

CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT: A LONG JOURNEY



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Introduction

UNESCO conventions, declarations, reports and other documents have since the foundation of the Organization highlighted that culture and development are indissolubly interrelated. In an effort to build just, safe, peaceful societies, UNESCO has established a link between progress and culture, education, scientific knowledge, mutual understanding and knowledge dissemination.

This vision entails special significance today, following its inclusion in the final report of Rio+20 - The Future We Want - where States and civil society expressed their concern over the current situation, which is marked by social inequalities, the occurrence of natural disasters, economic crisis, violence, and hunger. There is a need to formulate and implement policies that incorporate the interaction between culture and key development sectors, and guarantee comprehensive, sustainable development. The proposal is based on respect for and recognition of diverse identities and cultures, each playing a part in receiving, bearing and transmitting unique, invaluable knowledge, values and experiences for building a sustainable present and future for all.

Critical efforts will need to be made in the next couple of years to advance the key role of culture in development at different forums, especially at the forthcoming United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)¹ session that will be devoted to science, technology, innovation and the potential of culture for achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The purpose of UNESCO is to

strengthen and consolidate the agreements reached at Rio+20, and include culture on the development agenda beyond 2015 and on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an explicit, clear manner.

The early years of UNESCO and the first regional meetings on cultural policies

The Organization gradually defined and expanded the concept of culture in its first few decades, integrating aspects as determinant as cultural identity, a key element in the Declaration on the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation (1966), which laid the foundations for UNESCO cultural cooperation.

In collaboration with its Member States, the Organization convened several regional meetings on cultural policies in the 1970s, when the concepts of identity and development were reviewed. These international conferences highlighted the need to design cultural policies seeking to protect and disseminate national cultures. Such policies promoted the idea of putting technologies and the mass media at the service of culture, fostering knowledge and mutual understanding for social justice, and enhancing the cultural dimension of education. All these issues are fully relevant 40 years later.

The First Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative and Finance Aspects of Cultural Policies was held in Venice in 1970,² concluding that cultural development is being increasingly recognized as an essential component of social and economic development, and that these three factors needed to be incorporated into the concept of comprehensive development, which would make it necessary to review arbitrary classifications, including the notions of “developed” and “underdeveloped” countries, which takes into account only economic indicators. This was how the cultural dimension of development came into being. The Conference also stressed the need to preserve cultural diversity as the very essence of progress, thus providing the basis for cultural cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

The First Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Europe (Helsinki, 1972)³ made repeated references to the need to reformulate the concept of culture, including its significance as a means for the transmission and acquisition of ideas and values, aside from reflecting human experiences, traditions and productions. It emphasized the need to respect the originality of each culture, voicing concern over the cultural development of national minorities, the democratization of culture, the social and ethical role of creators and their right to freedom of speech, the work of the media, and the importance of conducting research and developing indicators and statistical data to support policy-making. Finally, the participating States noted that the development of culture could strengthen prosperity, democracy, freedom and fraternity.

Indonesia hosted the regional meeting in Asia,⁴ which emphasized the need to promote cultural development conceived of as a dimension of general development, while providing a powerful incentive for the development of the human personality and national integration, and an instrument for social change and progress.

Two years later, the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa,⁵ was held at Accra (Ghana). This historic event on the continent was characterized by the legitimate claim to cultural diversity as an integrating, cohesive element, and by the assertion of cultural identity after centuries of colonial domination as the accomplishment of an act of liberation and the best means of achieving the self-fulfilment of individuals and the harmonious development of societies, the first prerequisite for the advent of a new world order, founded on the right of nations to self-determination and on recognition of the equal dignity of all cultures.

