

# Towards a contemporary approach to the study of Development & Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract

The interest for understanding the relationship between Development and Culture, and specifically Cultural Heritage, has increased during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002), representatives from different contexts acknowledged the role of Culture as a pillar of Development. This recognition has been recently recalled by the Hangzhou Declaration (2013), which proposed to include Culture as a fundamental principle of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

However, the notion of Development – as much as that of Cultural Heritage, both embrace complex and dynamic natures, which have been only partially understood. Development as growth and Cultural Heritage as limited to the arts, are known to have negative implications in other areas (social, environmental, cultural). In spite of the recent advances to clarify each of these notions, the bridge between theory and practical actions, is still a debt.

This article aims to develop a baseline for the study of the binomial Development and Cultural Heritage. As a first approach, a retrospective analysis is presented in order to reveal the theoretical advances influencing the adoption of the terms, and to build a contemporary understanding of these notions. In this regard, key moments on the evolution of the relationship between Development & Cultural Heritage are examined through the lens of the leading international organizations on each field: The United Nations (UN) Head of development studies, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the Cultural field. The article then discusses preliminary findings on the theoretical gaps and concludes by identifying their potential challenges.

**Keywords** Culture, Cultural Heritage, Development, evolution

## 1. The theoretical evolution of the notion of Development

The notion of Development presents heterogeneous interpretations which have varied over time and according to the discipline studying it (Nurse, 2006:1; UNESCO, 2010:4). According to Gudynas (2011:22), development is usually linked to *advance* and *progress* in economic and social sciences, while in the environmental sense it refers to *stages of growth* and *maturity*. In fact, one of the main issues that comes out when starting to talk about Development is how to build a common understanding between those multiple interpretations. The discussion presented in this section refers to the more prominent understanding of development as economic growth (Nurse, 2006:1; UNESCO, 2010:3; Lander, 2012:224), its shifts over time, and its relation to other sciences.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, important advances related to the study of development as a process of growth were in place. In 1920, Leon Trosky contributed to this idea by presenting economic growth as a complex phenomenon consisting of at least three stages: construction, decay and reconstruction, of which each cycle lasts 8-to-11 years. Later, the advances realized by Trosky were recalled by recognized economists such as Nikolai Kondratieff and Joseph Alois Schumpeter after the second World War (Holmes, 2011:10).

Standing apart from Trosky, Kondratieff (1935) identified a path of long-waves in the process of economic growth, so-called the 'Kondratiev waves'. These fluctuations reflect the alternance of long periods of prosperity and depression which occur each 47 or 60 years. But, it was Schumpeter who developed one of the most accepted theories related to the cause for this path. He stated that these fluctuations result from *innovations*. In his words: "*innovations transform ways of production, transaction, services, expectancies of consumers, market structures, and sometimes destroying previous structures*". Schumpeter referred to this force as the 'creative destruction' (Holmes, 2011:11). In sum, those studies evidenced a non linear path of economic growth which varies due to innovation.

Contrary to what the theoretical advances suggested, post second World War industrialization, modernization and urbanization processes became the 'key to prosperity' supporting the idea of unlimited growth. A linear path was boosted, characterized by the appropriation of natural resources, guided by visions of efficacy and profitability, and measured by the Gross Domestic Product (Gudynas, 2011:23). This path created by advanced nations was to be reproduced in 'less developed' countries in order to reach a *developed* condition. Development started to be understood as an 'ideal stage,' as a goal. "Developed" countries in the north were seen as the reference point and "less developed" countries in the south of the world were expected to follow them (Nurse, 2006:2).

However, the negative effects – in social and environmental terms – that came as consequence of the understanding of development generated several reactions during the 60s. According to Gudynas (2011:24), in Latin America debates emerged around the dependence created between developing and developed countries, the unequal distribution of the supposed benefits, and the asymmetric relations, while the United Nations (1962) insisted on separating the notion of development from the notion growth, and emphasized the qualitative aspects of development.

Part of these reactions gave rise to the known *Human Development* (HD) theory. The published document ‘The human scale of Development’ on 1991, boosted a shift from economic growth to *human growth*. According to Max-Neef (1994:16), HD theory is supported by three main principles:

1. Development refers to people, not to objects.
2. Fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable. Those needs are subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom.
3. Fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and all times, which changes among them is the way and the means that people use to satisfy those basic human needs, called *satisfiers*.

