

Creative workers' views on cultural heritage and sustainability

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Abstract

This paper presents the “Arts–Sustainability–Heritage” (ASH) model which may be used to understand the values and actions of creative workers in relation to cultural heritage and sustainability. The model is derived from previous research on conceptions of sustainability, and the qualitative data comes from the “Creative Workforce” survey. We contend that artistic work is essential both for cultural heritage through the work’s reference and re-interpretation of culture, and for sustainability as a reflection on the current and future state of society. Artistic work is often considered an intangible cultural asset, and hence, the contribution of creative workers is often overlooked in a policy environment. The ASH model contributes to understanding the contribution of this ephemeral work toward cultural heritage and sustainability.



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He has carried out research projects investigating lecturers' and students' conceptions of sustainability and related dispositions that are key aspects of professional preparation at the tertiary level.

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Cultural heritage and sustainability are two entwined concepts that have found their way into international cultural conservation policies over the past decade. This paper presents a model known as the “Arts–Sustainability–Heritage” (ASH) model, which is designed to help understand the values and actions of creative workers in relation to cultural heritage and sustainability. The model extends our work on the characteristics, economic circumstances, and drivers of creative workers. We contend that creative (artistic) work is essential for cultural heritage through the work’s reference and re-interpretation of culture, and for sustainability through its reflection on the current and future state of society. Artistic work is often considered an intangible cultural asset and hence the contribution of creative workers is often overlooked in a policy environment. The ASH model contributes to understanding the contribution of this ephemeral work toward cultural heritage and sustainability.

Cultural heritage has become the core of tourism strategies in which buildings and townscapes, customary dances, and food create economic advantage for communities. Cultural heritage generally focuses on aspects that are perceived as familiar by the inhabitants but as unique by outsiders. It has an association with activity from the past, with historic narratives that align to the object or activity and hence make them more interesting to both insiders and others. In contrast, sustainability generally has an ecological and environmental connotation, based on the idea that living conditions are improved through development without degrading resources in order to do so. Sustainable development, as an idea and practice, has a broad engagement with food assurance, water and air purity, use of natural resources, promulgation of Indigenous cultures, education, and so on. It also engages with the production of place in relation to cultural construction of political economies: “how places are endowed with meaning and

the constitution of identities, subjectivities, difference and antagonism, following phenomenological, interpretivist, and constructivist paradigms.”¹ Effectively, sustainability is about keeping things going forwards toward a positive human outcome. Cultural heritage and sustainability as entwined concepts have both a backward- and forward-looking perspective in which human activity is seen as the sum of the legacy of the past and the potential of the future.

Cultural tourism can be seen as an example of the inter-relatedness of the two concepts. In an attempt to preserve cultures and lifestyle, tourism can offer a means through which a group’s culture can become a commodity for exploitation. For the insider, it can allow a discussion of what is favored by the community as the key cultural indicators. These cultural features can add to visiting outsiders’ awareness of their home culture through the insights and experiences of another. In this sense, both the local group and the tourist group can gain an advantage through the exploration of those cultural indicators. Moreover, the experience of defining culture through tourism practices can give shape to that culture as the inhabitants codify their culture as a commodity. As Escobar has argued,² communities actively construct their sociocultural worlds “through their laborious daily practices of being, knowing, and doing . . . even if in the midst of other forces.” However, tourism—and in turn cultural tourism—is rarely devised unencumbered by locals for outsiders to experience; rather it is a complex set of constructs involving multiple industries and broader political and economic interests.^{3,4} These may or may not be representative, and may or may not be locally or even nationally run.

In its simplest form, a human tension is created through the need to critique the value of one’s background in order to present it to others. In small communities, the very practice of promulgation starts to shift the community value of the

cultural element into something that is both historical (and hence an important concept for an individual's cultural identity) and present (something that can safely represent cultural identity to others). The present representation of culture for others also provides a way to sustain that culture into the future, and yet it is here that the complex set of constructs is most keenly felt. Culture is essentially not the same as it has been in the past; it has become culture-for-commodity and hence lies in a liminal space between cultural orthodoxy and marketing. The decision—whether made by or for a community—to present culture for tourism also raises issues of sustainability, issues surrounding tourist transport and accommodation, and aspects of communication, business and preservation. These may well detract from the culture itself. In contrast, tourism has at times enhanced the recognition and/or status of a culture, as a result of which that “cultural identity is likely to be enhanced rather than to disappear.”⁵ Clearly, there is a complex array of economic and physical relationships that converge on the site of heritage. Titon⁶ refers to this as a form of “cultural ecology” where music (as culture) embraces a multilevel interconnection with organism, population, and community. As well as orthodox models of culture, there are aspects of culture that are intangible.