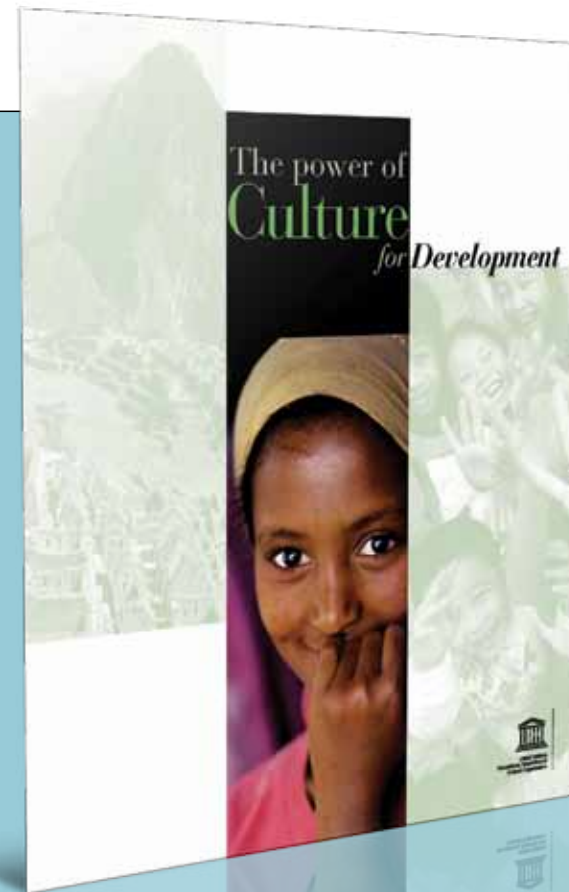
The Conference established a Working Commission on Culture and Development so as to apply the cultural approach to education, technology and environment. It concluded that integrated socio-economic development needs to take into account the cultural values of societies, giving priority to cultural diversity, considering that culture is the very sense of a people’s destiny.

The regional meeting in Colombia in 1978⁶ focused on the concept of cultural policy to address specific problems in each State, recognizing the dignity of all identities and the right and duty of every people to determine their cultural identity. The principles enshrined in the Bogotá Declaration indicate that cultural development is closely linked to communication, education and technology. Related policies should, therefore, be formulated within the framework of comprehensive development.

All these events, where the concepts of culture and development were enriched, paved the way for the World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT, Mexico, 1982). It was at that time when the expression ‘intangible heritage’ began to be officially used, emphasizing the human, democratic and cultural approach to development. It was stated that development strategies should always take into account the historical, social and cultural dimension of every society.

World Decade for Cultural Development

Following MONDIACULT recommendations, the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997) was launched. To be observed under the auspices of UNESCO and the United Nations, it featured an Action Programme that was commented on and highly assessed by the Economic and Social Council.



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The Decade mainly focused on considering the cultural dimension of development, reaffirming and enriching cultural identities, expanding participation in cultural life, and promoting international cultural cooperation. The aim was to devise alternatives to meet major new challenges through the formulation of development policies, strategies and projects, including the cultural dimension and goals related to economic and social change. The idea was also to train professionals, inform and raise awareness among decision-makers and public opinion, and strengthen creative capacities, policies and research in the cultural sector.

Within the framework of the Decade, the 26th General Conference of UNESCO decided to establish the World Commission on Culture and Development, an independent agency created by the Organization and the United Nations in 1992. The Commission was mandated to prepare world reports and recommendations on the contribution of culture to sustainable development for the purpose of impacting public policy making. Following a number of meetings with specialists and institutions of all regions of the world, the Commission culminated its work with the launching of the world report *Our creative diversity*.⁷ The report - one the major achievements in the Decade - helped to strengthen UNESCO position towards the contribution of culture to development and its closed link with other areas. It assigned a proactive role to women, children and young people, vindicated cultural rights, and promoted international debate over these issues.

A wide range of initiatives, including those of an experimental⁸ and theoretical nature, were implemented in this ten-year period, applying a highly successful cultural approach to other sectors such as education, environment, science, technology, human settlements, and gender. Research works identified the need to develop statistical data and indicators, and corroborated that social, economic and cultural exclusions are all forms of marginalization and poverty to be eradicated.

