

Five dimensions of community

S. Krempl, D. Marinova

Curtin University, Fremantle, Western Australia, Australia

ABSTRACT

The Five Dimensions of Community concept places culture and heritage within the context of planet Earth and the cosmos. This allows space to discover what universal wonder means for people of different backgrounds and to share moments where natural experiences have taken your breath away and provided new sights. Through a greater awareness of the elements of the Five Dimensions of Community we can better engage in the interconnectedness between heritage and culture, the built and natural environment, corporate living and spirituality. This paper proposes that in order to contextualize our cultural heritage, we need to go beyond the triple bottom line and the four pillars sustainability frameworks that seem to separate us from the rest of the world, and look for the spiritual links that connect us to each other, the Earth and the universe so that new or renewed sustainable traditions can emerge.

1 INTRODUCTION

Are we sufficiently proud of our contemporary cultures to confidently say that we wish to pass these on to future generations? As cultures homogenize through the dominating influences of urban cities and globalization, has our cultural heritage experience been narrowed to a point that it is unsustainable?

This paper looks at our contemporary lives to see whether there are important aspects that we have overlooked in our business. It draws out contemporary meanings and values, different ways of knowing and communing with nature and spirit. More importantly it hopes to encourage reflection on the dominant worldview that human beings and other-than-human beings are two separate entities, and to grow an appreciation for a mindset that places human beings within a greater, more sustainable, whole. It is hoped that the concepts presented may provide different ways to review our cultural heritage and approaches to life and work so that new or renewed traditions can emerge towards living sustainably.

A report for the International Network on Cultural Policy on Intangible Heritage (Deacon et al., 2004: 7) states: “globalization is feared as a cultural bulldozer capable of flattening marginal cultural forms in the same way that Hollywood and Bollywood floods the local film market”. Concepts such as the Triple Bottom Line – planet, people, profit or environmental, social and economic success (Savitz & Weber, 2006) are part of globalization, with the Four Pillars of Sustainability, which adds culture to the Triple Bottom Line (UNESCO, 2002), being an attempt to humanize it. The Triple Bottom Line concept is aimed at business for trade accountability and is less suited for reviewing cultural wellbeing. It refers to monitoring and measuring of social, environmental and economic standards to be attained in undertaking trade. The added cultural perspective in the Four Pillars context, is more often than not used in anthropocentric contexts, such as the value of cultural diversity and the importance of Indigenous cultures for humankind. Despite their good intentions, these concepts may be contributing to a lack of consideration for anything other than human wellbeing.

Many thinkers and leaders in the sustainability field see collaborating beyond human beings as critical to improving the health of the planet. For example, Berry (1999: 72) stresses that the four key establishments being governments, universities, religious traditions and corporations that play a significant role in the direction that human life takes “are failing in their basic purposes. They all presume a radical discontinuity between nonhuman and the human modes of being, with all the rights and all inherent values given to the humans”. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss when and how this disconnection occurred; however it should be acknowledged that past communities and civilizations had a far greater connection, collaboration and a reverence for the natural world.

Meanwhile centuries have passed influenced by Western philosophy as shaped by Descartes, Darwin and positivist thinking. At last a new layer of divergent worldviews, understandings and interpretations started to emerge to show that reductionism and species survival are only part of the picture and that an overarching collaboration between humans and nature exists. Kropotkin (in Ridley, 1996), asks whether the fittest species are those who are continually at war with each other or those who support one other. Kropotkin’s response is: “we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest” (in Ridley, 1996: 4).

In our cultural heritage endeavors, are we separating humans and nonhumans? Or are we working to create habits of mutual aid, an awareness of interdependency and a collaborative and therefore sustainable path? Is mutual aid the best sustainability strategy?

The Five Dimensions of Community is a new concept that extends the Triple Bottom Line and The Four Pillars to enable reflection on our way of life that is equally respectful of human and nonhuman cultural diversity and systems. This paper presents the work in progress in the use of this concept and draws on particular examples from this research.

