

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A SMALL CUBAN TOWN

Victoria Pérez

Economist, Specialist in Center for Reference and Exchange on Initiatives within the Community (CIERIC)

Introduction

In today's world, there is a growing need to mainstream culture into development policies, as it has a direct impact on the economy, social cohesion and self-fulfilment, fosters wellbeing, and improves quality of life. The role of culture in sustainable development will be reviewed at the forthcoming session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This will provide a key opportunity to include culture on the 2015 target date development agenda.

UNESCO has given top priority to this issue, as reflected on its conventions, which promote cultural diversity as a driver for development. Culture can help foster economic activity. Tangible and intangible heritage, cultural infrastructure, creative industries and cultural tourism make a significant contribution to comprehensive development, alleviate poverty, encourage social inclusion, and generate jobs and economic benefits.

According to the 2011 Culture and Development Report, cultural and creative industries accounted for more than 3.4 percent of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 and make up one of the fastest growing sectors internationally, reaching 11.9 percent in South America. This is also true for cultural tourism, especially in developing and emerging countries, which attract 47 percent of all tourists. Cultural institutions and activities are also income-generating sources.

Investing on cultural and creative industries provides a means to revitalize local economies. This is precisely the topic that will be developed in this article, which focuses on Gibara, a small municipality in Cuba that exhibits a wide range of natural and cultural resources.

This research work, requested by the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean (Havana, Cuba), includes a video developed in cooperation with the San Antonio de Los Baños International Film and Television School. It shows how cultural goods, services and activities generate both jobs and income, promote the exchange of knowledge and values, foster social cohesion, and improve quality of life.

Current Economic Context in Cuba

Cuba is implementing a process aimed at updating its economic development model. Adopted in April 2011, the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines of the Cuban Communist Party and the Revolution provide a guide for actions seeking to overcome economic difficulties in the country.

The Guidelines highlight the need to improve local management and promote development by strengthening local governments under an economic model that recognizes and grants further autonomy to state-run companies, and makes room for non-state modalities. The latter include non-agricultural and service cooperatives, beneficial owners, lessees, self-employed workers, small farmers, and foreign investors, all seeking to increase production and services to the population.

Guideline No. 163 on Culture underlines the promotion of identity, cultural heritage conservation, artistic and literary creation, and art appreciation. There is a need to encourage reading, enrich the cultural life of the population, and boost community work to meet spiritual needs and strengthen cultural values.

The international crisis and the measures that have been locally adopted to deal with it make it necessary to implement local management models maximizing the use of natural and cultural resources to provide for alternative development, economic benefits, and new jobs.

Gibara Municipality Characteristics

Gibara, a municipality located to the north of Holguín province, was founded in 1817. Centuries before, Christopher Columbus had arrived at its bay and had met the indigenous population. A native to Guanahani made communication possible between the indigenous population and the Europeans, who for the first time saw the use that was made of tobacco.

Gibara has 71,255 inhabitants, including 34,770 women (48.7 percent of the total population). It features a number of well-equipped educational and health care facilities, with most difficulties identified in the transportation and housing sectors. There is a strong movement, however, for individual home repair and expansion.

Around 50 percent of the population lives in rural areas, and 46 percent of the working-age population is made up of women. The labour force is mostly engaged in agriculture, industry, trade, education and health care. There are 1,750 self-employed workers in over 40 trades. Out of this total, 224 workers are somehow related to art and culture. Estimates show that the actual number may be higher because not all assistants have been formally registered.

The service sector, including catering, accommodation and recreation, has followed a rising trend since colonial times thanks to Gibara's location overlooking the ocean. The municipality became a tourist destination for the local population after fishing and trade activities declined.

Gibara has in the past few years become a point of referral thanks to the International Low-Budget Film Festival, which gathers together professionals, critics and enthusiasts who mushroom the streets all over the municipality.

Cultural Goods, Services and Activities

The historical section of Gibara, which was declared National Monument Site in 2004, exhibits a two-century-old rich cultural heritage. This is one of the tourist attractions in the municipality, which complements the sun-and-sand tourist destination in Guardalavaca.

Its historical heritage includes civilian and military constructions, such as the Ferdinand VII Battery, the barracks, the small forts, and the ruins of the old wall. The main squares, which provide for leisure activities, could well accommodate catering facilities and craft markets.