Cultural policies, cultural diversity and creative industries

The implementation of the World Decade for Cultural Development demanded that all cultural policies followed the same direction. This was the objective of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1998.⁹ Representatives of governments, civil society and the private sector stressed that cultural policies should be implemented in co-ordination with policies in other social areas, on the basis of an integrated approach. Any policy for development must be profoundly sensitive to culture itself.

The recommendations that were adopted covered five objectives: to make cultural policy one of the key components of development strategies; promote creativity

and participation in cultural life; reinforce policy and practice to safeguard and enhance the cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, moveable and immovable; and to promote cultural industries, both cultural and linguistic diversity in and for the information society; and make more human and financial resources available for cultural development.

The General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. This was an important document that helped to approach diversity as a key development factor, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.¹⁰ It also reaffirmed that cultural goods and services have a value-added because they convey identities, values and meanings.

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005)¹¹ was adopted four years later. It reaffirmed the universal value of cultural diversity and nature, far beyond the commercial character of cultural activities, goods and services. It seeks to enhance the capacities, cultural industries and the emergence of markets, generating an economic impact at the local, national and regional levels, while recognizing the diversity of identities, disseminating cultural knowledge, practices and values, and trying to involve minorities in decision-making processes.

Resolutions on culture, development and the MDGs

UA recent milestone in this connection was the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development of December 2010.¹² It recognized that culture is an essential component of human development, represents a source of identity, innovation and creativity for the individual and the community, and is an important factor in social inclusion and poverty eradication, providing for economic growth and ownership of development processes. A year later, the report¹³ under this resolution was launched, reflecting the impact of culture on development in general and on the MDGs in particular.

The MDG Summit ¹⁴ was held in 2010, concluding with the Global Action Plan Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Culture was not incorporated into the MDGs or their indicators on the grounds that it was difficult to show measurable culture for development indicators.

The experience gained by the MDG Achievement Fund, however, had a tremendous impact on the Report on Culture and Development and the Final Document on the MDGs. The cultural approach was first applied to the MDGs in 2006 thanks to the financial support of Spain through this fund, making it possible to start implementing 18 Joints Programmes on Culture and Development in all

regions of the world. Local authorities and populations were the main beneficiaries and players under these projects. The latter were aimed at promoting cultural diversity, mutual understanding and sustainable cultural-heritage management, as well as boosting creative industries to generate a positive socio-economic impact.¹⁵

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the latest resolution on Culture and Development¹⁶ in December 2011. It recognized the value of culture to achieve the MDGs and that culture contributes to the development of innovative creative capacities in people and is an important component of modernization and innovations in economic and social life. It also highlighted the importance of addressing this issue at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The resolution stressed the contribution of culture to economic growth, social inclusion and ownership of development processes.

UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite

Despite many declarations emphasizing that culture is a development factor, there is still a need to show how it makes its contribution and what its value-added is. For this purpose, UNESCO, with funding from the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), implemented a project to develop a number of indicators that demonstrate and support this value.¹⁷ The UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite runs from 2009 to 2013 and combines research, implementation test phases in up to 20 countries from all regions, and expert meetings. Covering the economic, social, governance, communication, heritage, education and gender equality dimension, the indicators seek to provide an empirical, pragmatic image on the relationship between culture and development, an area where results can be difficult to measure.

The UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite focuses on three main ideas:

1. Culture as an economic sector;
2. Culture as a factor with a value-added for development and increased impact; and
3. Culture as a sustainable framework for social cohesion and peace, indispensable to human development.

This project supports the initiative of UNESCO to have an impact on the international debate seeking to legitimize and enhance the value of culture in comprehensive, sustainable development of individuals and societies.

Sustainable, inclusive, equitable societies

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, with the presence of Heads of State and Governments and the full participation of civil society.

They renewed their commitment to boosting sustainable development and ensuring the promotion of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.¹⁸ The major concerns of humanity included, once again, reformulating and agreeing on new comprehensive development strategies.