2 THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY CONCEPT

The Five Dimensions of Community has the potential for the intangible link between human and nonhuman to be explored. As such let us first introduce it in a way that allows a sensory experience:

Imagine yourself being in your favorite place in the world. It is often the three-dimensional place that you first recall. The colors, forms and textures you once saw and touched come to mind. However there is more to the place that makes it special. This place triggers, for you, a point in time in your life. You may recall the happiness or sadness that was with you then. Perhaps it conjures up relationships and experiences at that period of time. This space of identity, family and community is the fourth dimension. Are there other qualities attached to your favorite place? Perhaps you felt the wind when you were there, or saw a sunset or heard sounds that sparked a sense of universal wonder, and you were transported, in an instant, into a spiritual dimension. All these five dimensions make places special to you personally but also for any community.

The Five Dimensions of Community (see Table 1) immediately places our culture and heritage in the context of the Earth and the cosmos. This has the capacity to include our expanded thoughts and relationships with humans, nonhumans, the planet and beyond and to many and diverse tangible and intangible ways of knowing and living. It includes a completely new dimension, the fifth dimension, to the three-dimensional reality that is associated with the Triple Bottom Line. The three dimensional world, because it is tangible and “real”, is much easier to put boundaries around and rules governing economic performance, regulations, processes and corporate systems exist in this three dimensional world. Interestingly enough, the three dimensional world can have a limited impact on how we view and express our lives and the world, in the same way that economic laws can have limited impact on culture and heritage. The fourth dimension is similar to the Fourth Pillar in that it is represented by culture, heritage and identity as it pertains to human beings. The fifth dimension however is very special. It refers to

what is intangible and spiritual in our lives – extremely difficult to define but easy to succumb to. We describe it as universal wonder. In many ways this dimension holds the essence of community heritage and cultural relationships with the natural living and non-living human and nonhuman world. Whilst it could be argued that a sense of spirituality exists in the three dimensional world, which includes the natural world, and also in the fourth dimension, or the people space, the majority of Western Australian people interviewed to date have found benefit in having the fifth dimension, or a spiritual realm, as a separate consideration because it involves a different sense of being that could easily be overlooked if it did not have space dedicated to it. In the words of one research participant: “Spirituality is a way of looking at Nature and you can turn it upside down and Nature is an aspect of spirituality but if you don’t separate them, they just coalesce then you miss the intentionality of being spiritual.” In addition, time and consideration for spirituality was seen as essential for making decisions and following through with actions that were for the greater good, not just for humans but for all Earth communities.

The words community and culture, in this context of the Five Dimensions of Community, are used interchangeably. The word community can mean a collective of people with a common background and this implies therefore similarities and shared life styles or cultures. Encouraging the interchangeable use of the words is a way of allowing communities to see themselves as having a culture which is important in a place such as Western Australia where it is common place to hear many communities, both urban and rural, say that they don’t have a culture and that only Aborigines and people from other countries have cultures. The term ‘cultural cringe’ was coined by Australian writer A.A. Phillips in 1950 (The Age, 2005: March 25) and reflects this attitude. Post-Colonial literature (Ashcroft et. al. 1989:2-12) refers to this attitude towards culture as an eroding of a sense of self due to dislocation caused by migration and other factors. It goes on to say that new settlers needed to be allowed to express their sense of ‘otherness’ through integrating natural settings and experiences for example the new landscapes, climate, seasons, flora and fauna and even creating a unique form of English into their everyday lives. Through statements in interviews it would seem that this ‘cultural cringe’ has not changed very much at all hence the use of community and culture interchangeably to enable participants to recognize that their way of life – who they are, their dreams, values, beliefs and how they communicate with each other and in their work processes, how they interact with the built and natural environment, how and where their history is kept, their customs and traditions, how they trade and what they trade in, how others see them – is their culture.

Table 1. The five dimensions of community concept.

