

# Globalization, Culture, and Development

## The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity

Edited by

Christiaan De Beukelaer

Miikka Pyykkönen

J. P. Singh



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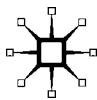
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Diversity of Cultural Expressions provides an international policy lens for  
analysing broad debates on issues of cultural globalization and development.  
The interdisciplinary contributions in this volume offer a fresh understanding  
of these key issues whilst examining cultural globalization, which is conceived  
in terms of artistic expressions and entertainment industries and interpreted  
anthropologically as the rituals, symbols, and practices of everyday life. The  
broad gamut of theories, methods, and evidence collected by the editors outlines  
UNESCO's accomplishments, shortcomings, and future policy prospects. This  
edited collection has a clear message: The Convention is a useful and important  
instrument in the debate on cultural diversity, but not broad enough or  
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# Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	x
<i>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations</i>	xiv
Introduction: UNESCO's "Diversity Convention" – Ten Years on <i>Christiaan De Beukelaer and Miikka Pyykkönen</i>	1
<b>Part I Culture</b>	
1 Confusing Culture, Polysemous Diversity: "Culture" and "Cultural Diversity" in and after the Convention <i>Yudhishthir Raj Isar and Miikka Pyykkönen</i>	13
2 Cultural Globalization and the Convention <i>J. P. Singh</i>	29
3 Competing Perspectives? WTO and UNESCO on Cultural Diversity in Global Trade <i>Jan Loisen and Caroline Pauwels</i>	43
<b>Part II Diversity</b>	
4 "Cultural Diversity" at UNESCO: A Trajectory <i>Galia Saouma and Yudhishthir Raj Isar</i>	61
5 Cultural and Biological Diversity: Interconnections in Ordinary Places <i>Nathalie Blanc and Katriina Soini</i>	75
6 The "Culture and Trade" Paradox Reloaded <i>Rostam J. Neuwirth</i>	91
7 Cultural Diversity, Global Change, and Social Justice: Contextualizing the 2005 Convention in a World in Flux <i>John Clammer</i>	102

### **Part III Convention**

- 8 Cultural Human Rights and the UNESCO Convention:  
More than Meets the Eye? 117  
*Yvonne Donders*
- 9 Performativity and Dynamics of Intangible Cultural  
Heritage 132  
*Christoph Wulf*
- 10 The 2005 Convention in the Digital Age 147  
*Véronique Guèvremont*

### **Part IV Looking Ahead**

- 11 Cultural Diplomacy and the 2005 UNESCO Convention 163  
*Carla Figueira*
- 12 The 2005 UNESCO Convention and Civil Society:  
An Initial Assessment 182  
*Helmut K. Anheier and Michael Hoelscher*
- 13 Culture and Sustainable Development: Beyond the  
Diversity of Cultural Expressions 203  
*Christiaan De Beukelaer and Raquel Freitas*
- Conclusions: Theories, Methods, and Evidence 222  
*J. P. Singh*

*Appendix: The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and  
Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* 228

*References* 245

*Index* 266

# 13

## Culture and Sustainable Development: Beyond the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

*Christiaan De Beukelaer and Raquel Freitas*

The 2005 UNESCO Convention provides an explicit link between the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions and sustainable development in Article 13 and development cooperation in Articles 14–18. However, the Convention leaves out broader notions of cultural diversity, which include culture as a way of life and cultural rights (for latter, see Donders, Chapter 8). Therefore, we argue, the reductionist understanding of culture does not necessarily or intrinsically have the potential for sustainable development that is claimed in the 2005 Convention. As a result, the link between the diversity of cultural expressions and sustainability has limited potential for transformative action towards sustainable development.

With respect to culture and sustainability in general, we discern two kinds of sustainable development. On the one hand, there is a mainstream definition with three integrated pillars: economic, social, and environmental. This approach is prone to instrumentalization. Sustainable development is driven ultimately by concerns about sustainable economic growth, and it was included in the Convention for instrumental reasons. For example, this may have included France's move to protect against open markets and the introduction of Articles 13–18 as give away to developing countries' claims on funding for development. On the other hand, sustainable development can be seen as transformative. In this regard, sustainability is not a universal blueprint, but rooted in cultural contexts. At the same time, it requires a metagovernance level that focuses on transformation (Meuleman, 2013).