Intangible heritage comprises cultural elements that are rather more ephemeral than buildings and townscapes, but that still form essential elements of culture. It can include spoken stories, poetry, art, music, dance, clothing, weaving patterns, food, and even memories. As many of these things are not kept in a permanent repository (other than the mind), this form of cultural heritage is much more difficult to sustain. Alvizatu⁷ suggests that intangible heritage comprises “embodied practices of intergenerational cultural transmission.” These practices are ephemeral and rely on some form of communication from generation to generation. Folk songs, lullabies, and dance music are all examples of this ephemeral practice which connects one generation to another, one group with another, one culture to another, and that can also be changed and modified as each new situation demands.

Concerned with moving local planning and decision making toward a more long-term, coherent, and participatory approach to achieving sustainable communities, Duxbury and Mateus⁸

(2012) propose a four-pillar framework for community sustainability comprised of environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural sustainability. As the fourth “pillar” of this model, cultural sustainability recognizes the essential need of humans to participate in cultural activity that pays homage to our past and lets future generations understand our experience. As Hess notes, when “cultures fuse musically, our identity shifts. We become creole subjects through the encounters we experience, particularly . . . in highly diverse spaces.”⁹

There is increasing focus on the heritage and sustainability of Indigenous groups (see for example the work on the loss of musical traditions among Australia's first peoples¹⁰ and among the Yorùbá people in Nigeria.¹¹ Despite this, very little research has been done on the re-formation of the intangible in urban settings. As Blake remarks,¹² “there is a great difficulty in identifying the exact content and nature of intangible cultural heritage to be protected.” Bell concurs,¹³ adding that there is an added risk of marginalization and social engineering: “Preservation establishes a sanctioned perspective presented and interpreted for posterity that then serves to exclude and marginalize other layers of meaning. Such exclusion, in turn, can limit access to and use of a place, and disenfranchise entire communities with divergent associations to the heritage place, to the degree of affecting their lifestyle, livelihood, and even identity.”

Creative workers, like all people, express different identities depending on the situations in which they find themselves. In this context, culture is rather fluid as creative workers will adopt and appropriate sounds and images from a range of sources to support the ideas they wish to present. For creative workers in music, who often have “portfolio careers”¹⁴ where work is an intermittent collection of different jobs, it is important to create a unique sound that differentiates them from other musicians. As expressed in the idea of culture-for-commodity, urban-based musicians often create fusions of different musical forms to make their artistic voice unique. The size of contemporary urban centers suggests that there may be a lot of this hybridization, or creolization occurring. We use the term “creolization” to refer to the complex interactions between diverse musical cultures and the consequent development of new

musical cultures, recognizing the role of creative workers in bringing to life practices that originate “in many cultural and temporal matrices, and the extent to which local groups, far from being passive receivers of transnational conditions, actively shape the process of constructing identities, social relations, and economic practice.”¹⁵ These new musical cultures characteristically select components from the original cultures and blend them in creative ways. Musical creolization can be considered as the bridge between musical heritage and musical sustainability, between the past and the future of cultural identity expressed through music.¹⁶ Recent research in the context of the Australian creative workforce indicates that heritage and sustainability are issues that are important to creative workers. To date, research that looks at cultural heritage and sustainability has focused on individual and community identity preservation and promulgation amongst Indigenous populations.^{17,18} There is only a small literature that discusses cultural heritage and sustainability in artistic contexts beyond Indigenous studies in the diverse communities that reside in urban contexts.

Much of the existing research on the creative sector focuses on economic value derived principally from intellectual property.^{19,20} This largely ignores the commercial uncertainty of symbolically rich goods and services which Pratt²¹ argues are far from “simply the ‘icing on the cake’ of the ‘real economy’.” Indeed, there is a paucity of research that examines the value and intersections of creative work within the larger urban cultural ecology.