The three dimensional world	refers to the world that can be seen and touched – both natural and built.
The fourth dimension	comprises of the identity, the culture and heritage of human beings ranging from individual to groups and community and includes relationships within human individuals and communities
The fifth dimension	refers to a universal wonder – an intangible spiritual realm

The Five Dimensions of Community concept is intended as a framework that acts as common ground to enable dialogue and discussion of appreciation of the understandings of spirituality, the phenomenal experiences associated with these and how important these are to well-being, a deeper appreciation of culture and heritage and to sustainability. As one research participant as put it: “The people that I have known who work so well and independently within the cultural field have a sense of spirituality. And that could be from a deep belief in a religious perspective or from other. Creativity is one of the things, along with spirituality, that we tend to treat lightly and dismiss – for ourselves too. If we don’t see it as important for ourselves then we are not going to acknowledge the importance for others and therefore we have the power to deny others that opportunity and that recognition. So we withhold part of their wellbeing if we don’t provide that space.”

For too long conversations on these topics have been declared politically incorrect and therefore removed from situations where people of different backgrounds come together – which in our urban life has become the norm. Contemporary communities are diverse. When you don't find common ground, differences become barriers. When common ground is achieved differences are appreciated. Research conducted in Western Australia, using the Five Dimensions of Community concept as the common ground, indicate that communities recognize spirituality as part of their everyday life and appreciate opportunities to have their spiritual interpretations and experiences acknowledged and deemed credible.

The fifth dimension has been prominent as well as forgotten throughout human history. The environmental attorney and governance specialist Cullinan (2011) examines the roots of our legal heritage prior to the birth of corporations. He takes us back to the history of law, when Cicero, a first century BC Roman philosopher stated that: "True law is right reason in agreement with Nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting... We cannot be freed from its obligations by Senate or People, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it." (Cullinan, 2011: 69). However, the first century BC law has evolved and the current law regards the connection between people and nature is as follows: "Animals, plants and almost every other aspect of the planet are, legally-speaking, objects that are either the property of a human or artificial 'juristic person' such as a company, or could at any moment become owned, for example by being captured or killed. For as long as the law sees living creatures as 'things' and not 'beings', it will be blind to the possibility that they might be the subjects (i.e. the holders) of rights. It is simply legally inconceivable for an object to hold rights" (Cullinan, 2011: 63).

Rules of human dominance over others and over all nonhuman entities are present in all areas of the Triple Bottom Line and the Four Pillars and have repositioned our original thinking and values regarding our relationships with nonhuman in favor of economic and corporate management and growth for humans. These laws have also framed our cultural and heritage contexts.

We have a very clear example of this in Australia. The year 1967 was very important for Indigenous Australians. Laws were changed providing Indigenous Australians the right to be reclassified from "Flora and Fauna" to "Human Beings". As "Flora and Fauna", Aboriginal Australians were objects, not subjects and not allowed to vote. In a Sydney Morning Herald article, Linda Burney (2007: n.p.), an Australian politician, is quoted as saying: "This is not ancient history. I was a child. It still staggers me that for the first 10 years of my life, I existed under the Flora and Fauna Act of NSW."

If the situation was reversed, and we were all "Flora and Fauna" instead of "Human Beings", the importance of Nature to human culture may have been better appreciated and integrated into our culture and heritage. In retrospect, the categorizing of Aboriginal Australians under Flora and Fauna could be seen to imply that Aboriginal Australians have intimate knowledge of flora and fauna communities. This could also imply that government and administrators making those decisions were separated from this connection with the Australian bush. A lack of respect for the laws of nature in the Australian context has resulted in disastrous policies and agricultural practices that have destroyed vast expanses in Australia. In the Western Australian Wheatbelt that is 19 million hectares in size, approximately 93% has been cleared for European-style agriculture resulting in extensive wind, water, soil erosion and rise in salinity. (Men of the Trees WA, 2010: 4), However both the "Flora and Fauna" and "Human" classifications fall short of recognising the richness, intimacy and phenomenal experiences encountered within spiritual dimensions as is evidenced in this quote from a desert country Aboriginal elder (Robinson, 2010: 56): "Listen carefully this, you can hear me. I'm telling you because earth just like mother and father or brother of you. That tree same thing. Your body, my body I suppose, I'm same as you ... anyone. Listen carefully, careful and this spirit 'e come in your feeling and you will feel it ... anyone that. I feel it ... my body same as you."