This chapter analyzes the 2005 Convention's claim on the link between protection and promotion of cultural diversity and sustainable development from the early stages of the Convention's formulation, along with the interpretation and the operationalization of relevant articles that establish the link. It shows that the potential of the Convention for sustainable development is limited because the specific conception of sustainable development is a narrow, instrumental approach, in which the link between culture and sustainable development dominates the operationalization of the Convention's contribution to development. Despite efforts being undertaken at the time of writing in 2014 to introduce culture in the discussion on the future sustainable development goals, the Convention should contribute to linking cultural diversity in a structural way to sustainable development through a culturally sensitive, reflexive, and dynamic approach to cultural diversity (Meuleman, 2013). Thereby we mean that cultural diversity should go beyond the "diversity of cultural expressions" in order to accommodate the normative diversity of cultural practices in which thinking about sustainability is rooted.

## Context

Over the past decades, a general understanding has emerged that cultural expressions have social and economic potential for development. Even before the beginning of the drafting process of the 2005 Convention there was already ample attention to the importance of development cooperation in the context of cultural diversity (dos Santos-Duisenberg, 2012, pp. 373–374). The United Nations, and UNESCO in particular, have been at the forefront of debates linking culture and development. The World Commission on Culture and Development underlined the link between culture and development in the report *Our Creative Diversity* (WCCD, 1996) following its establishment by UNESCO in 1992. The Convention itself reiterates the idea that culture and cultural expressions are instrumental to developing countries (Article 1, Objective f) and to sustainable development (Article 2, Principle 6).<sup>1</sup> There has been little contestation to this idea as such, yet transforming *potential* into *result* remains a challenge due to several factors of which we highlight the most significant.

First, there is a lack of conceptual agreement on what sustainability is and on how it should be attained. Even though there are many practices and ideas on what it *could* be, a general and universal vision is lacking; sustainability as a concept has been eroded considerably since its use became common after the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987,

whose simple, though ambitious, definition has since then considerably shifted in connotation:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(WCED, 1987)

Second, the concept of culture in the 2005 Convention is restricted to the protection and promotion of diverse cultural expressions. If “cultural expressions” can be considered a public good (Throsby & Withers, 1986), justifying public funding, it lacks sufficient scope to be linked with development: linking this restricted focus on culture as a measurable public good, to development in general, requires a broader understanding of development that does not exclusively focus on economic growth but encompasses human, personal, and cultural development, and of culture as a way of life, that are inherently related to sustainability.

Third, linking culture and development is operationalized differently if we are talking of sustainable development, applicable at the global level, or of development cooperation where developed countries assist developing countries. The current debate on the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will revise this schism, but so far the Convention reinforces it and that is why its contribution to development thinking can be seen as partial at best.

Fourth, there is a lack of a clear commitment to transformative sustainable development models, as development focuses on “cultural industries” instead. By this we mean the transformations required in mental framings, institutional settings, and research practices that change policies and public interactions in the face of global environmental change and unsustainable development (Jaeger, Tàbara, & Jaeger, 2011). Such transformations include the discursive attention to the “cultural turn”, which meant to take culture (as a “way of life”) into account in development studies and practice (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995). This did not translate easily into practice, because it necessarily remained an approach that was more reflexive than constructive, in the sense that it is stronger on critique than on practical solutions. Taking culture into account works well in theory, but the practical application continues to be a challenge. When the discourse shifted from culture in general terms to culture-as-industry, the “cultural turn” was seized by the same utilitarian considerations of mainstream consumerism that reproduce global and social inequalities (Sacco, Ferilli, & Blessi, 2013). This means

that the meaning of culture was reduced from a way of life to a far narrower understanding through the cultural industries (De Beukelaer, 2015).

In order to expose these contradictions and conceptual ambiguities, we explore the framework that derives from the 2005 Convention, which aims to operationalize a link between culture and (sustainable) development. We do this through a historical account of the link between culture and sustainable development in the Convention; an overview of what the Convention currently adds to the debate and a reflection on what it can still add in the global development agenda. The absence of any engagement with culture in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the struggle to include culture in the post-2015 development agenda illustrate this challenge.<sup>2</sup>

## **The potential: A brief history of culture and sustainable development**

The 2005 Convention contains two distinct approaches to the link between culture and sustainable development: the first approach is reflected in Article 13 and refers to culture integrated in sustainable development, while the second approach is reflected in Article 14 and refers to culture as an instrument or a means to development.

