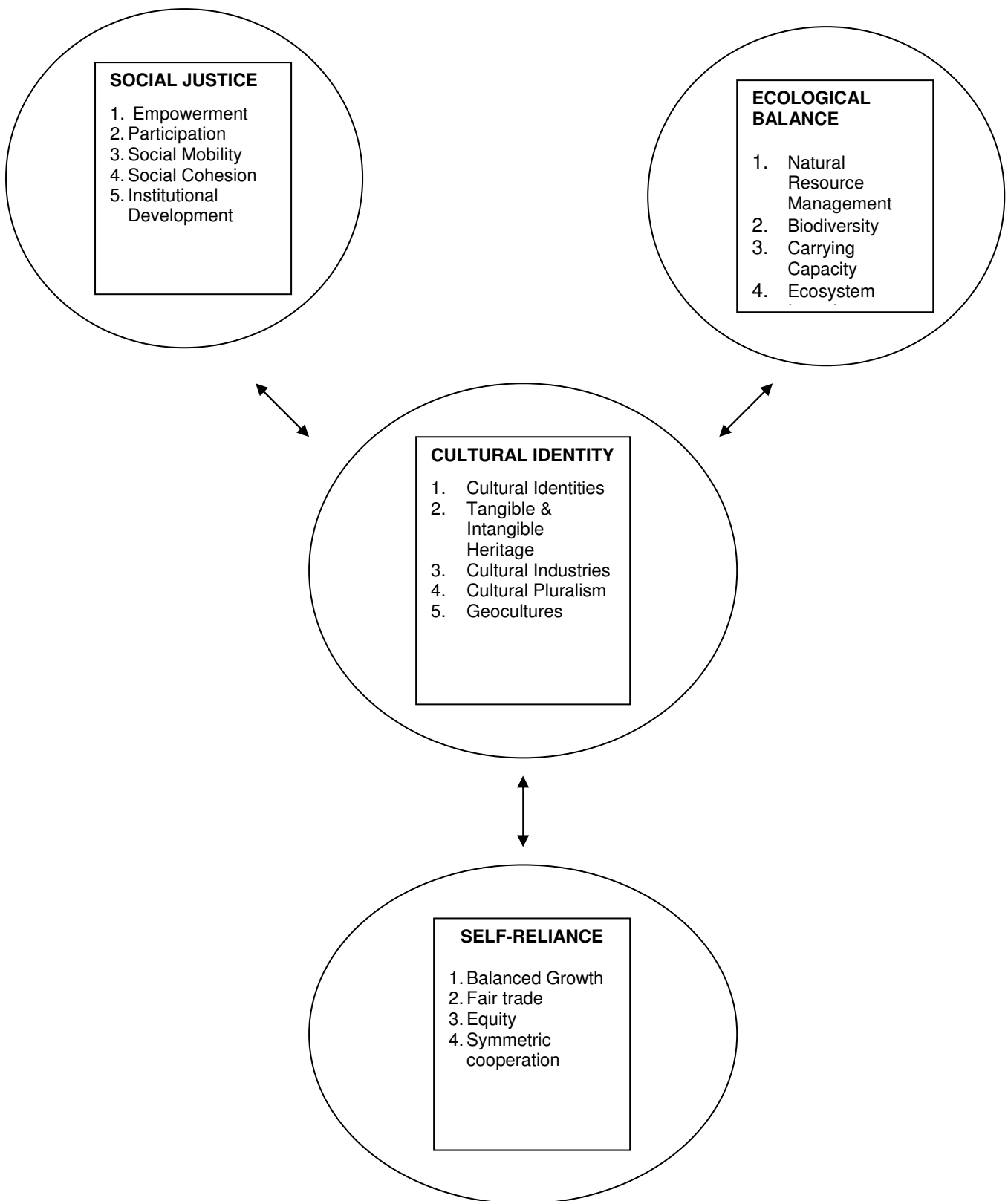
Culture and Sustainable Development in SIDS

International consensus on the unique circumstances facing SIDS and their sustainable development was achieved in 1994 following the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados. The Barbados Conference sought to ‘customise’ the concept of sustainable development that was popularised by the Earth Summit, to the unique circumstances of SIDS. Consequently, this Conference was the platform against which a Programme of Action was developed as a guide for SIDS to overcome the specific vulnerabilities that hinder their sustainable development (Briguglio 2006). Ten years on, in Mauritius, a review of the progress made by SIDS in sustainable development ensued.