The link between community and nature appears to be a recurring theme. However the links portray humans in conflict rather than in collaboration, asserting their domination over Nature. How strong is this link to Nature in our contemporary urban communities, our urban cultures, and what are the impacts on sustainable futures? The Five Dimensions of Community does not specifically focus on Nature. Nature has a place in the three dimensional world and there is scope for including Nature within the fourth and fifth dimensions, but it is not clearly articulated and could be missed. The Five Dimensions of Community does not have a specific focus for governance or corporate systems either and corporate systems play a very significant role in contemporary culture. So where does governance and corporate systems sit in the Five Dimensions of Community?

3 CORPORATE SYSTEMS AND THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY

The Five Dimensions concept does not have a dedicated place for corporate systems because corporate systems are a tool, just as technology is a tool. Corporate systems, like technology, whilst essential and provide many benefits, are not a dimension of life. Using this same rationale, the economic area of the Triple Bottom Line or the Four Pillars is also a tool and not a dimension of life. Economics has been given the status as a dimension of life and Spirituality is not represented in the Triple Bottom Line. Yet, it could be argued that peoples' belief systems influence their life and trade choices, what they determine as quality and what is seen as sustainable. The importance of a consciousness of Nature and Spirituality in every day life could therefore have significant impact on sustainability and likewise, the demise of Nature and Spirituality in every day life can potentially be very costly to human sustainability. Apply Newton's law of motion that states that "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" (NASSA, 2010) to our current global situation and we have the current world scenario being the interest of human wellbeing and the preservation of all things human becoming human self-destruction! The shortcomings of this consciousness in governance matters and in applying corporate systems tools without an awareness of the interconnectedness of natural systems is reflected in the experience of a Western Australian forester interviewed as part of this research: "Currently, in thinking of a big system like the Rangelands of Western Australia, the governance is divorced from the nature of the land. The governors have an incomplete understanding and their decisions are dominated by political expediency and self-survival in the system – unconscious of the dynamics of the natural system that they are governing. This is not a judgment that they don't know the system. They are just unconscious of the dynamics of the natural system. The more there is consciousness of Nature and Spirituality the better the decisions will be."

4. A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY

Without clear representation of Nature and corporate systems in the Five Dimensions of Community their relationship with spirituality and culture cannot be properly accessed. To this end, a second chart, the Connectivity Matrix (see Table 2) assists to further explore the Five Dimensions of Community and to better understand its applications in our contemporary lives. Table 2 is currently in development. It provides a different view and understanding of the Five Dimensions of Community. It brings corporate systems and Nature into focus.

The Community, Corporate, Nature and Spirituality matrix is a human social connectivity matrix that captures the elements of life and our engagement with different 'worlds' in a different way. Through it we can reflect on how much time we spend in each area to try to appreciate what is or would be a more balanced and therefore sustainable life. Table 2 is not intended to segment life up into silos but rather for the sections to help us to focus on, and give time and space to each different element in turn, and then to view it as a whole.

As part of community engagement work in the environmental sector in 2010, Krempl conducted three workshops as part of sustainability awareness events. These workshops were based on the Community, Corporate and Nature columns of Table 2. The spirituality column had not been developed at that point. One workshop was with government, one with a not for profit group and one was open to the public. Participants were asked to give a percentage to