### **Culture in sustainable development**

Parties shall endeavour to integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

(Article 13 of the Convention)

Three distinct but not mutually exclusive notions of development are present in documents that frame the link between culture and development at the international level, including in the 2005 Convention: development as economic growth in line with neo-classical economics; development as human capacity expansion, in line with the human development approach; and development in relation to present and future generations, in line with notions of sustainable development. It is crucial to understand these differences, because the Convention uses them interchangeably, and they can be contradictory.

Development as economic growth has most currency in international public policies of the type promoted by the international financial institutions (IFIs), some agencies within the UN, or the OECD, and is discernible in several documents that establish the link between culture and development. This is the market-oriented perspective, where progress is measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), leaving to a secondary role more refined concerns about sustainability such as equity, the quality of growth, and its impact on the environment (Fioramonti, 2013). In order to counterbalance the predominance of the economy-driven notion of development, Principle 5 of the Convention (Article 2) levels the playing field by raising culture to the same status of importance as the economy, and specifically ascribing individuals a right to participate and enjoy its fruition. In the context of the 2005 Convention the protection and promotion of cultural diversity becomes just as important as ensuring free trade in cultural goods and services. However, in practice the Convention has less capacity and instruments to uphold such principles than other normative apparatuses such as the WTO, which has more effective jurisdictional instruments (Graber, 2006).

The two other perspectives can be seen largely as reactions to this overdetermination of economic aspects on development. The World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) in 1996 advanced an approach to sustainable development where culture would have a key role in pushing for new approaches to development. It proposes people-centred development models that include the cultural dimension beyond economic growth (WCCD, 1996). Articles 13 and 14 seemingly incorporate the message of the WCCD, but it builds on a much weaker notion of sustainability. Although the key role of culture in development is explored in Articles 13 and 14 of the Convention, in practice culture stands mostly in an enabling role to development rather than culture as an end in itself contributing to sustainable development.

Realizing that not only humanity but also the environment were being forgotten in the race for growth, the Brundtland Report brought forth the notion of sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the possibility of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). This notion is present in Principle 6 (Article 2) and Article 13 of the 2005 Convention, which clearly establishes cultural diversity as an essential requirement towards the achievement of sustainable development, according to the definition of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).

The concept of sustainable development has evolved significantly since it was first coined, integrating a multiplicity of interrelated areas. The implementation of Article 13 shows evidence of the complex involvement of different policy and governance areas that are inter-linked and of very difficult operationalization. In fact, as pointed out by Meuleman (2013), the existing governance frameworks seem to deny this social complexity and uncertainty, operating in a business-as-usual mode characterized by highly centralized and institutionalized decision processes. Diversity and complexity are not effectively incorporated in governance strategies for the implementation of Article 13, which is left standing more as a principle to be achieved in some vague ideal future than as an operative norm of the 2005 Convention.

The recognition of culture as a pillar of sustainability (Hawkes, 2001) and its integration with the economic and social-environmental perspectives in parties' commitments to the Convention implies expected changes in public policies at the national level. These changes are bidirectional in the sense that culture is conceived as a driver and as an enabler of development. This means that different cultural and contextual aspects inform sectoral policies, while culture as a sector is valued in itself as an element of sustainable development. While all parties to the Convention are bound by Article 13, in practice its most visible outcome is limited to an operational instrument that UNESCO has developed, the Culture and Development Indicator Suite (CDIS), which is to serve as a guiding tool for policy changes in developing countries, as will be discussed below.

The whole context of the 2005 Convention essentially ensures the preservation of a status quo in terms of economic, social, and environmental development, which does not necessarily operationalize a role for "culture" and "diversity" in significantly changing the paradigm of sustainable development. Culture is much more than the identity of peoples. It is the fabric from which transformative ideas emerge, breaking boundaries and establishing new human and social development paths. Cultural diversity is about integrating these different dimensions into sustainability strategies in a coherent manner. However, Article 13 ends up being about the possibility of "the diversity of cultural expressions" sustaining development. The upside is that the Convention is a concrete measure about cultural expressions. The downside, however, is that more holistic normative engagements with culture and cultural diversity (that always remained vague) are only implicitly present. This means that in practice, culture assumes essentially an instrumental value and its constitutive dimension falls largely behind the scenes. In a

transformative model cultural diversity would be an integral dimension of sustainable development, while retaining a focus on the compatibility of diverse values instead of being just diluted in the same development model dominated by instrumental concerns and policy divergences that treat culture merely as goods.