Within this ecology exist important distinctions between labor processes geared to produce continuous output and those established for distinct, albeit often serial, production projects.²² These differences influence and are influenced by the nature of employment and production systems, and they also reflect the problems and opportunities associated with a sector fuelled by high levels of intrinsic motivation or “calling”²³ alongside the need for “personal identification with meaningful work”²⁴ as a psychological measure of success and career satisfaction.

Markusen²⁵ has drawn on Becker²⁶ to emphasize that creative work involves a series of relationships that cross the commercial, non-profit, public and informal community sectors. The creative sector includes a significant proportion of volunteers and

paid workers within the not-for-profit and community sectors, and these activities evidence other important notions of value.^{27, 28} One of these notions concerns the contributions of the arts and of artists to Australia’s cultural heritage and sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AS “HIDDEN WORK”

We have noted that cultural sustainability has been recognized as a subset of ecological sustainable development and comprises the fourth pillar of a model for community sustainability.²⁹ Despite recognition that cultural vitality is critical for economic health and social equity, contemporary discussions of cultural sustainability that include artists are sparse.

As we have argued previously,³⁰ much of the cultural work of artists is “hidden” because of part-time, unpaid and/or portfolio work. Alongside this, national data collections report only on main occupation and on major cultural institutions (such as art galleries), and they neglect the wide variety of arts activities that are the result of individual entrepreneurial work, or that reside in urban contexts.³¹ Because of this, we know little about the experiences of artists as they work within urban communities.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recognizes cultural activity as an important contributor to the economy. Hawkes suggests that “cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability.”³² Hawkes provides a workable definition of culture that includes “the social production and transmission of identities, meanings, knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, memories, purposes, attitudes and understanding.”³³ In our research we explore the experience of making and experiencing art as part of the Australian urban landscape. This adheres with the principles proposed by the International Network on Cultural Policy at their meeting in Santorini, 2002, which includes the statement: “the preservation of cultural heritage is a crucial component of identity and self-understanding that links a community to its past.”³⁴

Despite the current Australian and international discussion on the role of cultural sustainability for community identity, Reid and Petocz’s³⁵ research on educator and student perceptions of the concept

of education for sustainable development suggests that very few see culture as an aspect of sustainability, focusing more on environmental aspects. In Australia, *environmental* sustainability features strongly in scientific policy documentation; however, there is little discussion of cultural sustainability and development. Understanding how creative artists themselves experience their work in relation to cultural heritage and sustainability would allow policy makers to better reflect the contribution of those artists to the community. It is possible that research will contribute to a deeper, sector-specific analysis of the characteristics and dynamics of creative workers' portfolios, including the relationships between each creative or non-creative activity.

A MODEL FOR CREATIVE WORKERS' VIEWS OF HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

We have argued previously³⁶ that sustainability and cultural heritage can be viewed as higher-level graduate dispositions, along with concepts such as ethics, sustainability and creativity. This work was situated within the context of music higher education, and it had yet to consider the extent to which these dispositions were voiced by practicing artists. To fulfill this need, we analyzed qualitative data from a survey of creative workers (described in the following section) in relation to community, society, service or social justice. The responses were mapped against the ASH model, adapted from our previous explorations of sustainability.

We have investigated university lecturers' conceptions of sustainability in the context of their teaching.³⁷ Using a phenomenographic approach to the analysis of interview transcripts, we found that views of sustainability could be classified in three hierarchical conceptions. The narrowest of these conceptions ("distance") focused on defining sustainability in terms of "keeping something going," essentially as a way of avoiding engagement with it. A broader conception ("resources") focused on sustainability in terms of material, biological or human resources. The broadest conception ("justice") focused on the notion of fairness from one generation to the next, or even within one generation, as an essential condition of sustainability. These views represent the values that were held by university lecturers. There were

corresponding modes of action in the context of university teaching for sustainability that were characteristic of each. The narrowest ("disparate") was a manifestation of the simplest idea, that teaching and sustainability were completely separate activities. A broader approach was "overlapping," in which ideas of sustainability could be useful in the teaching endeavor in some instances. In the broadest approach ("integrated") sustainability was seen as an essential component of teaching. A later investigation of tertiary business students' conceptions of sustainability³⁸ found that the same model was applicable to learners as well as teachers.