Among developing countries, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are considered to face a far more formidable challenge in realising sustainable development (UNECLAC 2000). By virtue of their small size, SIDS are constrained mainly by factors such as high limitations on natural, human, and technical resource bases thus compounding the challenges of high degrees of economic vulnerability, geographical isolation and extreme susceptibility to environmental change. The extent of economic and environmental vulnerability that is characteristic of SIDS forms the principal impediment on the sustainable development of these nations (Bass and Dalal-Clayton 2006).

The economy of most SIDS (e.g. tourism) depends on the exploitation of their bio-systems, such as fisheries and coral reefs. SIDS are also highly susceptible to the effects of climate change such as a rising sea level. Hence, natural disasters and environmental degradation have a dual effect on such nations, destroying not only the “ecological sub-system”, but further diminishing the economic and social viability of these nations, for example, through the impact of tsunamis and hurricanes. When this situation is combined with the contemporary shift towards liberalised trading regimes under the aegis of the WTO and the erosion of preferences the economic and social viability of SIDS is further compromised.

Figure 1: Pillars of Sustainable Development



What the above suggests is that for SIDS, economic and social vulnerability is not just a function of small size and environmental limitations it also relates to the mode of insertion of these economies into the global political economy. SIDS have extremely high commodity specialisation of trade, such specialisation usually being in the export of low-value-added raw materials and commodities, which have declining terms of trade and fetch low (and volatile) prices in global markets. Tourism, which is the major service export, also suffers from low levels of local value-added and high levels of external control. Combined with the commodity and service specialisation of exports, is the geographic concentration of markets, competition among SIDS for these markets and the dependence on imported necessities and manufactured products to sustain the society (Streeton 1993).

These conditions are not inherent; they have emerged from a particular socio-economic and politico-cultural context. SIDS have long served as “cultural crossroads” and/or plural and hybrid sites for identity formation, and global inter-connectivity from pre-colonial times to the contemporary phase of globalization. SIDS are the most inter-penetrated societies, especially in relation to global media, tourism, migration, trade and aid dependence. Most SIDS have been integrated into global processes since the expansion of European-centred capitalism and are characterized as mono-cultural economies and societies. In so many ways much of the vulnerabilities of SIDS are a function of the ways in which they are positioned in the global political economy and not based purely on some inherent set of geographic and environmental conditions.

SIDS, the Cultural Industries and Sustainable Development

The cultural sector plays a dual role in that it is an arena for identity formation and an economic sector with growth potential, including its role as a key driver of the new digital and intellectual property economy. The arts sector and the cultural industries are well recognized as means of artistic expression and symbols of national and regional identity. They describe the role of cultural entrepreneurs and arts enterprises, for-profit as well as not-for-profit in the production, distribution and consumption of film, television, books, music, theatre, dance, visual arts, masquerade, multimedia, animation and so on. The cultural sector is not just a commercial arena, it is an aesthetic and social space where spiritual values, psychic meaning and bodily pleasures are displayed, enacted and represented. From the perspective of SIDS cultural production is an important area for investment and a means of bolstering cultural identity. It also aids the diversification effort in mono-cultural economies that are overly reliant on a narrow base of traditional and non-traditional exports (Nurse 2002).

In several SIDS the cultural industry sector is making an increased contribution to GDP, exports and employment. An analysis of the participation of SIDS in the global cultural economy shows that most operate with a large trade imbalance, the exception being Singapore. The following table provides export and import data on cultural merchandise trade for a selected group of SIDS, specifically those that are known to have some export capabilities. Countries like Jamaica and Barbados from the Caribbean and Fiji in the Pacific or Mauritius in the Indian Ocean are known for their arts and cultural industries but still have a trade deficit. Part of the explanation is that the table has data only for merchandise trade and does not include trade in services, royalties earnings and earnings from cultural and festival tourism where these economies are able to generate some earnings. It is also that in most

SIDS the capacity to document and measure the economic flows and exports is largely underdeveloped.

Table 1: Cultural Industries Exports and Imports, Merchandise Trade, Selected Countries, 2002