With regards to human needs, Max-Neef observed an interrelation among them, which means the satisfaction of one of them can satisfy another in a simultaneous, or complementary, or compensatory manner (Neef, 1994:17).

Essential aspects emerged under this perspective, such as the quality of life which depends on the possibilities to satisfy the fundamental human needs; the recognition of other ‘forms’ of poverty related to unsatisfied needs; the possibility of different paths of development. Furthermore, concepts such as self-sufficiency or ‘endogenous development’ using local capacities and local resources, presented by Johan Galtung (1985), were also studied during the 80s (Gudynas, 2011:28).

In parallel, the sustainable development notion emerged mainly linked to environmental concerns. On 1968 Paul Ehrlich in his book “*The Population Bomb*” reignited the argument made by Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) who predicted that population growth would eventually outstrip all means of subsistence. In the same year, the Club of Rome, including scientists, economists, businessmen, administrators, and statesmen was founded. In 1972, it published “*The Limits to Growth*”. The study modeled the dynamic interaction between industrial production, population, environmental damage, food consumption, and the usage of finite resources; and predicted that growth could not continue indefinitely (Meadows, 1972:184).

The warning exposed by the Club of Rome, echoed on the Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland report (UN, 1987). The document set out three fundamental conditions -environmental protection, economic growth and social equity- underpinning sustainable development and defined sustainable development ‘*as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*’ (UN, 1987:37). One of the major contributions of sustainable development theory, was to recognize that development –understood as economic growth – and the natural environment were inextricably linked.

Since its publication, Sustainable Development – SD – theory has been studied from diverse perspectives. At the moment, strong conceptual frameworks, and methods for assessing and monitoring change in different arenas –business, cities, social or environmental projects, etc. are available. These methods emerged as a result of the search for continuous assessment of the

use of resources. Simultaneously, SD theory has had various interpretations and contradictions have been found. Contrary to the generalized understanding, SD “*is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs*” (UN, 1987:15). In terms of Peter Marcuse (1998:106) a misinterpretation of sustainability pretending to ‘freeze’ a reality, “*only benefits those who already have everything they want*”.

In sum, the theoretical advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have contributed to recognize Development as a dynamic and not linear process which goal is to reach well-being (UN, 1987:45; UNESCO, 1982:2; Neef, 1994:48; Eckersley, 1998:10). This consideration puts in the center of debates how to ensure the *quality* of growth rather than its quantity. How to build the ‘structural changes’ mentioned in the Brundtland report, referred to a change-of-mind about how humanity relates with its environment – man-made and natural. How to manage the changes implied in development processes. In that respect, human knowledge is considered the new ‘key of prosperity’ (UNESCO, 1999:1). According to Sen (1998:15), its cultivation and development will allow to adapt and solve contemporary issues.

## **2. Culture and Cultural Heritage**

As Development, Culture is another notion which has evolved over time and currently presents abstract and diverse interpretations, “*the term Culture, could mean all and at the same time nothing*” (UNESCO, 2010:4). Besides, its understanding becomes more difficult, when Culture and Cultural Heritage have been used in interchangeable manner. In order to overcome this issue, part of these multiple definitions of culture provided by experts from different fields and times (UNESCO, 1982; Bourdieu, 1986; Throsby, 1999; Hawkes, 2001; Nurse, 2006; Pillai, 2013) have been studied and re-interpreted under an integrated view.

One attempt to explain Culture in the most comprehensive ways, suggests Culture can be defined as a result from the interaction between people and their environment (Pillai, 2013:2). This interaction is a dynamic process which evolves over time, and along with a physical context and groups of people. Differing from social aspects, cultural aspects allow to recognize a society or social group from others. This understanding links culture with notions such as diversity and identity. According to J. Hawkes (2001:4), Culture can be understood through the study of cultural aspects, which can be summarized in three types: i) values, meanings and aspirations, ii) processes and mediums through which we develop, receive and transmit these values and aspirations, and iii) products (tangible and intangible) considered manifestations of meanings and processes in the real world.

These cultural products or artifacts may present a recognized *Cultural Value*. The term ‘Value’, in this field, will refer to the measure on which any cultural product (tangible or intangible, past or current) plays a fundamental role as an expression of collective features of a group or community (Throsby, 1999:6) and, at the same time allows for the recognition of differences from other groups. Some of these Cultural Values, have been exalted as ‘*Cultural Heritage Values*’ and recognized as significant enough to deserve protection and to be transmitted (ICOMOS, 1994:1).