Its cultural infrastructure consists of two Houses of Culture (in Gibara itself and Velasco), three museums (Natural Sciences, Cuban Art, and Local History), a municipal library, an art gallery, the Colonial Theatre and the Jibá Cinema (with 480 seats). Some of these facilities need to be refurbished, diversify their cultural programmes, or be given an additional use to generate revenues, jobs and cultural opportunities for the local community and tourists.

Its archaeological heritage features La Polca del Cementerio cave system that covers 26 sites, of which only seven have been explored. At the same time, the unspoiled underwater heritage at its bay involves an 18th-century pirate ship and El Federal, a local vessel sunk by a German submarine in 1942. The municipal industrial heritage has to do mainly with cigar-making. There are five cigar factories currently under operation, giving employment to a large number of women.

Gibara's biodiversity can be used to develop nature tourism. Los Caletones ecological reserve, which covers 15,000 hectares, provides habitat to 55 percent of local birds (773 species) and is a unique site for tourist excursions. The municipality also features a coral reef, over 20 flooded caves, a migratory bird corridor, and two wind farms, which generated some 11,000 megawatts per hour in the January-May 2012 period alone, making it possible to save 2,420 tons of oil.

Ecotourism can become a major income-generating source for the region and the country. For example, cave paintings have been found in Los Panaderos cavern, which became the highlight of local excursions under a one-year pilot

project. The rate fixed was 5.00 convertible pesos (CUCs) for adults and 3.00 for children, totalling around 28,800 CUCs in that period.

Fishing gear production and cigar rolling are some of the traditions that should be kept alive in the municipality.

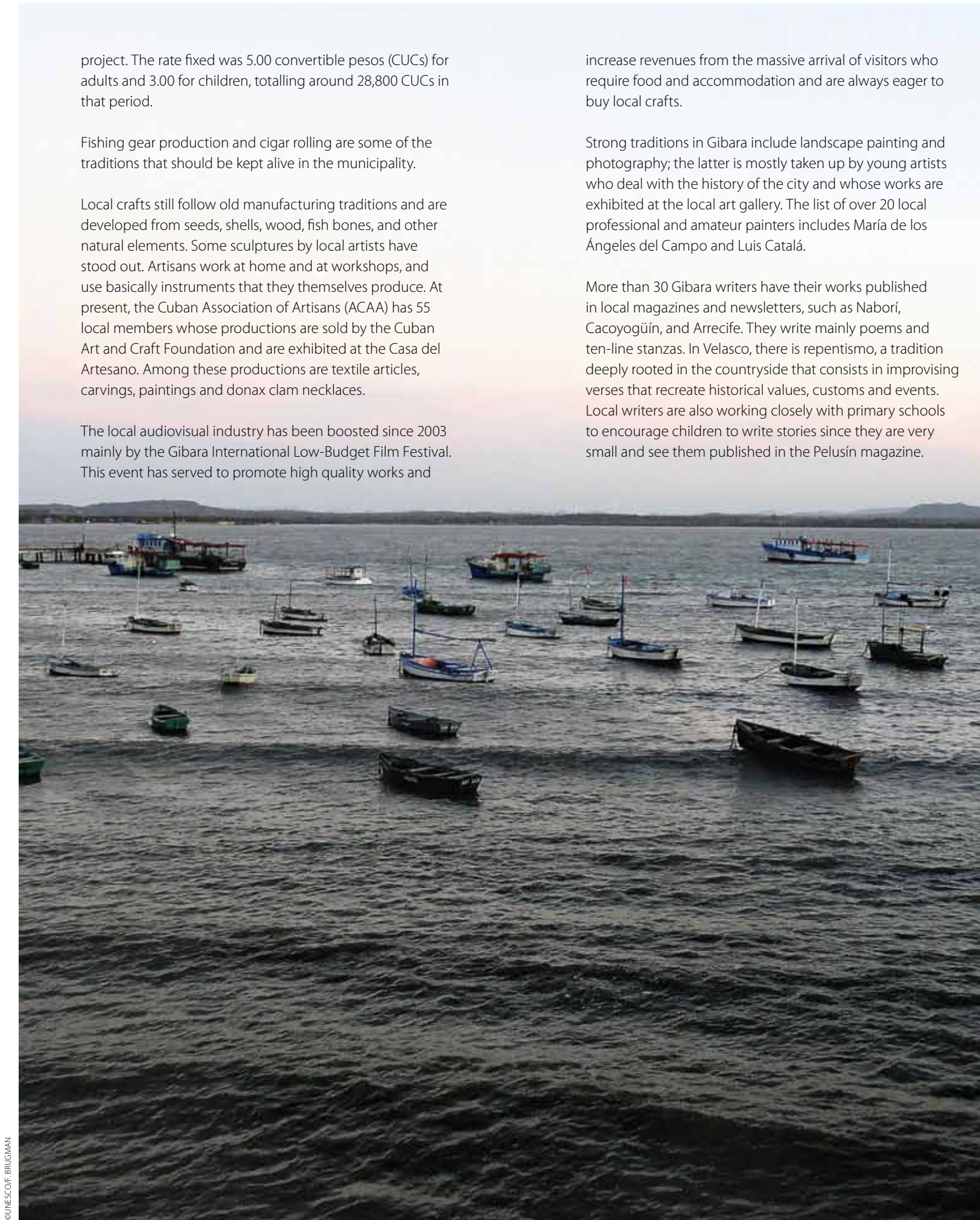
Local crafts still follow old manufacturing traditions and are developed from seeds, shells, wood, fish bones, and other natural elements. Some sculptures by local artists have stood out. Artisans work at home and at workshops, and use basically instruments that they themselves produce. At present, the Cuban Association of Artisans (ACAA) has 55 local members whose productions are sold by the Cuban Art and Craft Foundation and are exhibited at the Casa del Artesano. Among these productions are textile articles, carvings, paintings and donax clam necklaces.