	<i>Barbados</i>	<i>Fiji</i>	<i>Jamaica</i>	<i>Mauritius</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
POPULATION	257000*	773000**	2528000**	1127000*	2987000*
EXPORTS (US\$000's):					
1. Heritage Goods	3.3	17.6	0	10.8	3,685.5
2. Books	169.4	123.8	64.5	3,406.90	349,859.5
3. Newspapers & Periodicals	292.5	13.1	141.6	171.9	35,934.4
4. Other Printed Matter	166.4	16.7	12.5	626.1	7,554.5
5. Recorded Media	49.1	66.4	166.4	947.7	1,552,343.9
6. Visual Arts	220.4	168.9	97.5	934.4	10,167.7
7. Audiovisual Media	0.1	3.9	0	73.5	41,443.9
Total Exports In Core Cultural Goods	901.3	410.4	482.5	6,171.4	2,000,989.4
IMPORTS (US\$000's):					
1. Heritage Goods	9.5	0.5	0.3	7.3	4,885.9
2. Books	7,479.1	3,219.6	38,202.0	8,209.9	199,171.7
3. Newspapers & Periodicals	1,891.7	38.1	98.9	2,890.9	26,641.1
4. Other Printed Matter	878.3	365.2	1,350.0	405.1	18,801.3
5. Recorded Media	4,135.9	1,182.4	11,338.3	2,544.2	170,562.1
6. Visual Arts	1,582.3	559.4	1,485.5	1,090.5	41,989.7
7. Audiovisual Media	816.4	1,105.1	238.2	655.9	177,462.7
Total Imports Of Core Cultural Goods	16,793.2	6,470.4	52,713.2	15,803.70	639,514.6
BALANCE	-15,891.90	-6,060.00	-52,230.70	-9,632.30	131,474.80

Notes: Population data is for the following years, 1995* and 1996**.

Source: UNESCO, *International Flow of Selected Cultural Goods and Services, 1994 – 2003*. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <http://www.uis.unesco.org> accessed 02/03/2006.

In economic terms the cultural industries sector is one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. Best estimates value the sector at 7 per cent of the world's gross domestic product and forecast are put at 10 per cent growth per annum (UNCTAD 2004) This growth is accounted for by rapid techno-economic change in products, distribution & marketing (e.g. e-books, iTunes, Amazon.com); the increasing commercialization of intellectual property, particularly copyright; the shift towards a post-industrial economy where personal, recreational and audio-visual services have expanded as a share of the economy; the strong cross-promotional linkages with sectors like tourism (e.g. festival tourism); and the convergence of media, the increasing concentration of large firms and the expansive growth of the digital economy (e.g. the Internet and e-commerce) that allows for easier production, distribution, consumption as well as infringement (e.g. piracy, file swapping) of cultural products, services and intellectual property. These transformations in the cultural industries sector is complimented by the emergence of an inter-governmental framework and regime in the following areas:

- Harmonization & internationalization of copyright regulations (WTO-TRIPs; WIPO copyright & digital treaties).
- Liberalization of cultural industries under WTO-GATS.

- Protection of cultural diversity (e.g. UNESCO International Instrument for Cultural Diversity).

For SIDS the introduction of culture into global trade rules and governance is an issue of immense concern. In many respects it is a contest between the liberalization of trade in cultural goods and services under the WTO and the promotion of cultural diversity through the UNESCO IICD. Many SIDS supported the adoption of the IICD based upon its potential to contribute to cultural diversity and to facilitate more balanced trade in cultural goods, services and intellectual property. However, the key challenge for many developing countries is that conventions do not generate rights or commitments to signatories. In this sense the convention may encourage more artistic production but it would not guarantee space in the market. This brings the issue of cultural entrepreneurship to the forefront of the discussion because no legal framework can legislate who will get into the market or will proliferate in the global, regional or national cultural economy. The principal issue therefore is to ensure flexibility within the evolving rules-based trading system such that developing countries can promote cultural entrepreneurship. Here the key concern is whether developing countries will be able to meaningfully participate in the expansion of this sector of the world-economy through the application of a range of industrial and innovation policy initiatives.

Challenges and Opportunities for SIDS

The main challenge for SIDS is that of establishing new and alternative artforms and genres in global, regional and national markets that are increasingly saturated with content from the main cultural exporters (e.g. the US, UK and India). Participating in these markets are not just a matter of building competitiveness it also calls for changing tastes and lifestyles that are not easily achieved without heavy marketing and alliances with global firms.

SIDS are also faced with a number of challenges that are associated with small and peripheral economies such as weak management and information systems, shortage of skilled personnel, low levels of training, poor manufacturing and service facilities, uncompetitive packaging and branding, weak marketing and distribution channels, high levels of copyright infringement and piracy and weak rights management and royalties collections. There also tends to be an historical, institutional and commercial bias against indigenous content in the home market that marginalizes and chokes off local entrepreneurship, investment and market development.

The key opportunities relate to changes like rising domestic cultural content in developing countries, the growth of diasporic markets and networks, the increasing interest in “authenticity” and indigenous culture in the tourism industry, cost reductions in new digital technologies, the growth of global media (e.g. cable TV, satellite radio), and the emergence of Internet marketing and broadcasting. However, access to foreign markets and media are constrained by the high cost of marketing, the oligopolistic structure of markets and the restrictive business practices of the transnational companies (Nurse 2002).