In a modification of the model, we investigated educators' conceptions of internationalization in the context of teaching,³⁹ and applied the modification to the analysis of the papers presented at an international conference on teaching statistics.⁴⁰ In these studies, we positioned internationalization as a value or disposition, a correlate of the disposition of sustainability, and containing common elements. The empirical analysis was based on written texts—the papers presented at the conference—rather than transcripts of interviews, and these texts supplied plenty of evidence for the appropriateness of the model. In the current project, we present another modification of the original model, to the notion of sustainability in the context of creative work. We focus on the cultural aspects of sustainability, and include the explicit time dimension by referring to "heritage and sustainability," and we shift the focus from the activity of teaching or learning to the context of creative work.

The ASH model (see Table 1) considers the inter-relationships between cultural heritage and sustainability and the practice of creative workers. Two dimensions are in focus: the view of cultural heritage and sustainability in the context of creative work—the value dimension, and the view of creative work in the context of cultural heritage and sustainability—the action dimension. At the narrowest level, artists see heritage and sustainability as irrelevant to their creative work ("distance"), except maybe in terms of the practicalities of maintaining their artistic practice. They see their creative work as being unrelated to the activity of heritage and sustainability ("disparate") and don't talk at all about combining them in any way. At the intermediate level, artists notice that

Table 1. The ASH model

Heritage and sustainability (in the context of artistic work)—values held		Artistic work (in the context of heritage and sustainability)—actions taken	
Distance	Cultural heritage and sustainability are seen as irrelevant to artistic work. Sustainability is viewed only in terms of practicalities of maintaining an artistic practice.	Disparate	Artistic work and cultural heritage and sustainability are unrelated ideas. Artistic work focuses on artistic creation and expression of new ideas; heritage and sustainability focuses on the continuation into the future of objects and ideas of the past.
Artifacts	Cultural heritage and sustainability are possible sources of inspiration for artistic work. Sustainability is viewed in terms of its input into such artistic work.	Overlapping	Artistic activity overlaps with the notion of cultural heritage and sustainability. Ideas of heritage and sustainability can be incorporated into examples of artistic work, both by drawing on ideas from the past and by aiming the work at future solutions of current problems.
Justice	Cultural heritage and sustainability are approached by focusing on the ‘social contract’ between artists and their world. Sustainability is viewed in terms of equity and social justice.	Integrated	Artistic activity incorporates cultural heritage and sustainability as essential components. Artistic work is an expression of a particular view of the world, with the artist as cultural guardian and social critic.

the values of heritage and sustainability can provide inspiration for some aspects of their creative work (“artifacts”) and they believe that their artistic activity can be combined in some situations with ideas of heritage and sustainability (“overlapping”). At the broadest level, artists see cultural heritage and sustainability as essential components of being an artist, and focus on the “social contract” between the artist and the society in which they live and which supports them (“justice”). Creative work is an expression of a particular worldview, in which the role of the artist is to be a guardian of cultural heritage and a critic of society’s future direction (“integrated”). This analysis of artists’ views is derived from their personal narrative of reflected experience. In a sense, these narratives are representations of the participants’ view of their position and not descriptions of actual outcomes.

It is a common feature of variation theory⁴¹ that conceptions are ordinal and hierarchical. In their earlier work with educators, as in Wihlborg’s work with nurses,⁴² Smith, Reid and Petocz noted that someone who holds the broadest “justice”/“integrated” view is also aware of and able to use the narrower views. However, this does not happen in the other direction: so someone “who holds the narrowest ‘disparate’ view will not easily understand or have sympathy with the broader ‘overlapping’ view and may have no idea at all about the ‘integrated’ conception.”⁴³

EMPIRICAL DATA

With the aim of generating a more detailed picture of the characteristics and dynamics of the work and careers of creative workers, the Creative Workforce Survey was implemented in Perth, Western Australia, in 2010–2011. Using respondent-driven (or “snowball”) sampling, participants were recruited through creative industries networks. Since this was an unknown population, calls for participants were also made through industry press, local media, industry associations and elsewhere. To reduce bias in what was essentially a chain-referral approach, sampling involved multiple “seeds” (initial sources) selected to align with Perth’s creative industry sectors. The survey elicited 182 responses from a broad spectrum of creative occupations and employment types. The artists reported 61 diverse creative occupations and listed up to seven consecutive roles (a median of three roles was recorded). The largest representation was from visual artists (13%), followed by writers (11%) and musicians (8%). Participants were aged 18–80, with 60% of them being female.

