Cultures and Values

In order to help us understand what a **regenerative** culture might look like, these pages discuss how cultures are expressed in our lives and the world around us.

We are all steeped in cultures of different kinds, often many we are not even aware of. We may not notice choosing how or even why we do things a certain way, it's simply the way we do things. We could have a family culture e.g. how we do breakfast or how we deal with tricky emotions. We could be part of a culture that relates to our heritage, our religion, an interest group, community or the country where we live.

Haweatea Holly Bryson an Australian Maori writer says:

> Culture is a normative part of the self that is not explicitly taught but is assimilated through participation in it... It refers to how we cultivate a place or a person through a specific paradigm of what is most highly valued.
>
> — Haweatea Holly Bryson

When looking at the cultures of which we are part, we can see that certain values lie within our culture. Some things are prized and others neglected or ignored, e.g. does a family cook and eat together, is silence or conversation valued during meal times, where does the food come from, etc.

When we begin to examine the wider dominant cultures through the lens of what is nurtured or supported and what is ignored or airbrushed out, we can more clearly see the values underlying those cultures. If we take a historical view, we see the shift to valuing the human species as primary, holding a privileged position amongst the rest of nature, and treating the rest of nature as a resource. In contrast, in many indigenous cultures where other parts of nature are viewed and treated as kin, the relationships between beings are counted as central. We see the devastating impacts of colonialism where only certain humans, the "white" ones and their needs and beliefs are considered primary. Certain of these "white" humans are particularly valued, those with power or influence or identified as special in some way.

Regenerative cultures and our Principles & Values

XR has a set of Principles and Values (P and V's) that are pointers to the way we want to operate within the movement and to what we want to offer to the world in response to the toxic culture that surrounds us, of which we are part. Our First P and V describes our vision for change creating a world fit for the next seven generations to live in. It ends by saying "this will be underpinned by cultures rooted in respect for nature, genuine freedoms and justice."

As much of culture is unconscious, we need to take the time to question the particular values underlying a particular time or situation, in order to ensure they don't remain mysteriously hidden. Most of us living in the UK have grown up in a capitalist culture where the gaining of money is strongly prized and the myth of "endless financial growth" drives Government policy. Big business utilises this unconscious cultural value of "more" to convince us that "many" or "bigger" or "better" is what we all need. There is no invitation to consider how this expansion impacts wider society or the wider ecosystem. Similarly, we have been sold the idea of being customers with a right to a certain service, not only when we shop but also in relation to our health, our education etc. Here again relationship is excluded, it discourages reciprocity or sharing resources or goodwill.

Relationships are key

You might ask - what has this to do with activism and XR? It demonstrates that if we are to create regenerative cultures that are more healthy, fair and sustainable, and redress the harm humans have caused, then we have to re-establish **relationship** as a key value. XR UK's third Principle and Value "We need a regenerative culture" concludes "it's about relationships. Our relationships with ourselves and personal histories, our relationships with what we struggle against, our relationships with other individuals day to day, and our relationships as a group - these are completely interdependent." The Regenerative Culture's circle vision statement says "moving from ego-system to ecosystem".

Robin Wall Kimmerer, an environmental biologist who combines her scientific knowledge with her Potawatomi heritage in her teaching and writing describes the very different culture of her elders and ancestors, a "culture of gratitude". Food, firewood, trees for building and making paper become gifts rather than resources. As participants and recipients in this kind of culture, there is a resulting sense of relationship and belonging.

> "...the land is the source of goods and services, which are distributed in a kind of gift exchange: one life is given in support of another. The focus is on supporting the good of the people, not only an individual. Receiving a gift from the land is coupled to attached responsibilities of sharing, respect, reciprocity, and gratitude.
>
> — Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass

In the diagram below, the psychological model of Maslow's Heirarchy is used to show the difference between a Western and First Nation perspective . The focus moves from prioritising the needs and actualisation of the individual to the needs and future of the community.