### Cooperation for development

The 2005 Convention provides a framework to include the promotion and protection of the diversity of cultural expressions in development cooperation between parties to the Convention. In theory, this means collaborating on cultural projects, yet in practice this mostly means that “donor” countries set agendas for “partner” countries for activities and approaches. Article 14 focuses explicitly on cooperation for development and bridges Article 13 with the following articles: Articles 15 (Collaborative Arrangements), 16 (Preferential Treatment for Developing Countries), 17 (International Cooperation in Situations of Serious Threat to Cultural Expressions), and 18 (International Fund for Cultural Diversity) are particularly relevant in the light of international development.

Article 14 stipulates that “parties shall *endeavor* to support cooperation for sustainable development and poverty reduction” (emphasis added) at four levels: (1) strengthening the cultural industries; (2) capacity-building; (3) technology transfer; and (4) financial support. A distinction is made between what is aimed for, and how these aims should be attained: strengthening cultural industries should help sustainable development and poverty reduction, which is an empirically suspicious claim (see e.g. UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008, 2010). And in this process, the diversity of cultural expressions is reduced to the cultural industries.

The previous section stressed how the complex notion of sustainable development is not easy to translate into commitments and practice. This is no different for poverty-reduction. First, reducing (let alone eliminating) poverty is no easy feat (see, for example, Collier, 2007), and framing it as an issue that can be overcome with essentially technocratic measures is thus misleading at best. Second, there is little proof that economic activity in the cultural sector is instrumental in reducing poverty. Quite on the contrary, evidence shows that while the sector may help some, it often exacerbates the precarious position of the poorest (Oakley, 2006).

The 2005 Convention foregoes this evidence, and focuses on technical measures to instrumentalize cultural diversity for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Yet cooperation for development cannot

solely be seen as a transfer of skills, technology, and resources from the global North to South. There is a well-recognized need to build more on expertise and approaches across the diverse global South where policies and practices could be more transferable than between North and South. An exclusive focus on South–South cooperation could also be perceived as, and even generate, a further weakening of the commitment of the North, which is not desirable. Moreover, the aims of Article 14 are poverty reduction and sustainable development. They are, however, crippled by a crucial word in the article: *endeavor*. As the commitment is limited to “endeavoring”, parties to the Convention can easily bypass this crucial article. However, if the profound and long-standing inequality in the production and distribution of cultural *texts* is to be addressed, a firm commitment to cooperation is crucial. This largely follows Article 10 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2002), where “cooperation and solidarity” are proposed as ways to establish viable and competitive cultural industries on national and international levels, with particular attention to developing countries.

In many ways, Article 14 illustrates long-standing contradictions concerning traditional development cooperation. While it has long been argued that skills and technical know-how are available to make development work and eradicate poverty, the problem resides not in intention but in implementation. The idea that voluntary cooperation will be decisive in assuring not only the diversity of cultural expressions, but also its positive influence on development as a whole, is optimistic. The prevailing imbalance between the resources available to developed and developing countries cannot be solved by mere technical and minor financial intervention.

This article of the 2005 Convention echoes the optimism conveyed in Truman’s approach to development in 1949, where “[f]or the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve suffering”, stressing that “greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge” (Truman 1949 in Escobar, 1995, p. 3). The implicit claim made by Truman, and by extension Article 14, is twofold. First, the problem is not systemic, but particular, as the relatively weak position of many “developing” countries is intrinsic, and not extrinsic to their condition. Second, solving these intrinsic issues can be accomplished by investing in known solutions (as suggested in Article 14), and the ways cultural expressions are created and circulated should adjust in order to become viable and part of a global economic marketplace. This entails no transformative idea

of development, only the reproduction of a status quo that developing countries are to attain.