Survey questions required closed or open-ended responses, and repeated items for the purposes of triangulation, validity and reliability. The survey did not ask explicitly about cultural heritage and sustainability; rather, it prompted discussion of these issues with open questions that asked artists to describe their professional identity, intersections

between creative practice and the community, paid and unpaid roles, and desired work. The following items required open-ended responses that could be relevant to the topic:

- Q8.1: In terms of professional identity, how do you answer if someone asks ‘what do you do?’
- Q8.2: If your answer changes, how does it change and how do you make that decision?
- Q9: What was your main activity on the last day of last month?
- Q16: What unpaid time commitments do you currently have?
- Q25: What is the relationship between your non-arts roles and your artistic practice?
- Q27.5: How would you prefer to allocate your time, and why?
- Q29: During your career, have you adjusted your career goals with respect to your ambitions as an artist?
- Q31: Thinking back in time, what are the three most formative events in your career?
- Q48: This research will gather stories about the impact and value of the arts within the community, and about the wide-ranging skills, knowledge and activities of artists. If you have a story to share we would love to read or hear it.

Analysis employed inductive coding of the open-ended data to identify community, society, service or social justice aspects, mapping the responses against the conceptions within the ASH model.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented illustrating the three levels of conceptions, from narrowest to broadest. At each level, the dimension of heritage and sustainability (in the context of creative work) focuses on the cultural values that are held by the artist, while the dimension of creative work (in the context of heritage and sustainability), illustrates how these values are enacted within and beyond the arts. Direct quotations from the survey responses are given in italics. Not surprisingly, the quotations at the narrowest level tend to be briefer, while those at the broadest level are often quite expansive.

Distance and disparate

At the narrowest level, “distance” is used to indicate a view that cultural heritage and sustainability are irrelevant to creative work, and responses

are narrowly focused on self rather than other or community. Sustainability is viewed simply in terms of the practicalities of maintaining an artistic practice: for example, *I’m an artist who teaches to make enough money to sustain a virtually unsustainable practice.*

For some artists, notions relating to community were positioned as avenues through which a practice could be maintained: I would like for more of my artwork to make it into the “social enterprise” sector, because it reaches a much larger audience there. Others conflated community involvement with unpaid work rather than with social good or broader issues of sustainability: I am not interested personally in community projects and I think people should be rewarded for the work they do.

In terms of action, “disparate” indicates a view that creative work is naturally distinct from any aspect of cultural heritage and sustainability. Creative work focuses on aesthetic notions of creation and the expression of new ideas, for instance: *I prefer to write, read and study privately, and Art for art’s sake would be my preference.* By contrast, cultural heritage and sustainability comprises the continuation into the future of objects and ideas of the past, a topic that was not seen as relevant by respondents.

Artifacts and overlapping

At the intermediate level, “artifacts” is used to describe a view in which cultural heritage and sustainability are said to provide the inspiration for some creative work, both by drawing on ideas from the past and by aiming the work at future solutions of current problems. Sustainability is viewed in terms of its input into creative work. Several artists expressed this conception in terms of their personal values and interests: for example, *My interest as an artist is the role of arts in society and its important place in our world as a way we make sense of it, share stories, communicate, criticise and celebrate.* For some artists, this conception emerged over time: one artist in her 50s remarked that over many years she *grew in appreciation of what art can do for a community.* Another artist noted that he has *moved away from the individual pursuit of expressing creativity and shifted my focus to people and community and developing ways for community to express their cultural identity in the public space/places.*

Such a view corresponds to actions in which artistic activity is “overlapping” with the notion of cultural heritage and sustainability. The two can be combined in artistic works when the situation allows it: *Goodwill holds it all together as we break new ground socially and culturally, and every singer does what he/she can to help*. Artists commonly expressed a strong sense of satisfaction gained through such engagement with community and broader social issues. For some artists, the impact of this work made it their most fulfilling aspect of the practice, as shown in these statements:

Community work is what I find most rewarding and of transformative, social value, and the moral values are often stronger in not-for-profit and community organizations. Spending more time on these would give me more ethical satisfaction. Other artists spoke of formative cultural events that changed the course of their work: “[My] arts practice really changed fundamentally as I began to work with people and communities that weren’t Anglo-Australian.”