But, what is Cultural Heritage Value? In the broader international context, the debate on the definition of CHVs has been led mainly by the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO- which emerged in 1945. Early considerations, beheld a widespread and isolated view of CHVs, mainly based on aesthetic considerations. From the Hague Convention (1954), to the Convention Concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the protection of movable objects, collections, immovable property, archaeological sites, etc., was boosted considering their great importance from an artistic, historic and scientific point of view.

Years later, the World Conference on Cultural Policies (UNESCO, 1982:3), suggested the recognition of intangible expressions of culture, such as immaterial works of artists, expressions of people’s spirituality, etc. The acknowledgement of intangible cultural heritage implied also the recognition of new cultural values, based on social or religious traditions, which accommodated modest expressions of the Culture of any community. The notion of intangible heritage and the new cultural heritage values proposed by MUNDIACULT were recalled years later by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003:2).

The evolution described above, allows to sustain that CHVs express an *attributed or evidenced quality*, which should be supported by a profound understanding of a community and a collective acknowledgement. The recognition of the ‘full range of values’ contained in any cultural product is part of the current challenges (Rodwell, 2007:205) and the process to identify them has generated many discussions and critical questions during the last decades. Who decides what is considered as cultural heritage, why decide it, how to make that decision, and so on, remain much debated questions. In this sense, experts like Rodwell (2007), Zancheti and Hidaka (2011:99) recognize that any attempt to formalize significance or CHV in a manageable text, “*always produces a partial set of values, or a specific narrative*”. This means that it is difficult to capture the complete significance of the heritage considering that it changes according to society, territorial context and periods of time.

The recognition of Cultural Heritage Values as a dynamic construction adds to the current concerns, a new one: how to manage these values? This implies asking ourselves what should be preserved and how to ensure its future transmission. According to Dawson “*what has become clear through this process is that heritage is not intrinsic within old things but, rather, a constructed ideal, an invention created by each generation for its purposes. If the next generation chooses to accept the items passed on to them as their heritage, that is their business—not something we can force them to do. Our objective should be to best articulate*

*the values of those properties we have chosen as our heritage so that those in the future can make an informed choice about which properties they will choose to perpetuate as their heritage” (Dawson, 2005:6).*

Therefore, Cultural Heritage can be described as a dynamic process – as part of Culture – where the significance (CHV) of a part of the cultural products is recognized and exalted in order to be transmitted to the next generation. In the process of construction or negotiation, which differs in each context, new cultural heritage values can be discovered, re-discovered and added to previous ones, or even new cultural heritage values can be recognized in other cultural products (UNESCO, 2010:5). On the contrary, precedent cultural products, considered cultural heritage products, can be lost and forgotten during the interpretation and transmission process (figure 1).

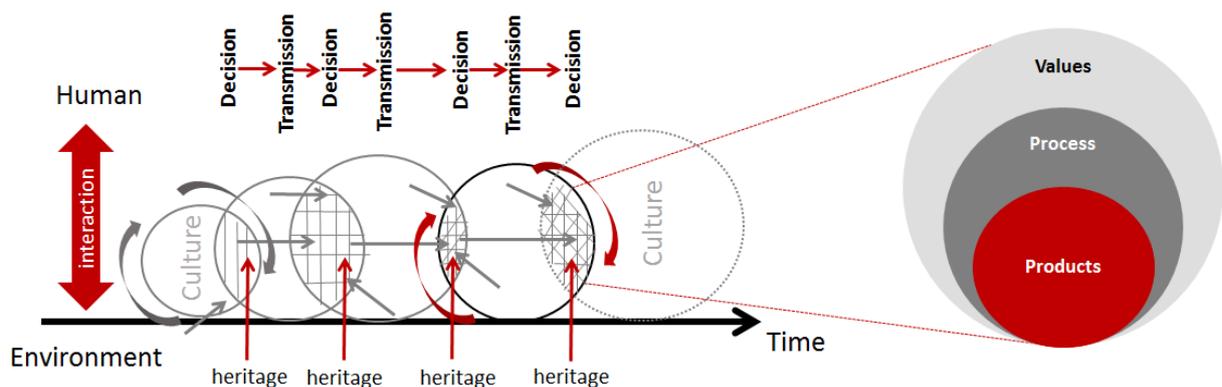


Figure 1. Construction of Cultural Heritage as part of Cultural dynamics  
Illustration by G. Garcia