Twenty years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio 1992), it has been demonstrated that the progress hoped for has not been made. Despite good intentions, the financial and environmental policies established by States continued to ignore the capacities and knowledge of individuals who were relegated and dependent upon the decisions of others. At the same time, a wide range of limitations under this development model have been revealed, leading to serious world economic, social, food, energy and climate crisis, showing that policy-making and society were making their own way. Inequalities remain; the number of social groups likely to be marginalized and with no access to opportunities continues to grow; and societies are not freer, safer, more just or peaceful. Therefore, the sought-after sustainable economic and social well-being has not been achieved.

Against this background, the analysis of the current situation needs to take into consideration the cultural approach that has for years been advocated by UNESCO, assigning a leading role to the human being and society, recognizing that fundamental lessons for development can be drawn from respect for and reaffirmation of the diversity of scientific and cultural knowledge and practices. Society receives, bears and transmits cultural values, experiences, attitudes, talents and capacities; it is thus a central actor in development.

Several positive changes have taken place: civil society is now involved in debates and agreements, and future development is no longer linked only to the triad environment-energy-economy. It is thus necessary to position culture into regional, national and local development policies, international cooperation initiatives and other programmes on education, health care, communication, agriculture, gender, transportation, science and/or social cohesion, building upon successful, inclusive experiences.

The economic activities associated with culture include heritage management, infrastructure development, growing creative industries, and sustainable cultural tourism. They all generate major economic benefits and jobs, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation. Culture is a source of identity, a booming sector where young people, women and other population groups can display their creativity and knowledge, and a means to promote active social participation, foster a sense of identity and appropriation, and, consequently, increase social cohesion.



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It is therefore impossible to question the potential of culture to boost sustainable comprehensive development, social unity and peace.

In her foreword to the 2011 edition of the Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, indicated that the Organization is firmly committed to regularly including culture on the global development agenda. She stressed that investing in culture is investing in sustainable development.

In her message on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (2012), she recalled that culture boosts the creativity that drives innovation and development. (...) Culture and creativity are renewable resources par excellence. (...)

Experience shows that efficient development models are those that actually integrate local cultural specificities, thus eliciting the involvement of the communities concerned. Culture must absolutely be included as a pillar of any sustainable development strategy, for it will enable peoples to dialogue with each other and be masters of their future.^{C&D}

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Notes

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council Website. <http://www.un.org/es/ecosoc/index.shtml>

² First Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative and Finance Aspects of Cultural Policies. Venice, August 24 to September 2, 1970. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000928/0928375B.pdf>

³ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Europe. Helsinki, June 19-28, 1972. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000014/0014865B.pdf>

⁴ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Asia. Yogyakarta, December 10-19, 1973. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0001/000104/0104725b.pdf>

⁵ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa, Accra, October 27 to November 6, 1975. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0001/000190/0190565b.pdf>

⁶ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Bogotá, January 10-20, 1978. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0003/000327/0327135B.pdf>

⁷ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001055/1055865b.pdf>

⁸ Intergovernmental Committee of the World Decade for Cultural Development, Final Report. Paris, April 1997. Item 6: Presentation of some projects illustrating the theme of culture and development. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001115/1115705b.pdf>

⁹ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development. Stockholm, March 30 to April 2, 1998. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001139/1139355a.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127162s.pdf>

¹¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001429/142919s.pdf>

¹² United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development. A/RES/65/166. http://www.unesco.org/uy/ci/fileadmin/cultura/2011/UNGA_Res.65-166_es.pdf

¹³ Culture and Development. Report of the Director-General of UNESCO. A/66/187. 2011.

¹⁴ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Conv2005_CDIndicators_SGReportC+D_es.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/spanish/millenniumgoals/>

¹⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/culture/achieving-the-millennium-development-goals/mdg-f-culture-and-development/>

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development. A/RES/66/208. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/208&Lang=S

¹⁸ <http://www.unesco.org/new/es/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/programmes/culture-for-development-indicators/>

¹⁹ First paragraph of The Future We Want, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Final Document. Rio de Janeiro, June 2012. https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216-l-1_spanish.pdf