In this context existing strategies for ensuring competitiveness and sustainable development are inadequate. It is against this backdrop that recommendations for protecting cultural diversity and promoting cultural industries were endorsed in the report of the UN Secretary-General on the Strategy for the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (UNDESA 2006). Table 2 outlines the key priority areas defined by plenary at the SIDS conference which are categorized under two thematic concerns: traditional knowledge and cultural heritage; and cultural industries and entrepreneurship.

While there are many convergences amongst the SIDS regions (Pacific, Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, Caribbean), not all regions have the same priority issues. Among the Pacific, Africa and Indian Ocean territories because of the high level of native indigenous population there tends to be greater concern over issues relating to cultural heritage, ethnic plurality and traditional knowledge whereas in the Caribbean, which is one of the first geographic areas to be incorporated into global capitalism, there tends to be more focus on cultural industries and entrepreneurship as a means to promote intangible heritage. Some SIDS are also faced with the problem of isolation and large distances to global markets whereas others have the challenge of geographic and cultural proximity to developed market economies and the influence of foreign cultural practices.

Table 2: Priority Areas for Action in Culture

Cultural Heritage and Tradition Knowledge	
1.	Involve communities in policy-making to safeguard their cultural heritage, including identifying what deserves protection and who owns it.
2.	Improve the management of cultural and natural heritage sites and ensure the accessibility of such heritage to all and its cost-effective maintenance.
3.	Develop partnerships between Governments and civil society for sustainable heritage management.
4.	Support and strengthen community capacities in resource management and governance.
5.	Develop programmes to record traditional knowledge and preserve customary cultural values, traditions and practices.
6.	Teach and transmit traditional community values and associated local and indigenous knowledge in basic education.
7.	Record and document indigenous languages as a means to support their systematic incorporation into school curricula and encourage publishing in indigenous languages.
Cultural Industries and Entrepreneurship	
8.	Build capacities in cultural areas through education and training in the arts, arts administration, heritage management and cultural entrepreneurship.
9.	Invest in cultural industries to generate new and indigenous forms of employment and exports, to aid in the diversification of economies, and to reinforce and expand cultural confidence and ties with overseas communities.
10.	Strengthen consultations between Governments and cultural industries in order to align government policy on culture and trade, industry, tourism, education, intellectual property protection and other sectors.
11.	Protect the intellectual property of small island developing States against piracy in the music, publishing and other creative industries, and build the capacity for rights management and patents, trademarks and copyright administration in small island developing States to protect all forms of creative innovation and raise public awareness of those issues.
12.	Improve institutional capacity for the advocacy, promotion and marketing of cultural products, services and intellectual property, including copyrights.
13.	Improve access to capital and credit, in particular in the areas of development financing and market development grants for small and medium-sized enterprises and the establishment of culture support funds in small island developing States regions.

Source: Summary of Panel three – “Role of culture in the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States” at the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Conclusion

The paper argues that culture should be viewed not just as the fourth pillar but as the central pillar of sustainable development. The basis for this comes from the interrogation and deconstruction of the meaning and practice of development itself. This analysis shows that mainstream versions of sustainable development maintain the core features of developmentalism and modernization which are considered to be the main cause of environmental and associated global maladies. In this regard the paper outlines a framework for reconstructing the sustainable development agenda that has the potential for greater coherence with the goals and values such as social justice, self-reliance and ecological balance. The argument is that mainstream notions are embedded with a culturally specific framework that holds sway over other visions of development thereby foreclosing the pursuit of more relevant approaches. The paper in effect calls for opening up the discourse on sustainable development to facilitate greater policy space and choice by developing countries and SIDS, in particular.

The paper starts from the premise that the value of cultural diversity is equivalent to that of genetic diversity in the sustainable development debate. It identifies both the protection of cultural identities and the promotion of cultural industries as valid transition goals towards sustainable development because of the ways in which cultural content shapes and communicates the identity, values and hopes of a society. In this sense cultural goods and services are not mere commodities, services or bundles of intellectual property. They are critical catalysts for identity formation, nation building and reinforces and expands the cultural confidence of former colonial societies and their diasporic communities. The cultural industries are also worthy of investment because of the returns that it generates in terms of new and indigenous forms of employment, production and exports. It also aids in the diversification of mono-cultural economies and facilitates a more competitive development platform. The conclusion is that the cultural industries should be viewed as a critical strategic resource in the move towards creating sustainable development options in SIDS.

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