The local audiovisual industry has been boosted since 2003 mainly by the Gibara International Low-Budget Film Festival. This event has served to promote high quality works and

increase revenues from the massive arrival of visitors who require food and accommodation and are always eager to buy local crafts.

Strong traditions in Gibara include landscape painting and photography; the latter is mostly taken up by young artists who deal with the history of the city and whose works are exhibited at the local art gallery. The list of over 20 local professional and amateur painters includes María de los Ángeles del Campo and Luis Catalá.

More than 30 Gibara writers have their works published in local magazines and newsletters, such as Naborí, Cacoyogüín, and Arrecife. They write mainly poems and ten-line stanzas. In Velasco, there is repentismo, a tradition deeply rooted in the countryside that consists in improvising verses that recreate historical values, customs and events. Local writers are also working closely with primary schools to encourage children to write stories since they are very small and see them published in the Pelusín magazine.



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Tourism is an income-generating activity that can attract visitors interested in local culture and natural beauty. The recently opened Ordoño Hotel and the new facilities to be built should be articulated with privately owned restaurants and inns, so that concerted efforts can lead to local sustainable development.

Culture, a Vehicle for Knowledge Transmission

As was already mentioned, the most important traditions in Gibara include fisheries and cigar making.

Cigars used to be produced long before the town was founded. Leaf tobacco had been sold at the bay. While there are not so many tobacco plantations in the area, several cigar factories are still under operation, with related traditions very much alive, including reading news and literary pieces to factory workers, something that can certainly be of interest to foreign visitors.

Fishing at the bay involves mainly traditional gear and includes a local seven-centimetre-long shrimp, blue crab, and a popular mollusc called donax clam. Around twelve miles off the coast, captures cover migratory species like dolphin fish or marlin, depending on the season. Coastal fishing can be attractive to tourists as it is a daily activity of the local population. These traditions do not only strengthen their identity, but also make them unique, exclusive. It is thus important to transmit them to the younger generations so that they can be preserved.

Another great passion in Gibara has to do with pigeons. The Mario Salcido Corella Pigeon Breeding Association was established in Cuba 118 years ago. Its local representation office in Gibara has been active for 48 years, has 42 members at present, and is being supported by Belgium. A five-month championship is now being held (January 19-May 4), with

pigeons flying all the way from Gibara to Havana, and old fanciers transmitting their knowledge to young people and even children.

Literary workshops attract many people. Writers, poets and repentistas share their works with their neighbours. The Soñadores del Mar Society has 66 members and organizes gatherings to read poems on the bay, daily life in fishing villages, etc. This is another way of transmitting traditional and identity-related knowledge from generation to generation.