### 3. The relationship between Development & Cultural Heritage

The relationship between Development and Cultural Heritage is difficult to reveal. The dynamic nature of both terms, which are recreated constantly by people who redefine values and aspirations, plus the uncertain use of both terms over time, have affected their estrangement (UNESCO, 2010:2). However, the following section summarizes part of the shifts in the relationship between Development and Culture identified over time and, based on the assumption that Cultural heritage is part of Culture.

After the second world war, the relationship between development and culture was considered remote. According to Larrea, (2009:4) the paradigm of development linked to industrialization, modernization and unlimited growth, ignored the possible contribution or benefits derived from traditional societies. On the contrary, a path of ‘homogenization’ was promoted, putting at risk and sometimes destroying cultural diversity. These situations might explain why some actions led by UNESCO were focused in diversity protection at 1966. In that context, development represented a threat to culture, understood in terms of diversity and tradition (UNESCO, 1996:9) (figure 2).



Figure 2. Development as ‘threat’ to Culture  
Illustration by G. Garcia

During the following decades, the limited understanding of development as unlimited growth, and its measurement in economic terms was critically reviewed. Hand on hand, with the search for a ‘real’ development and strategies to achieve it, the importance of culture started to be recognized. On 1972, the report summited by the Club of Roma stated that “*a person's time and space perspectives depend on his culture, his past experience, and the immediacy of the problems confronting him on each level*” (Meadows, 1972:18). Ten years later, during MUNDIACULT it was stated that a ‘genuine’ or ‘balanced’ development “*can only be ensured through the integration of cultural factors in the strategies to achieve it*”, considering that “*through culture we discern values and we make choices*” (UNESCO, 1982:1). In this following period, Culture starts to be considered as a potential force to achieve the desired development or well-being (figure 3). However, the World Commission on Environment and Development of United Nations, focused on actions to avoid destruction of the natural environment reduced the potential contribution of Culture and Cultural Heritage to an specific kind of cultural product: indigenous knowledge (UN, 1987:17; UN, 1992).



Figure 3. Culture as a force to achieve Development  
Illustration by G. Garcia

In 1996, the report “*Our creative diversity*” submitted by the World Commission on Culture and Development proposed a two-fold perspective on the relationship between Development and Culture, where the mutual impacts – positive or negative – should be assessed. The report invited to develop further studies in order to identify cultural indicators which might allow to assess the impacts and without ignoring the potential economic benefits derived from the use of Culture, it invited to transcend them (UNESCO, 1996:44).

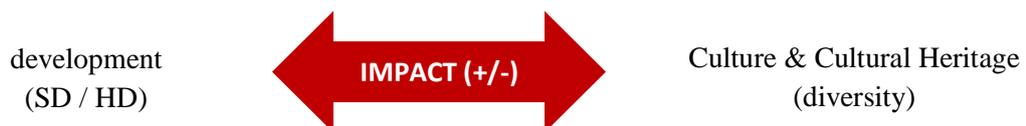


Figure 4. Interrelation between Development and Culture  
Illustration by G. Garcia

The advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> century stimulated the re-analysis of the relationship between Development and Culture, which has taken force during 21<sup>st</sup> century. On 2001, J. Hawkes proposed to consider Culture as “*The fourth pillar of Sustainability*”. Although, this idea was previously mentioned (UNESCO, 1982:2), it became widespread after Hawke's publication.

Considering Culture as a dimension of Development was insisted on by politicians from different context -France, New Zealand, India- during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002). More recently the Hangzhou Declaration has emphasized the need to include Culture as the fourth fundamental principle towards sustainable development on the post-2015 UN development agenda (UNESCO, 2013:3).

At the moment, the contribution of Culture to Sustainable Development in a broad sense –not just indigenous knowledge- has been also recognized by the United Nations (UN, 2013:8). In brief, what is clear for these two organizations –UN and UNESCO – is that the notions of Development and Culture have converged in a close relationship (UNESCO, 2010:6) (figure 5). In spite of recent advances, the question presented by Marshall Sahlins (UNESCO, 1996:13) remains unsolved: which role does Culture play in the development process?.