Many artists voiced frustration in relation to the barriers that impacted their ability to engage in broader cultural issues. Not surprisingly the most common of these barriers was time:

If money were not an issue I could work on projects that benefit the community as a whole rather than produce works that appease non-artists to decorate their walls (not that there is anything wrong with that) but art should be accessible to all and community/public art means everyone can see, get involved and have a say in the creativity around them.

For many artists the enactment of this overlapping conception was aspirational—something that could be achieved once existing barriers were removed: for instance, *[I would like to] give up my job, earn money as an artist and contribute to the community, or I would love to have the luxury of giving more into the community*. Two more extended responses were along the same lines:

With unlimited time, resources and access to the developer at the very inception of a development project I could engage with communities and build social capital using the environment as a catalyst for social change.

The choir generates income from engaging with and performing for government and not-for-profit organisations. It is here that we can have most impact as an agent for

reconciliation. . . . More time could be spent on community if we could afford to do this for no payment, with similar impact.

Such comments point to a desire to create a balance in creative work weighted more toward aspects of cultural heritage and sustainability, and lead naturally to the next level of conceptions.

Justice and integrated

At the broadest level, “justice” is used to indicate an approach to cultural heritage and sustainability in the context of creative work by focusing on the “social contract” between artists and their world. Sustainability in this conception is viewed in terms of equity and social justice, expressed in the form of artistic output. One artist expressed this with the statement that artists have *specific and needed skills to contribute to the work we all face in terms of an environmentally healthy and sustainable future*. Other artists expressed their strong belief that the arts contribute to much wider agenda: *Sharing music with the community and for the greater good of the community is what it is about*.

A more extended explanation of this viewpoint is shown in the next quotation:

I strongly believe in community and community projects and also feel the need to give something back through non-profits. I have particular interest in the social enterprise model and would like to be able to help with this as a means of alleviating poverty.

Where artistic activity includes cultural heritage and sustainability as an essential component, it is described as “integrated.” In this conception, creative work is an expression of a particular view of the world in which the role of the artist is to be a cultural guardian and a social critic of future action. There were several more extended descriptions of such work, and they show an obvious passion:

This is the work I have wanted to do all my life . . . The entire ethos of all the work I have been doing . . . is about democratising the arts – bringing great works of ‘live’ art to communities who have the same appreciation as city dwellers, but live thousands of kilometres from where the performances are taking place.

[The arts] affirm the value of seniors and brings people together within communities, acknowledging shared heritage and the importance of sharing reminiscences and

thereby evaluating our lives and making decisions for the future.

My responses to the natural and built environment 'place' strongly inform the development/scoping up of site-specific cultural arts events that have a strong emphasis on Community engagement/participation, skills development and transferring knowledge.

For one artist, the "integrated" nature of the artistic practice itself had been central to a process of self-discovery:

In 2003, I created Aboriginal artwork for health promotion projects. This motivated me to explore my Aboriginal heritage more deeply. I felt I had to know more about where I had come from, before I could decide where I was going with my art. . . . The knowledge I gained has increased my pride as an Aboriginal woman and it has influenced and enriched my life and my art. . . . Through my art, I am reconnecting with my cultural heritage – country, family and history.

Another artist highlighted the "justice" aspects of cultural heritage and sustainability

Sustainability in art is the connection between nature and culture, art and ecology. It promotes artistic expression and social interaction, and takes responsibility for the world that surrounds everyday life. . . . many people don't understand sustainability let alone working as an artist in a business context for the environment. . . . Our current focus is the application of storytelling (as a pattern recognition tool) to generate bio-diverse ecosystems (cultural and biological) and help rapidly reduce extinction rates.