This does not mean, however, that no cooperation is possible or useful, or that no transfers of ideas, skills, or practices are desirable. There is, actually, ample space for this, as evidenced in a volume that addresses the negotiation processes and backgrounds of all articles of the Convention in detail (von Schorlemer & Stoll, 2012). Regarding Article 14, dos Santos-Duisenberg (2012) clarifies that the place of cooperation for development was firmly established from the start of the notations of the Convention, through the drafts and towards the final version. While debates were held on the application of this idea in practice, it was clear that both North–South and South–South cooperation would feature in this approach. Yet, the implementation does not correspond to the scale of the matters that the Convention is meant to address, which brings us to the issues of scope. The following section expands on these concrete dimensions and their limitations in greater detail.

### **Operationalization: What does the UNESCO Convention add?**

This section explores four of the main ways that the 2005 Convention actively engages or influences the link between culture and sustainable development. The first part, on the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, is directly linked to the Convention, whereas the other parts address efforts that exist in conjunction, rather than in direct relation, to the Convention. The latter parts are the Culture and Development Indicator Suite (CDIS), the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F), and UNESCO’s “special edition” of the Creative Economy Report (UNESCO and UNDP, 2013).

#### **International Fund for Cultural Diversity**

The International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) is the direct operational instrument of the 2005 Convention, which serves to support its aims in developing countries that are parties to the Convention. The IFCD has been active since 2010. By the end of 2013, it had raised a total US\$6.4 million of which US\$4.6 million has helped to support 71 projects from 43 countries (UNESCO, 2014c). The demand for support from the fund, however, far exceeds its capacity. In 2013 alone, only 10 out of 56 eligible proposals have been funded, and 140 more were dismissed as ineligible.



The IFCD primarily relies on voluntary contributions from states parties to the 2005 Convention, although it also welcomes donations from individuals. The limited availability of funds is largely due to such voluntary nature of the commitments. While Article 18(7) clearly stipulates the aim to provide contributions on a regular basis, it remains voluntary and parties only commit to “endeavor” to do so. They are, however, encouraged to provide an annual contribution to the IFCD of at least 1% of their overall contribution to UNESCO, as is done on a non-voluntary basis for the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). Contributions to the IFCD have recently been considered as fully eligible as official development assistance (ODA), which constitutes an additional incentive for donor countries to channel funding through this mechanism.

The IFCD supports activities of a variety of actors, including civil society (NGOs), state parties, and international NGOs. Funded activities are classified as “cultural policies” or “cultural industries” initiatives, receiving respectively some US\$1.5 million and US\$2.4 million (UNESCO, 2014c). There is also a considerable disparity and fluctuation in funds received per segment of the cultural sector, see Table 13.1. (For a list of projects funded, see UNESCO, 2012a; UNESCO & UNDP, 2013.)

While compelling initiatives and activities have come to fruition thanks to the IFCD, the limited resources available constrain the initiatives towards the implementation of the 2005 Convention in the developing countries that are parties to the Convention. Moreover, the contrast between the high number of funding applications (196 in 2013) and the limited number of eligible projects could indicate that the procedure may be too complex and thus limiting, and that the focus and the activities envisaged by the Conference of Parties (Article 22) may not correspond to the needs perceived by governments and other stakeholders. This indicates that actions related to the 2005 Convention are essentially donor-driven and insufficiently rooted in bottom-up action (see Anheier and Hoelscher, Chapter 12).

### **Culture-Development Indicator Suite (CDIS)**

The CDIS emerges out of a decade-old background of different efforts at developing cultural indicators, some of them explicitly linking culture to development.<sup>3</sup> The CDIS was created by UNESCO after consultations with several experts and bears an explicit objective of linking operational and advocacy activity with research work.

Table 13.1 Project funding per cultural domain and per cycle (in US\$)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
Music	235,164.00	360,115.00	143,986.00	166,442.93	255,763.00	1,161,470.93
Cinema/Audiovisual	321,797.00	213,280.00	0.00	273,332.00	135,418.00	943,827.00
Publishing	124,985.00	26,000.00	0.00	283,878.00	100,000.00	534,863.00
Performing Arts	281,088.00	95,115.00	93,101.00	171,767.56	100,000.00	741,071.56
Media Arts	79,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	79,500.00
Visual Arts	169,500.00	65,000.00	181,806.00	73,514.93	0.00	489,820.93
Design/Crafts	26,563.00	146,000.00	32,701.00	0.00	99,600.0	304,864.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,238,597.00</b>	<b>905,510.00</b>	<b>451,594.00</b>	<b>968,935.42</b>	<b>690,781.00</b>	<b>4,255,417.42</b>

Source: <http://en.unesco.org/creativity/ifcd/statistics-funded-projects>.