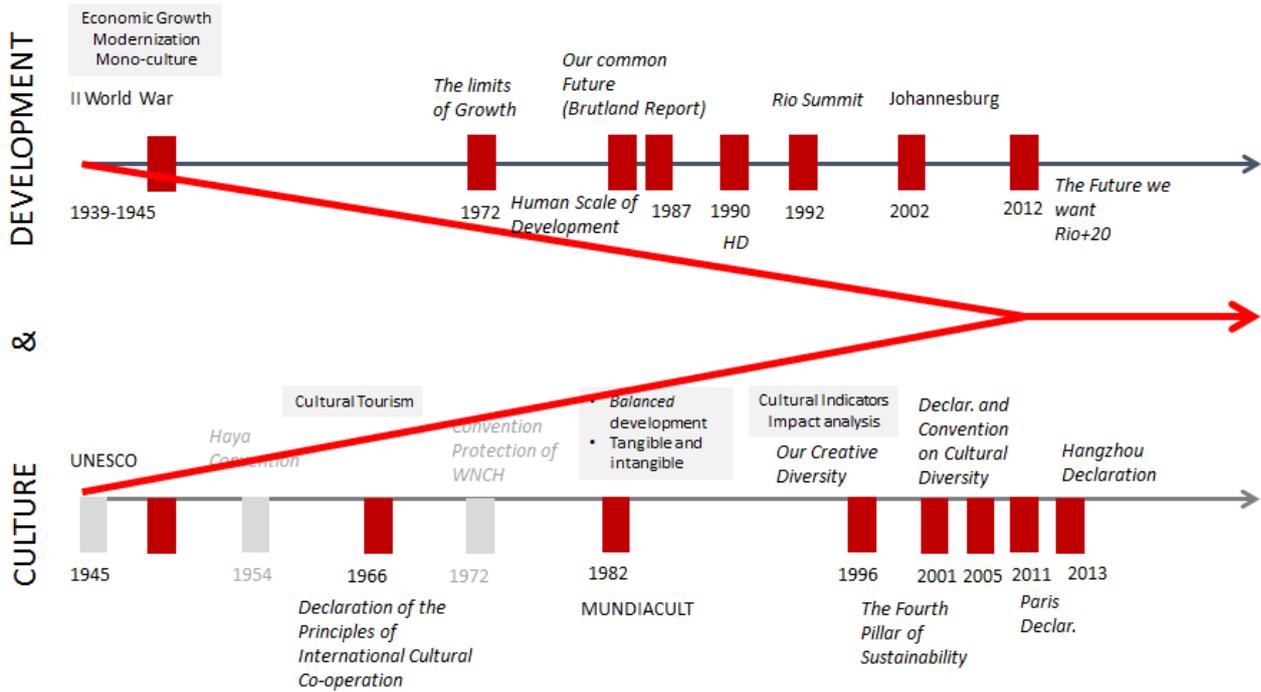


Figure 5. Convergence of Development and Culture  
Illustration by G. Garcia

According to D. Throsby (1999:6), the role of culture presents two main strands for interpretation. On the one hand, culture as a product of development, as a set of activities capable of generating social and economic growth, and on the other hand, culture as the force, the set of attributes fundamental for development of societies. Linked to the second interpretation, there is a more ambitious thinking about the importance of culture. Culture seen as a tool to build an alternative ‘model’ of development (Rapoport, 1969:96; UNESCO, 1996:11; Nurse, 2006:3). This assumption becomes crucial in times of constant failures of previous models of development, where Culture might help to define specific solutions to common needs, considering the particularities of each context, human and environmental.

#### 4. Discussion

Since the 1970s, theoretical advances have called to turn down misconceptions of Development as unlimited growth measured in economic terms and to move beyond the limited understanding of Culture and Cultural Heritage as arts. However, important gaps between practical actions and those theoretical advances can be identified. The legacy of the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century concerning the distinction between ‘*developed*’ and ‘*developing*’ realities, has implied a symbolic imposition to ‘less developed’ societies (Larrea, 2009:4; Nurse, 2006:1). Under this context, ‘developing’ is taken to represent what should be considered as “*delayed, what is not desired, something that should be getting over*” (Larrea, 2009:4), where ‘*primitive*’ societies should become into ‘*civilized*’ populations characterized by a cultural hegemony (Nurse, 2006:2; Holmes, 2011:21). In terms of Holmes, cultural hegemony refers to a symbolic imposition of dominant groups, which turn into a model. This model is adopted by other groups considering the potential benefits for the followers, or the oppression for whom refuses it (Holmes, 2011). Such hegemony has also affected our notion of culture where “*certain forms of culture are valued over others*” (Routledge, 2011:2).