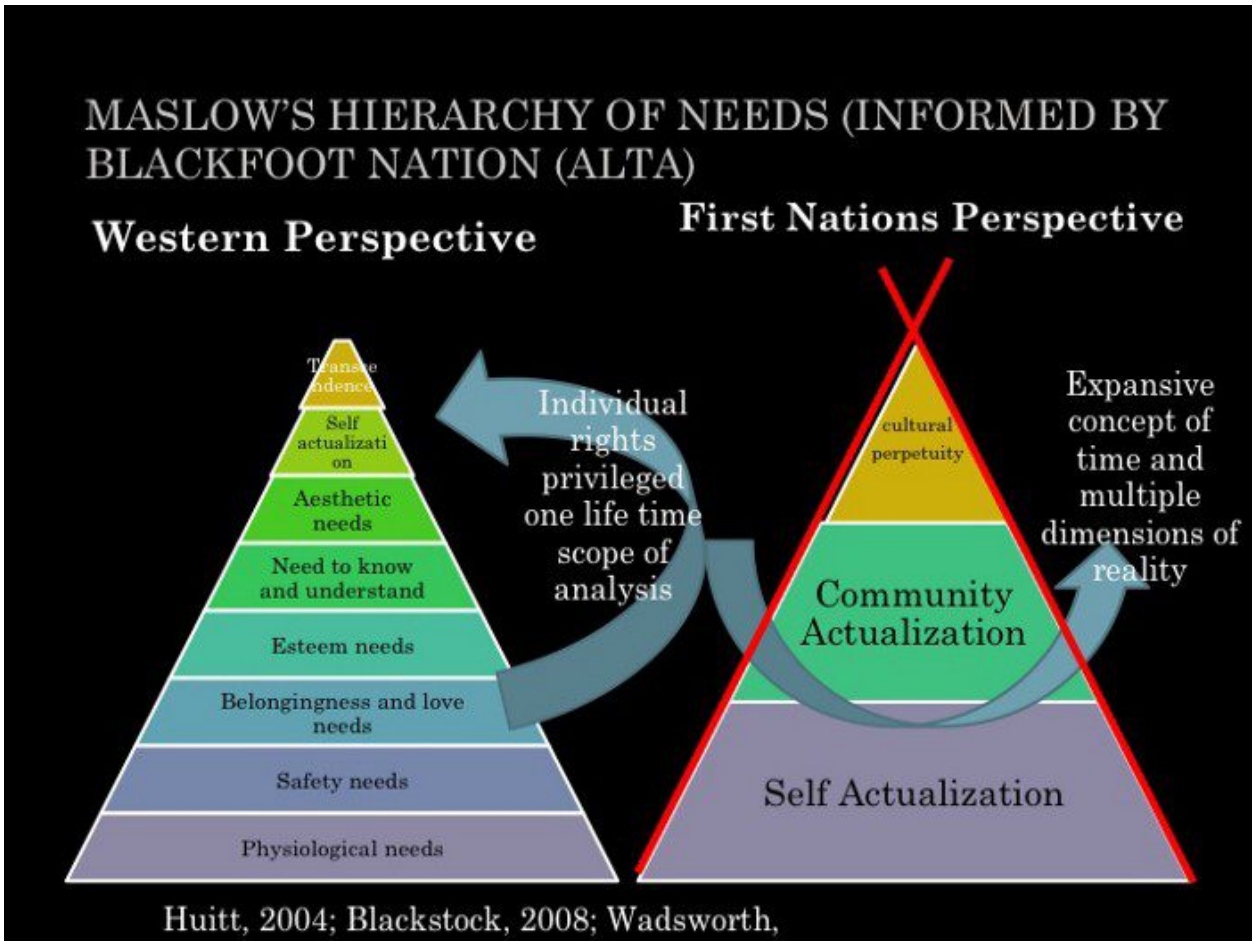


Diagram showing two pyramids. Pyramid 1: Western perspective: Individual rights privileged one life time scope of analysis; Pyramid 2: First Nations perspective with expansive concept of time and multiple diemsions of reality. (credits: Huitt, 2004; Blackstock, 2008; Wadsworth.)

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What is this Regenerative Cultures thing?

The Regenerative Cultures circle have recorded a workshop "What is this regenerative cultures thing?" where you can join participants to explore these themes.

https://www.youtube.com/embed/85Fhtj9UDKM?si=6PF1WsvB_9wTBZJc

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