each of the three columns based on their perception of how much time they spent in each, taking their current life and work as a whole. The total for all three columns needed to add up to 100%. In all three workshops, the ‘Nature’ column failed to reach a 10% average. As a result of this, we began to question the reliability of biophilia described as the love of nature that is inherent in all of us – as stated by a leading Australian environmentalist, (Flannery, 2010: 107-108) in his quoting the work of evolutionary biologists Wilson and Fromm. Research done on the death of languages, (Nettle & Romaine, 2000:2-7), shows that once the application for words are lost, the context changed, or the focus of a community shifted from an earth rich way of life to a more common global language, the nuances and locally specific words can be lost within as little as one generations. If, then, communities have been detached from nature for two generations, could we loose this biophilia, this connection and love of nature, forever? It is a possibility. How would that disconnection impact on the decisions we make and the culture that we would pass on to future generations? Is the current level of disconnection already having an impact on environmental sustainability – including human survival? Is this connection with nature and spirituality a strong or weak part of our cultural heritage? And will the richness of our cultural heritage be compromised by a decline of nature and spirituality in our lives? On the other hand, it is also a possibility that a consciousness of spirituality can de-commodify nature to ensure that biophilia is revived where it is losing its connections within our communities.

Table 2. Connectivity Matrix

	<i>Community Culture (1st Person)</i>	<i>Corporate Systems (3rd Person)</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Spirituality</i>
<i>Communication</i>	Oral Communication	Written Communication	State of Being	Universal Wonder
<i>Skill required</i>	Listening / Observing	Writing / Speaking	Flow	Silence / still
<i>Process</i>	Involvement	Detachment	Interdependence	Transformation
<i>Foundational element</i>	Vision & Tradition (identity)	Management & Governance (stability)	Creation & Destruction (change)	Belief (hope)
<i>Essential conditions</i>	Trust & respect	Facts and figures	Time and space	Compassion
<i>Intended outcome</i>	Belonging	Money	Sustainability	Love

The Five Dimensions of Community and the Connectivity Matrix is being trialed as a setting for conversations about Nature and Spirituality, topics that would usually be far removed from contemporary urban social or work communities. The categories and dimensions have, so far, helped participants to work through and clarify different aspects, for example the difference between what we consider to be the environment and Nature. Through this process, staff in environmental organizations, have stated that it is a different thing to be carrying out environmental work and to be immersing oneself in Nature. This may seem obvious now that it is stated but in the busyness of corporate living it was, in many instances, overlooked. After the sharing of memories and experiences in Nature, it became apparent for some that time for Nature had not been factored into their lives and they were remiss of this. In other cases, where this difference was known and recognized, there was a consciousness of the need to make time to be in Nature and this was already part of their lifestyles. Environmental work was seen as detached and objective and belonging under the corporate system area as was scientific research that was also seen to fit under the corporate objective, reductionist category.

Immersing oneself in Nature was described as being open with ones senses, listening, observing, smelling, becoming more aware of natural surroundings and the life within it, responding to it, feeling a connectedness. It was seen as a presence as well as being present in it. It was feeling a sameness, an ‘intuneness’ which did not happen unless you could unwind into

it as described in this quote from a Western Australian environmental sustainability leader: “I can have time and space but my state of mind would have to have stillness. If I have created the time and space, empty of thoughts, then that is stillness. We tend to use the word spaces to mean not doing anything. But I was trying to communicate the stillness of mind rather than stillness from doing things.”

Nature seems to have an impact on people. “When you are in nature – in that natural world – there is a sense of honesty and you can communicate honestly. I don’t really know why. Perhaps there are no distractions. You can be more open with people in a natural setting. It allows for that one on one time that you can spend with your family or by yourself. Some of the best and open conversations I’ve had with my family have been driving through the paddocks. Where as if you are sitting at home, the radio or TV is on and people walk in and out. When you are out there, there is just Nature, you and the other person or Nature, you and your family.” Krempf describes an experience of this impact that Nature had on people when she was on a Men of The Trees Society tree planting day with busloads of high school children. She first saw them get off the bus in rather rowdy fashion strutting an air verging on arrogance and very concerned about their looks. As the day went on she noticed them change and start to notice things around them. The teenagers calmed down and lost that egotistical element as their clothes and hands and shoes got covered with mud as they trundled through paddocks soaked with winter rain to collectively plant thousands of native seedling to rehabilitate degraded land. It would seem that Nature had tamed them. Marinova describes her experience with taking PhD students to maintain a section of the Bibbulmun Track – a 1000 km long largest pedestrian path maintained by volunteers in Western Australia. The students have to walk for 20 km while doing some work, such as cutting branches, removing fallen trees, pulling out weeds. The first 1.5 km seem like an impossible task and very different from their everyday routines, but then something happens... They can start to see the blue skies, hear the sounds of the birds, observe the colors of the flowers, trees and bushes, feel the smell of the air... Walking is no longer a challenge, they feel they can jump, walk very quickly and even fly. Nature has given them energy and rejuvenated every cell of their bodies. Everything is interesting, there is something magic in the air.