On the other hand, the theoretical advances in the study of culture and cultural heritage have contributed to clarify important aspects related to their construction as well as their transmission. In both cases –culture and cultural heritage- result from complex processes which embrace three factors: i) specific context (natural and built), ii) specific groups of people, and iii) specific time. All these factors constantly vary. Therefore, construction as well as transmission of cultural products are located within a dynamic process, where any judgement will be strongly conditioned to our ability to understand and assess permanently these changes. However, according to Rodwell (2007:44) current practices related to immovable heritage still present a biased understanding of iconic buildings: “*The historic architecture of the city essentially as theatrical scenery - but without performers, needs to be substituted by a dynamic approach which embraces all expressions of interaction between the physical environment and human activity*”.

Finally, the theoretical advances in the study of the relation Culture and Development have revealed a dual role of culture: first, as a product of development and second, as a tool to re-design development. The first interpretation, has been studied since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> and at the moment, it presents studies and scientific methodologies (Throsby, 1999; Riganti & Nijkamp, 2004; Nijkamp, 2012; Ost, 2009; Ost, 2012) which evidence the benefits derived from its use and conservation. In spite of that, in practical actions, the tension between use and conservation of tangible cultural products has increased, affecting them as well as their surrounding environments, especially in southern countries (GHF, 2010:27).

The second and more ambitious role of culture, has already been discussed since the 1960s. The study of culture as a driver of development processes has been recognized, for example in the urban planning field by visionaries such as Scotsman Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, and Jane Jacobs in the first and second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> (Pillai, 2013:10). However, the approach inspired by them, known as *Integrated Planning* or *Cultural Planning* has gained prominence since 1990s in Europe and North America. In this approach, Culture might reveal the underlying

systems which support development processes considering the particular features of each context (physical, human and environmental) and in consequence, its understanding will serve to design other 'paths' of development.

In sum, the recent advances – in the cultural, economic and urban fields – have allowed to emphasize a relationship between culture and development. However, how this relationship works requires to be clarified under an holistic approach.

## 5. Conclusions

The present article has discussed several interpretations of the notions of *Development*, *Culture* and *Cultural Heritage* in order to draft a common understanding of these terms in the cultural field. Avoiding to elaborate deterministic definitions and supported by the analysis presented is possible to understand *Development* as a process rather than as an end, which aim is to reach well-being; *Culture*, as the result of the interaction between people and their environment –built and natural- which allows us to distinguish from others; *Cultural Heritage* as the significant cultural values attributed or evidenced in cultural products (tangible or intangible, produced on the past or in the current time). The heritage condition, seeks to facilitate the transmission of cultural products and their cultural values, to future generations. All of these terms embrace a dynamic nature, which is recreated constantly by people and their surrounding environment, and which varies over time.

In the third section, the relationship between Development and Culture has been analyzed. Theoretically, we have advanced from an unidirectional relation between development and culture, to a bidirectional relation on which both notions are intrinsically linked. As was mentioned above the variety of interpretations of these terms might have affected that comprehension. Furthermore, two main approaches towards the study of the relationship between culture and the development process have been recognized. On one hand, culture as a product of development and, on the other hand, culture as a fundamental factor for promoting development. In that regard, part of the current challenge is to develop convincing and scientific methodologies to clarify and prove such relationship.

Finally, the article presented a discussion about the gaps between the theoretical advances and practical actions. According to recent studies, the change of mind claimed by the HD and SD theories since the seventies is still a debt in practical actions. Development continues to be considered as a linear process where developing countries are followers of developed countries, with environmental, social and cultural consequences. On the contrary, the theoretical advances have called for a change of current paradigms: from the global solutions to the local solutions, optimizing local resources and being aware of global responsibly; from diversity understood as a constraint, to the respect and promotion of diversity as an opportunity; from culture as elitism and expenditure, to culture as tool to reach the desired well-being, in more than one way.

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