The culinary culture is also an integral part of the intangible heritage. Typical recipes mainly based on local fish, crab and shrimp are passed on from one generation to another. Catering services can help boost this culture, not only because they can include exclusive, distinctive dishes, but also because they can generate jobs and revenues.

Contribution of Culture to Social Cohesion

The diversity of cultural expressions and their appreciation, distribution and knowledge make it possible for people to understand and assess cultural diversity and to be open to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Culture promotes social cohesion and integration, while discouraging conflicts and helping devise solutions.

The International Low-Budget Film Festival in Gibara is an event that fosters cultural and social knowledge and exchange, as it disseminates movies from different regions of the world and makes room for experience-sharing between filmmakers and the general public. Las Cavernas Festival is another major event that provides for social participation and unity, gathering together audiovisual professionals, enthusiasts and the general public.

The Low-Budget Film Festival has sparked great interest among local residents, especially among young people who are naturally inclined towards documentary making. They are called Voces del Audiovisual and work under the leadership of the Art Museum and in coordination with schools. Their main productions include Estaciones del año, Niños del presente (in solidarity with Haiti), Puro amor, and Vivir el Festival. Las Cavernas Festival is held in Los Panaderos Cave and features free exhibitions of documentaries and short films produced by local artists.

Other traditional festivals include the Día del Gibareño Ausente, the Cultural Week, and the Carnivals; they all provide for feasts and cultural get-togethers between natives and foreigners.

The Houses of Culture organize workshops for children and teenagers, while other facilities stage sports competitions and other health-conducive practices that encourage creativity and participation.

All these meetings and activities strengthen and transmit local traditions and values, and also boost economic benefits.

Contribution of Culture to Better Quality of Life

Access to health and education services is free and universal. It is an integral part of the basic principles promoted under the Cuban development model. Sports and cultural activities are also important and are associated with citizen rights set forth in the Constitution of the Republic. Housing and transportation are the two most critical sectors in the country. In Gibara, however, local residents are refurbishing their houses on their own and know that transportation services will get better only after more tourists arrive and additional revenues are generated.

The municipality has eight beaches: Blanca, Vallado, Da Silva, El Faro, Villa Blanca, El Boquerón, El Curita, and Caletones. They are all small and only visited by local residents and some tourists who prefer to move away from major beach destinations like Guardalavaca.

The natural landscape is ideal for walks and excursions, including Los Caneyes lookout point and the Railway Tunnel, the only one of its kind in Cuba. Hand-carved on rock, the tunnel goes through a hill, commands magnificent views of Cacoyugüín River and its mouth in the bay, and facilitates access by light vehicles. If the rails are properly re-built, the distance between Guardalavaca and Gibara will be reduced to only 37 kilometres, giving more people the opportunity to make the trip comfortably and quickly. In fact, such a trip will become a must for any visitor.

The important historical heritage of the municipality should not be forgotten. Heritage buildings such as La Asturiana Spanish Casino, Da Silva Mansion, the Colonial Theatre, and the Santa María Estate are now being under-utilized. If they are restored, they can provide a wide range of services to young people and adults alike. They can accommodate cafés, meeting points, etc. And they can also be rented to those receiving remittances or involved in joint ventures operating in the area. This will help meet individual and social needs in terms of recreation and free time.

Potential of Culture for Economic Development in Gibara

Considering the cultural resources available in Gibara, walking down its streets, and talking to its residents, one may well realize that many actions can be implemented under a comprehensive local development strategy based on culture as a driver for progress, wellbeing and higher quality of life.

Job generation and revenues can grow if the existing potential is maximized. New self-employment modalities and service cooperatives can be established to meet current demand, using the cultural sector to boost development.

Catering and tourist services can also grow, especially after private initiative has been promoted, and more self-employed people are opening coffee-shops, restaurants, inns, and transportation facilities. One should not forget that creative industries can play an important role in this connection.

Taking into account the large number of audiovisual professionals and enthusiasts and the success of the Low-Budget Film Festival in the municipality, one could easily recommend establishing an audiovisual production company there. Having so much talent, the district can become a film town, with artists finding a space to work at and enthusiasts, a great range of choice on mobile screens in public areas and at movie theatres.

Likewise, workshop-schools focusing on arts and crafts, literature or painting can be established, and a local artist market can be set up, including points of sale in public areas. This will give them greater visibility and increase production, sales and revenues.