5. TAKING UP THE FIVE DIMENSIONS CHALLENGE

This research that explores Nature and Spirituality as important spheres of life has allowed a different kind of exploring to occur about how we live our lives. In one organization, it came to be known that some staff had often wished to be able to take their work outdoors in Nature as appropriate but assumed this would not have been supported by peers and management. Through opportunity for dialogue this permission was unanimously supported. This may seem like a simple thing but it was like the joy of a child being allowed to go outside to play. Although that analogy of a child enjoying going outdoors requires qualification these days as Louv, the person who coined the term Nature-deficit disorder, reminds us with a quote from a fourth-grader in San Diego which says “I like to play indoors better ‘cause’ that’s where all the electrical outlets are” (Louv, 2005: n.p.). The research provided the administrators in the organization with a greater appreciation of the complexities of feelings and intangibilities of the work done with communities and staff who work directly with communities. Administration staff themselves, once liberated from their corporate personas, shared rich experiences in Nature and Spirituality reflecting intriguing cultural diversity. It also provided community workers a chance to appreciate the complexities and pressures of the corporate system.

As part of the research, participants from the organization were asked how much time they spent in each of the four areas as shown in Table 2 at this point in their lives, and, in the case of an organization, how much time each participant believed that the organization spent in each area. It was the domination of time for corporate matters, through the percentages exercise, that surprised this community service organization and this triggered a finding that the pace they were working at seemed to erode the noticing of small but important points required for the integrity of quality of life for those that the organization serviced. It was said, that it was easier to bring an awareness to these important intangible areas through discussing spirituality as spirituality brought values to the surface. Here is a quote from research with that

organization: “There is a pace we reach very quickly that will leave others behind. And the ones that are left behind are the people that we are supposed to be sitting along side.”

In other contexts the domination of corporate matters was dealt with in a different way. This is one person’s considered response to the percentage question. It expresses the benefit of spirituality in underpinning community and corporate worlds. “The spirituality part is in all areas. During the day there might be little bits of spirituality happening that are bigger than time. However, the time for spirituality transforms the other aspects of life. Spirituality and Nature need to be incorporated into community and corporate worlds. So I need to incorporate spirituality and Nature into me all of the time in order for me to operate best in community and corporate worlds.”

6. ALLOWING THE FIFTH DIMENSION

So far, this research has found that persons who have close and active links with Nature also have a deep sense of spirituality. How have they defined spirituality? The following statements from interviews conducted in December 2011–February 2012 with Western Australian sustainability leaders and workshops with not-for-profit organizations show that there are differences in how spirituality is perceived in response to the different aspects as shown in Table 2. Spirituality is described as the inner intuitive gauge of right and wrong, respect, being what is done rather than what is said, the essence, the driver, a letting go of self, and a sense of being and being in the presence of whatever one perceives as the creator of the universe. It is also moments when we are knocked out with some natural experience of wonder and amazement and beauty. Here are some thought provoking quotes on Spirituality from research participants:

“As humans we transcend the physical by some mysterious, unquantifiable and unobservable but very important way, we are more than physical”

“We need to find ways to be aware of spirit every moment whatever our proclivity is”

“This is where we fall short as a species. I think that is why spirituality is expressed in so many ways because we don’t have a language for it. We will see spirituality expressed through writing, music, dance, prayer, meditation, objects. It is universal wonder. It is what the spiritual within us reveals and finds the doorway to. We use every tool in the book to try to communicate something that is incommunicable.”