The CDIS comprises seven interlinked socioeconomic dimensions that should guide policy-making. Interestingly, the first dimension that comes up is always the economy, whose weight in the process runs contrary to the implicit understanding in the 2005 Convention that the different dimensions of culture (social, environmental, political) have just an equal weight as the economy. The economic dimension is then followed by indicators on education; heritage; communication; governance; social participation; gender equality. Each of these dimensions, or policy areas, has a number of subdimensions, which are then operationalized into indicators.

The CDIS proceeds through the implementation of a number of pilots in different developing countries. While it is explicitly designed to implement Article 13 of the Convention, its application is restricted to developing countries and is (as of 2014) funded exclusively by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). This has two implications in terms of interpretation and analysis of the consequentiality of this instrument. It perpetuates the schism between the developed world and the developing world, by building on Article 13 as if it were meant for developing countries alone. The underlying assumption that justifies this is that policies in the developed world already effectively operationalize the link between culture and development, which is by no means a given.

A major limitation of the CDIS is the discrepancy between the vast aims and the limited funding (with Spain as sole donor), while several countries have strategies on operationalizing culture in development (Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Canada). This made the CDIS dependent on one donor and, in the context of a changing development aid landscape, the continuation of this initiative will depend on the extent to which it is able to harness a critical mass of support among other donors, global civil society, and developing countries themselves.

The CDIS can be described as an attempt to take into account diversity and complexity, which stumbles upon an economistic and rationalist logic that segments reality in ways that are incompatible with its proclaimed holistic thinking. The resulting ambivalence creates operational and political difficulties, as it also explicitly tries to operationalize the link between culture and development beyond “cultural expressions”.

While presenting a biased tendency towards the developing world, the CDIS nevertheless has the merit of effectively inscribing the link between culture and development on the international agenda. It proposes concrete operational ways of linking different areas, and filtering

in cultural indicators into the governmental agendas and statistical offices through its proposed methodology and toolkits. However, its level of complexity, with matrixes, indicators, and holistic approaches makes it difficult to implement by partner countries in a spontaneous manner without external technical assistance and political stimulus. It should also be noted that the CDIS is one competitor among a fierce market of international institutions trying to “sell” their statistical toolkits.

### Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F)

The MDG-F was established in 2006 as a substantial contribution from Spain to the achievement of the MDGs that were defined as targets for development to be implemented between 2001 and 2015. One of this fund’s thematic windows is the link between culture and development, through which 18 joint UN programmes were implemented in developing countries. The underlying normative agenda, as stated on MDG-F’s website, was to assist countries in the implementation of UNESCO’s Conventions on culture.<sup>4</sup> The link of this thematic window with the 2005 Convention was officially established through Article 14, focusing almost exclusively on the creative industries’ potential of expanding “the economic and trade potential of local creativity, talent and expertise”.<sup>5</sup> The underlying political agenda was meant to compensate for the absence of culture as one of the MDGs and through this programme show that culture is an integral part of development and a contributor to job creation, economic growth, and even to MDG Goal 1 of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. This thematic window has enabled the link between culture and development to filter in to the UN agenda, although ambiguities remain regarding the actual level of commitment of both donors and beneficiary countries to this agenda.

Despite Spain’s heavy investment, and its positive spin-offs into the UN institutional system and with governments of developing countries, the MDG-F thematic window on culture and development is still, at the time of writing, a drop in the ocean and its momentum may end up having very little political impact. This observation is also in line with remarks made above concerning the CDIS, and justifies a question about the state of European development cooperation, which despite efforts at harmonization, has not reached consensus to take advantage of scale and catalytic opportunities in this area. Initiatives are scattered between countries with different levels of engagement in the culture and development agenda and the EC, which also has ambiguous commitment to this area, and has also funded some efforts independently.