In Australia and elsewhere, researchers target Indigenous groups as sources of intangible cultural knowledge and use contemporary techniques to record their stories, music and dance. Creating repositories of Indigenous languages, images and music is one process intended to keep the cultural value of those communities alive.⁴⁴ UNESCO has focused on this element of preservation as something that is critical for cultural heritage and sustainability with the idea that it is important to record the past to inform the future.⁴⁵

DISCUSSION

The ASH model has provided a means of interpreting the survey data that pertain to creative workers' understanding of cultural heritage and

sustainability. The model shows how creative work is both values oriented as well as action focused. Individuals' voices within the data showed a personal stance toward cultural heritage and sustainability. The narrowest perspectives—"distance" and "disparate"—suggest persons who have not yet considered their own contribution to society in regards to heritage or sustainability. Another reading of that narrow perspective could be that they simply did not see that the survey allowed them space to discuss these issues. In one sense, this is a limitation of surveys, as the results can only be indicative and do not represent a person's whole world-view. However, the data provide evidence of the existence of this narrow perspective, giving arts educators and policy makers the opportunity to help creative workers broaden the scope of their work and opportunity. This is important because whilst the "dematerialization of heritage—the rising salience of stories, designs, musical forms, and information in discussions of heritage protection—offers the prospect of more comprehensive management of traditional cultural productions, yet it also creates daunting complexities for policy-makers."⁴⁶

The "artifact"/"overlapping" and "justice"/"integrated" perspectives show that there is a real possibility for individual creative workers to make an impact on society in the area of cultural heritage and sustainability. These workers are more inclined to reflect on their artistic situations and respond creatively to solve problems of heritage and sustainability. Here too, educators and policy makers could take the opportunity afforded by the creative workers' cultural altruism and support their work in financially meaningful ways. The ASH model could be useful as a basis for policy makers to understand the scope of artistic work and the creative workforce.

According to the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard in March 2013, "Creative Australia: The National Cultural Policy"⁴⁷

addresses the central role of the arts, heritage and creative industries in cultural expression and includes the individuals, enterprises and organisations engaged. . . . [It] also articulates the aspirations of artists, citizens and the community, and the paths to agreed goals. It responds strategically to the economic and social challenges that the next decade of the 21st century is likely to present.

The policy says little about individuals, stating instead that the major funded cultural organizations “are the principal stewards of Australian cultural heritage and its contemporary manifestations. They preserve and develop our heritage, make it publicly available and provide opportunities to interpret and create new cultural products and expressions.”⁴⁸ The major cultural organizations are acknowledged as “expert public communicators . . . [which] enable and animate the cultural conversations that configure people’s self-awareness of belonging to a single nation.”⁴⁹ We find the policy to be curiously disjunct with our findings and yet reminiscent of the multiple industries and levels of governance that sit outside individual and community-based thinking around cultural tourism and heritage. The policy focuses on institutions as the purveyors of culture; however, many creative workers consider themselves to be outside the mainstream institutions but are nevertheless at the center of the practice of constructing culture. In a sense, artistic practice and creative workers respond swiftly to cultural shifts, providing a catalyst for sustainable practices long before institutions and policy have caught up with them. The experience of artistic life is an essential and poorly understood component of this narrative. What, then, is the role of the artist?

As expected, the majority of respondents defined themselves by artistic identity, using either generic terms such as “artist” or specific terms such as “violinist” or “painter.” Among the respondents whose professional identity incorporated aspects beyond the artistic, four included their paid and unpaid community-related work (“overlapping”) and one used the term sustainability to define the financial viability of his practice (“disparate”). One respondent described herself as a “sustainability consultant” rather than an artist (“integrated”). For many of our respondents, volunteer or unpaid work also provided them with opportunity to use their artistic practice or creative thinking in areas beyond the purely artistic.

Unpaid work emerged as an important component of hidden work. The intersection between artistic practice and community was seen most strongly in relation to unpaid time commitments, in which volunteer work featured strongly. Community newspapers evidence the rich cultural activity within urban communities, from community theatre to art exhibitions and classes. These

are often organized and presented by small groups of passionate musicians and artists at the same community arts organizations, and individual artists struggle to demonstrate their contributions amidst “increasing calls for the broader arts sector to define its relevance to today’s communities.”⁵⁰ This form of work often comprises the bulk of employment for creative workers, but their contribution, incorporating work that is unpaid or voluntary, is often overlooked. Volunteer work related to the arts was noted by a quarter (25.8%) of respondents, who included arts-related unpaid work and/or used their arts skills in mental health settings and at schools (and in this context it does not include committed time or time spent in the support of one’s artistic practice, such as rehearsal or administration). Volunteer work extended beyond the arts; in total, 23 artists listed volunteer roles not associated with the arts, including work for the fire brigade and a number of charities, and a volunteer for “sustainability groups.”