Aspects of commonality with regard to spirituality were also noted. These are the deep appreciation of stillness and an ability to hear the silence that enabled people to be aware of their spirit and the spirit of all things in Nature and the universe. Nature is recognized for its three dimensional physicality as expressed in a range of favorite places that included a person’s home and surroundings, to particular forests, oceans, beaches and other natural locations – but the connection goes beyond the physical form. The scope with the Five Dimensions of Community and its placement within the wider context of Earth and the cosmos allowed the recognition of common threads with favorite three-dimensional places to move from the three-dimensional to the fourth and fifth dimension with ease. In this quotation, Nature’s physical and spiritual dimension is captured along with universal wonder and the human relationship to all these aspects: “Driving through the Kari Forest – it is like the air has a color to it and going into that space you become one with the world you are going into.” Another account states: “As soon as we reached the land of Pia, it was different. It felt like the trees, the earth and the birds all welcomed us along with the people. We could feel the spirit of the land and the spirit of the people instantly. You knew there would be a *Grevillea* bush there and a set of rocks and when you came back the next year –seeing the land was like seeing old friends.”

The fourth dimension – the people realm, also had connectivity leading to a deep spiritual fifth dimensional place. Again, in this instance, the Five Dimensions of Community and the Connectivity Matrix provided the scope for the participant to consider different layers of relationships and their meanings for community wellbeing.

The inclusion of the fifth dimension – the spirit realm – in the Five Dimensions of Community concept, provides time and space to share experiences and thoughts about Nature and Spirituality in every day living and working situations. The research shows that Nature is an accepted common ground for spiritual expression and engagement; however the majority of those interviewed supported having spirituality as a separate dimension from Nature as it provided a different entry point.

For some this experience of talking about Nature and Spirituality was new. For these people, the love of Nature seemed inherent but not familiar and in some instances there was a resistance to engaging with nature, because it was unknown and because it contained living things, like ‘creepy crawlies’ that they saw as a threat. These persons preferred the comforts of city living and five star comfort rather than a night under a million stars! This was the same for Spirituality. Where there was not a close link to Spirituality, it was not initially familiar. In these situations there was also a resistance to engaging in spirituality because of preconceptions of what spirituality meant. Spirituality for these people meant religion and religion was something they would prefer to avoid. In most cases, dialoging about spirituality in its broader sense was seen to be enjoyable and appreciated.

For some, their lack of engagement in Nature and Spirituality was seen as a stage of life where other aspects such as raising children and demanding careers were the priorities. On the other hand there were those in demanding senior positions who made it their priority to go for runs or walks through park and bush land or to take weekends away in Nature on a regular basis. The majority of people interviewed were not so fortunate or disciplined, or they felt guilty to take time out from being busy, but wished to have more time to engage in the spiritual realm be it Nature or in some other practice to reacquaint themselves in these areas. Practices such as yoga, the arts, martial arts, retreats, meditation, prayer and time for self-reflection, bushwalking, camping and even travelling was what they would do with this time.

Initial findings from the interviews with sustainability leaders and workshops with not-for-profit community organizations indicate that the following are the key challenges in allowing the Five Dimensions of Community space in our lives:

- Skills and customs are required to help us relearn how to quiet our minds: “Stillness in a way of shutting down all the busyness of the mind and the brain and the physical movement in order to be in the presence. Without it we are too busy looking at our self than to reality.”
- There is a need for more teachers, guides and opportunities to experience Nature and to bring Nature closer to us in our life and work: “I think there is a lot that is inherent [about Nature]. Sometimes when you tell a story about the land or share with people about the land it opens their eyes to the land or they have an experience of the land. There’ll be something that wakes them up to that [Nature].”
- Values need to be spoken and their application reinforced and taught. Values should not be taken for granted: “I underpin all projects with teaching the values of respect, non-judgment and compassion. And I verbalize these often and encourage actions that demonstrate these values.”
- Recognition that as human beings, we are part of a greater whole and have a responsibility to learn the languages of the other than human: “If there is a lack of opportunity [to be in Nature] because you are a city dweller then I can see that the lack of interdependence or interconnectedness that prevents you being able to be engaged with Nature and I could see that being a pretty dangerous position. This is because the engagement with Nature is non-verbal. Nature has a language of its own. If we ignore Nature then we have the potential to be very destructive.”