### Creative economy reports (CER)

The Creative Economy Reports (CER) are not directly linked to the 2005 Convention. They do, however, illustrate efforts by different United Nations agencies to place the creative economy on the international agenda. This can be seen largely at two levels. On the one hand, under the initial reports (UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008, 2010), the focus has largely been on the diversification of national exports by strengthening the creative economy. Thereby, the focus has been on trade in creative goods and services, emanating from the cultural and creative industries. In 2013, the special edition of the CER, “Widening Local Development Pathways” (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013), opened up an approach that is far more culture-oriented than previous reports. The underlying aim of this change was to support advocacy efforts to take culture seriously in the global development agenda, which would replace the MDGs that expire in 2015. As such, the scope and engagement of the special edition of the CER widened considerably. While the engagement with culture is extended beyond the diversity of cultural expressions, the link of the CER with sustainable development remains weak. Even though they argue that culture should be the *central* pillar of sustainable development (UNESCO & UNDP, 2013, p. 51), it is not clear what this means in practice.

What the 2005 Convention and the CER have in common at this point, is that they both tend to conflate claims commonly made about “culture” as a way of life and a pattern of living with an agenda focused on cultural (or creative) industries, even though the Convention does not ostensibly focus on the former notion of culture. Yet, precisely because these notions of culture are different, the claims about the role of culture in the anthropological sense do not necessarily apply to culture as expression (or industry). It is, however, in the broader cultural understanding of culture that transformational changes towards sustainable development are likely to take place. While cultural expressions can help to make such transformations (through explicitly environmentally aware expressions), many do not contribute to advancing a transformative sustainability in praxis (Maxwell & Miller, 2012) or in their message (most pop-music, for example, promotes lifestyles antithetical to sustainability). In the link between cultural or creative industries and sustainable development, two buzzwords find each other. But, upon closer examination, the link between the concepts is thin.

In sum, the four mechanisms and initiatives above (IFCD, CDIS, MDG-F, and CER) in fact operate within what we called the “mainstream model” of sustainable development and development cooperation, and their transformative potential is limited.

### **The potential, revisited: What can the 2005 Convention still add?**

As stated above, the 2005 Convention combines the goal of sustainable development and of development cooperation. The current global agenda is moving towards an actual merger of these two distinct but related realms. There is little doubt that a global agenda should continue to assert the catalytic role of international instruments towards development. However, the development debate is no longer exclusively focused on developing countries. It has shifted to embrace a global agenda of development post-2015 where all countries are implicated, some as donors, some as agents of their own development, some as both, and all with responsibilities regarding sustainability. At the time of writing, an intergovernmental open working group (OWG) is debating which areas should be included with specific goals and indicators for the future SDGs that will follow the MDGs.

The MDG framework was a powerful driving force of development cooperation efforts, with positive aspects and also downsides: it catalysed efforts and funding to essential needs but it also established universal standards that were not always well adjusted to the specific needs and initial conditions of developing countries. It also did not sufficiently focus on environmental sustainability and was largely donor-driven.

Despite some uncertainty that culture will be taken up explicitly in the SDGs, there are now indications that this may happen.<sup>6</sup> Given the globally important normative and agenda-setting nature of these goals, inclusion or exclusion of culture makes all the difference for the future implementation of commitments in the area of culture and cultural diversity, including the allocation of funds.

In the race towards this new global development framework, UNESCO has led an ambitious strategy of including culture as a fundamental dimension of development, with mixed results. On the one hand it successfully negotiated several General Assembly (GA) resolutions stressing the link<sup>7</sup>; it placed the issue for discussion as a major topic in 2013’s Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); it secured funding for IFCD recognized as valid

ODA accounting in the OECD Development Aid Committee; it organized with China a major international conference on the issue in Beijing in 2013; and it included the topic as a major issue in the World Culture Forum in Bali in 2013.

On the other hand, UNESCO let culture slip off the high-level panel (HLP) report (High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013) that produced the initial agenda for the post-MDG period, despite the open commitment to the issue from the President of Indonesia and co-chair of the HLP. The link between culture and development is likely to appear in some form in the future SDG agenda, as recommended in the latest General Assembly resolution on the issue, but the possibilities of actual funding are slim, with Spain reducing its development cooperation funding, and the rest of Europe downsizing its commitments and becoming more hawkish in terms of development and unclear about joint priorities. It is uncertain who will take over operational support to continue showing the relevance of the agenda.