The ASH model helps us begin to understand the dilemma of creative workers when faced with multiple paid and unpaid work situations. In our study, those workers expressing the narrowest views also had a harder time seeing the relevance of different forms of work as part of their own artistic identity. Those with more sophisticated views appear to have been more adaptable as they were better able to reflect on the situation and consider their own response to it. Their thinking, and their work, meld together to create new forms of practice in relation to new challenges.

Artistic practices can be seen as an essential expression of human thought. As Tung and Cipriani say, “In addition to the transformative power of their practice, contemporary visual artists act as mirrors that reveal cultures, the way they mutate, and above all their abiding diversity, albeit in the context of globalization . . . identity and diversity have become crucial subjects in the contemporary art scene.”⁵¹ Contemporary artistic practices include works that are not intended to reside in formal galleries but instead are intended to impact directly on communities.

The practices of conservation arts, recycled arts, outsider arts and sustainability arts all involve artists who use their work to make some form of statement to society. In music, “early” works are endlessly replayed and reinvented by musicians demonstrating the heritage value of written

compositions with a somewhat distinct approach to sustainability, as the work can be endlessly re-interpreted for contemporary audiences. In art, most early works are housed in formal collections. They can provide an interpretive window on past lives. As can be seen from this study, recent art still makes comment on current life, may take its technical approach from prior art works, but is mostly aimed at making a contribution to contemporary issues. The contemporary creative workforce may be found in any community but the roles of that workforce may differ with the current social and economic situation found in any specific location.

Many of the artifacts produced by creative workers are ephemeral. They “pop up” in unusual places, they are heard in odd locations, they are experienced by others, and then much of the work simply disappears. The contribution of these forms of art is also generally unrecorded but their existence contributes to the public’s view of their own culture. The 20th and 21st centuries have provided new technological solutions to the preservation and interpretation of the intangible. The advent of the recording, film and photographic industries has shifted the manner in which intangible cultural artifacts are dealt with. We can suggest that the recording industry now provides a platform for intangible forms of culture to move through society in a rather eclectic way. The internet provides unlimited access to different genres of culture, especially in the area of music, art and film. Sounds, images and ideas that once firmly belonged to specific communities are now shared and re-formed as different cultural practices. Contemporary societies favor a mix of ethnic groups and individuals adopt, adapt, and change elements from a myriad of cultures to form their own.

Culture has a curious dynamic that flows from individual representation to group activity. Urban societies can embrace eclectic cultural practices and transform them into both generic and homogenized cultural output, or emphasize the diversity. Prior to the recording age, recording the past in order to develop appreciation and understand transformation over time relied first on oral traditions and then, later, on written texts; now, this analysis can draw on recordings or footage made since the turn of the 20th century, increasingly available (and thus archived for future use)

in digital forms.⁵² Musicians’ performing practices evidenced through recordings, for example, provide data relating to the knowledge and understanding of cultural value and sustainability. Fashions in performance style have been molded by social context and/or individual preference. During the second half of the 20th century there was an explosion of interest in the field of period-instrument performance, which has provided new data on which contemporary musicians develop their practice. In this sense, they embed their practice within the context of a rich musical heritage, but their performance reaches into the idea of sustainable practice. Ironically, sustainable practice and sustainable careers are often at odds because the predominance of the Western canonic repertoire creates barriers to the development of audiences for new music and, as a result, the development of a strong new music market.

The implications here for cultural heritage and sustainability are obvious. The investigation of the tangible and intangible evidence of artistic practices of past eras, for example, is a useful model for gathering data about artists’ activities and experiences. Stories created from artists’ personal experience of making and experiencing art, and the nature and value of cultural life, form a critical resource for others to reflect upon and assimilate different artistic experiences with their own. These experiences are then amplified through the use of the arts in multiple contexts both focused on the arts and focused outwards to broader societal concerns.

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