

INTERNATIONAL AWARD
UCLG - **MEXICO** CITY - CULTURE 21
CATEGORY INDIVIDUAL
WINNER 2016

JON HAWKES



CDMX
CIUDAD DE MÉXICO



UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments



culture 21
Agenda 21 for culture



JON HAWKES

Jon Hawkes is the author of the much acclaimed and ground-breaking [book](#) – ‘The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: culture’s essential role in public planning’ (2001) – and one of Australia’s leading commentators on cultural policy. In parallel to his dedication to cultural theory and policy, over the last few years he has strengthened his life-long commitment to community activism and arts projects, in an ongoing crossing between thinking and doing, cultural theory and local practice. He currently works with a number of Melbourne-based organisations, such as the [ILBIJERRI Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative](#), a group dedicated to producing innovative indigenous works, [The Substation](#), a contemporary multi arts centre, and [J-Studios](#), an artist-run studio collective.

He is the former Resident Cultural Analyst with the [Cultural Development Network](#) of Victoria (Australia) and throughout his long career he has been Director of [Community Music Victoria](#) (2001-2008), Fellow of the Community Cultural Development Board (Australia Council) (2004-2005), Director of the Australian Centre of the International Theatre Institute (1991-1998), Director of the [Community Arts Board of the Australia Council](#) (1982-1987) and a founding member of [Circus Oz](#) and the Australian Performing Group (Pram Factory).


Born in Wales, Jon Hawkes also lived in the West Indies as a child, before arriving to Australia. As his daughter tells us in a short and unique [profile](#) of Hawkes, he started as an actor, the musical *Salad Days* in 1963 being his first professional

production. In addition to his work within the world of theatre and the performing arts, he has also been a lighthouse keeper, a bookseller and editor of numerous periodicals such as [Go-Set](#), Australia’s first and biggest pop music and youth culture magazine.

His book ‘The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: culture’s essential role in public planning’ has become one of the cornerstones of public policies advocating for the essential position of culture within society. The central argument of this work can be found at the centre of many policy development strategies at local levels throughout the world. By proposing culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability, Hawkes not only placed culture at the same level as the traditional three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental development – he also helped to focus the discourse on culture.

Thus, the fourth pillar has enabled a move beyond the triad model of sustainability towards a vision more adapted to the complexity of contemporary contexts, where culture is advocated as having “its rightful place in all public policies” along with the other pillars.

With a diverse experience between practice and theory, it can be said that Hawkes’ contribution to the conceptualisation and positioning of culture within society reflects his professional and personal experience, as his [presentation](#) at the UNESCO Hangzhou Congress in 2013 demonstrates. His vast experience as an artist, producer and manager within the fields



of performing and community arts has given him a perspective that is the outcome of the entanglement between practice and theory. The fact that he has lived in different locations in Australia and elsewhere and worked with indigenous communities has also contributed to his vision of the role played by culture within sustainable development.

With his work, culture has gained a meaning that has often been overlooked or undervalued in the context of post-GDP narratives and evaluation, which have recurrently missed culture as a core essence of human life. For Hawkes, culture has always been about processes rather than products, meaning that cultural value becomes manifest through making and doing, rather than through the resulting artefacts. Therefore, the importance of cultural action, as part of sustainable development, occurs through creative approaches and within communities. Without the vitality of culture, public planning can never be really effective or wholesome. The emphasis on making and culture as being at the same level as the other pillars of sustainability highlights the importance of community participation, decentralisation and bottom-up considerations. Indeed, another major concern in his work is the importance of the local level, and of local governments, in fostering sustainable development with a strong cultural component.

Therefore, the action of policy-making that has culture at its centre and as one of its foci of concern should incorporate participation, authenticity and engagement. Cultural diversity and an approach to sustainable development guided by this perspective assure openness and a plurality of visions, since culture encompasses the principles, histories and traditions of a society.

Partly inspired by the work of Jon Hawkes, the Executive Bureau of UCLG approved the [policy statement](#) "Culture: fourth pillar of sustainable development" in November 2010 in Mexico City. This statement maintains that the "fourth pillar" provides a strong visual metaphor and "reinforces the importance of culture in understanding the world and its intrinsic relation with sustainable development". The statement asks cities to guarantee "the development of the cultural sector itself" and to ensure that all public policies (education, the economy, science, communication, environment, social cohesion and international cooperation) are analysed to assess its cultural impact.