7. CONCLUSION

Even though the majority of workshops and interviews were conducted in the built environment, the fact that the discussions focused around Nature and Spirituality seemed to allow

a sense of being in Nature and Spirituality that opened, what has been described by participants as, honesty in discussion without the corporate and commercial distractions.

The focus on Nature and Spirituality, which is seen by the majority as inseparable – although good to have as separate lenses to keep each alive in our mind and senses – are perceived as a requirement for community wellbeing and areas to be strengthened for the sustainability of future generations. This would therefore imply that what is perceived as our contemporary culture as it currently exists in Western Australia, is not something that Western Australians interviewed would be proud to pass on to future generations. Nature and Spirituality is seen as necessary to draw out meanings and values, different ways of knowing and communing with all things of the Earth, the cosmos and all dimensions within and beyond our comprehension and would provide the depth of culture required for sustainable futures.

In Western Australia, the impact of governance and policies developed without a consciousness of the dynamism of nature has had devastating impacts on Nature's own ability to find homeostasis and these same regulatory systems together have forged a main stream community that largely sees itself as cultureless with culture belonging only to Aborigines and overseas people. Yet the richness of heritage, life experience, tacit knowledge, a sense of wonder and connectedness with the world and the universe emerged once a credible setting was created and the words Nature, Spirituality and universal wonder were given time and space to allow people to journey through the dimensions of life, living and wonder. The visibility of words should not be underestimated. This ending quote states this quite profoundly.

“[Languages] have no tangible existence like trees or people. In so far as language can be said to exist at all, its locus must be in the minds of the people who use it. A language is not a self-sustaining entity. It can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in.”(Nettle & Romaine. 2000:5)

REFERENCES

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London and New York. Routledge. Reprinted with permission of Taylor and Francis on <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/ashcroft3f.html> accessed on 8th March 2012.
- Berry, T. 1999. *The Great Work: Our way into the future*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Burney, L. 2007. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3rd May, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/when-i-was-fauna-citizens-rallying-call/2007/05/22/1179601412706.html>, accessed on 9 January 2012.
- Caterson, S. 2005. *The Age*. 25 March 2005. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/National/Expatriate-games/2005/03/24/1111525276948.html> accessed 8th March 2012
- Cullinan, C. 2011. *Wild Law. A manifesto of Earth justice*. London: Green Books.
- Deacon, H., Dondolo, L., Mrubata, M. & Prosalendis, S. 2004. *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage*. Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Flannery, T. 2010. *Here on Earth. An argument for hope*. Melbourne. The Text Publishing Company.
- Louv, R. 2005. *Last Child in the Woods. Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. New York. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Men of the Trees WA. 2010. *Diversity Across the Wheatbelt. Putting It Back, Together*. Perth, Men of the Trees Western Australia.
- NASSA 2010. *Newton's Laws of Motion*. Glen Research Centre. NASSA <http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/K-12/airplane/newton.html> accessed 10th March 2012
- Nettle, D., Romaine, S. 2000. *Vanishing Voices. The extinction of the world's languages*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Ridley, M. 1996. *The Origins of Virtue*. London: Penguin Books.
- Robinson, I. 2010. *This Thirsty Heart. A journey in the deserts of Australia*. Perth: MACSIS Publishing.
- Savitz, A.W. & Weber, K. 2006. *The Triple Bottom Line: How today's best run companies are achieving economic, social and environmental success – and how you can too*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- UNESCO 2002. *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Adopted by the 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO*. Paris: UNESCO.