

The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability

Culture's essential role in public planning

by Jon Hawkes
for the Cultural Development Network

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The Fourth Pillar provides a clear definition of culture, analyses its function within the emerging new planning paradigms and proposes practical measures for the integration of a cultural perspective into the public sphere. The key conclusion of this work is that a whole-of government cultural framework, operating in parallel with social, environmental and economic frameworks, is essential for the achievement of a sustainable and healthy society. Cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic vitality. In order for public planning to be more effective, its methodology should include an integrated framework of cultural evaluation along similar lines to those being developed for social, environmental and economic impact assessment.

Part One, "The Meaning of Culture" puts forward a comprehensive definition of culture that focuses on its use as a concept to describe the community creation of values, meaning and purpose in life. It then contrasts this with the alternate view of culture as simply arts and heritage, and argues that this duality of usage has created significant problems and confusions.

Part Two, "The Application of Culture", examines the ways that culture is both integral to, and unacknowledged by, the new paradigms of public planning, in particular those that emphasise sustainability and wellbeing as key goals.

Part Three, "The Results of Culture," outlines a range of practical initiatives to improve public planning.

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