Excursions to natural and cultural sites for Cuban and foreign tourists will generate significant revenues for the municipality and its residents, who may sell handicrafts, provide catering services, and offer diving and speleological tours. Business and service taxes to be collected by the municipal government could be used to promote private initiative and meet local demands.

Santa María, a typical estate with a sugar mill five kilometres away from town, could be turned into a rural tourist resort featuring vestiges of the old production facility and well-preserved slave barracks. It is surrounded by man-made lakes ideal for fresh-water fishing. An excursion combining fishing and other attractions like country lunch for 10 convertible pesos (CUCs) will generate 9,600 CUCs a year (only considering 10 tourists and two excursions a week). Estimates show that Gibara welcomes around 800 foreign visitors a week on tourist packages from Guardalavaca. Such a tour would thus be well received.

Cacayogüín River is an ideal site for fresh-water fishing and other sports and catering activities. Loma de La Morena sulphur water stream runs down a hill that is 80 metres above sea level, with a pool the local population bathes in for its medicinal properties. The development of a health tourism facility in this area is currently under study.

The bay is also an area to be further developed. It is ideal for water sports and activities like sailing, skiing, kayak and underwater photography. It can accommodate fish and seafood points of sale and a small processing plant.

Local catering facilities have so far failed to take municipal attractions into account. They do not offer, for example, rice with donax clam and stuffed blue crab - two typical, exclusive dishes -, or traditional desserts. They only seldom organize culinary contests parallel to the Cultural Week. On the other hand, an indigenous cookbook would certainly be very well received by natives and foreigners.

These are just a few ideas, but Gibara has a lot to offer. Its cultural resources can be used to boost sustainable development and improve the quality of life of its residents. This will be achieved only if the local development strategy recognizes the primary role of culture as a major economic activity and its contribution to the transmission of knowledge, social cohesion and wellbeing. **C&D**



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THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN GIBARA

Title	Contribution of culture to economic growth in Gibara
Objective	To show how important culture is to economic development through case studies at the local level
Outputs	Field research work and Audiovisual promotional material
Use	Presentation of the research work and the promotional material at meetings to review the post-2015 Development Goals Agenda so as to incorporate culture as a pillar for development
Field research work	
Title	Gibara: Contribution of culture to economic development is a small-sized city of Cuba
Author	Victoria Pérez Izquierdo, Economist, Cuba
Number of pages	50 pp.
Format	Digital
Abstract	Study over the potential of culture for economic development in Gibara, a small-sized city to the north of Holguín province (eastern Cuba)
Link	UNESCO Portal of Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean www.unesco.lacult.org

Audiovisual promotional material		
Title	Culture = Economic Development	
Genre	Institutional promotional material	
Duration	3:40 min	
Original idea	UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean	
General production	International Film and Television School in San Antonio de Los Baños (EICTV), Cuba	
Synopsis	The promotional material shows the potential of Gibara for local economic development through culture, especially: 1. the production and consumption of cultural activities, goods and services; 2. the transmission of knowledge; 3. social cohesion by sharing culture; and 4. Improved quality of life thanks to a wide range of cultural offers having an economic value.	
Creative team	UNESCO creative team	Fernando Brugman and Leire Fernández
	UNESCO administrative team	Lenia D. Gamonal, Sandra Varela and Danela García
	Production	Joseph Ros, Cuba
	Photography	Ernesto Granados, Cuba
	Steady-cam / Second camera unit	Oscar Ernesto Ortega, Cuba
	Editor	Daniel Díez, Cuba
	Image post-production	Omar Leyva, Cuba
	3D post-production	Víctor López, Cuba
	Direct sound / Sound post-production	Rubén Valdés, Cuba
	Production coordinator	Sara Levezinho, Brazil
	Field production	Nomar González, Cuba
	Assistant camera	Adrián García, Cuba
	Gaffer	Jandro Carmenate, Cuba
	Production assistant	Arando Capó, Cuba
	Making-off	Héctor David Rosales, Cuba
	EICTV general coordinators	Marcel Arenas y Maykel R. Ponjuán
EICTV contact persons	Marcela Arenas and Maykel Rodriguez, International Relations Department eictv@eictv.org.cu	
UNESCO contact persons	Fernando Brugman, f.brugman@unesco.org Leire Fernández, l.fernandez-gomez@unesco.org	
Audiovisual material download link	UNESCO Portal of Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean www.unesco.lacult.org	