As mentioned above, the continued engagement with the link between culture and sustainability in development will be dependent on emerging economies that may also take a more significant place as donors, such as China or Indonesia, whose interest in social development is also open to question and clarification. Moreover, their political and economic interests dominate the practical and strategic focus on the operationalization of the link between culture and the SDGs. Given the difficulties in many developing countries in implementing inter-ministerial communication and coordination channels, together with the preponderance of finance ministries in policy-making and the almost non-existence of culture ministries with weight inside governments, it is difficult to predict that these countries will on their own continue to implement a culture-development-focused agenda if it is dominated by economic or diplomatic interests, with cultural diplomacy becoming predominant (see Figueira, Chapter 11). In such a scenario, unless countries see an interest in culture, and such potential interest is normally argued through the creative industries or tourism, continued emphasis on the link will decline.

In the midst of all this emphasis on culture, it also remains to be seen what will be the role of cultural diversity. Considering that the debate is focusing on the creation of yet another set of universalizing indicators, it is hard to see how cultural diversity will contribute to a transformative sustainable development. The link between culture and development is expanding to the global sustainable development agenda but is still prey

to the same economy-driven model. It is necessary to go beyond strict categorizations in order to explore explicitly normative questions about the role of culture and of cultural diversity in promoting transformative sustainable development.

Merging sustainability and development agendas at global level, however, represents an opportunity for UNESCO to go beyond the traditional strict distinctions of developed and developing countries and to argue for a bold agenda that firmly encompasses all countries in the implementation of Articles 13 and 14. One way of seeing this opportunity is by exploring the explicitly normative questions that can be asked, and *should* be asked when discussing sustainable development in a global context. Appadurai (2004, 2013), for example, focuses on the *capacity to aspire* as a way to (re)think the future. Culture, he argues, has been placed too much in the past, as it has been equated with terms such as habit, custom, heritage, and tradition (Appadurai, 2013, p. 180). This, in contrast with economics, that “has become the science of the future” (Appadurai, 2013, p. 180). Taking culture more seriously as a locus of imagination could help to open up a greater normative diversity towards the future. Appadurai, however, warns against the inequality in the distribution of the capacity to aspire:

[The capacity to aspire] is a sort of meta-capacity, and the relatively rich and powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire. It means that the better off you are (in terms of power, dignity, and material resources), the more likely you are to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration.  
(2013, p. 188)

As such, efforts should be made at the international level to engage particularly those who are less inclined, used to, or able to engage in debates about the possibilities (and limitations) of the future. This is even more important given the tendency of “development” issues to shift from a geographic realm to a social realm. At this point, the upper middle classes of Lagos, Mumbai, La Paz, or Jakarta have more in common with the social elites in London, Moscow, or New York than many of their fellow urbanites, and the same goes for the subaltern populations of these cities. Bearing in mind this social stratification, the need to consider the importance of the capacities of *all* sociocultural groups to engage in the imagining of the future, through their respective capacities to aspire, is the challenge that binds culture and sustainability today.



## Conclusion

While the 2005 Convention explicitly links cultural diversity to sustainable development and development cooperation, this link is insufficient and weak. The way that Articles 13 and 14–18 focus on this link is a necessary step, but it fails to incorporate transformative sustainability that does not rely on the classical economic and utilitarian models. As a result, it focuses merely on mainstream sustainability, where the economic still dominates all other fields. The operationalizing efforts of the Convention and related initiatives, such as the IFCD, the CDIS, the MDG-F, and the CERs largely fail to move beyond this realm as well. Yet, culture particularly matters in relation to the transformational potential of sustainability-thinking. The link between culture and sustainable development (Article 13) and cooperation for development (Article 14) in the 2005 Convention are not serious attempts to engage with either sustainability or the global political economy of cultural production. These buzzwords “diversity” and “sustainability” hide the actual aim of the Convention: providing a legal framework for the *exception culturelle* against WTO negotiations.

However, beyond the 2005 Convention, the link between culture and sustainability is not without contradiction. As a result, it bears obstacles to the fulfilment of the Convention’s potential, such as a degree of ambivalence in its object, lack of sufficient scope, and of real commitment to transformative development models. This is due partly to the fact that the link between culture and development has been acknowledged more widely than is the case with the link between culture and sustainability. Yet the ambivalence is both the weakness and the strength of the Convention: while there is no clear prescription to engage with sustainability, the legal framework allows for action in a variety of ways.

While the Convention oscillates between centralized decision-making and market approaches to the governance of diversity, there is in fact greater need for more networked governance that builds on interdependence and empathy towards a culture of pluralism and tolerance (Meuleman, 2013, p. 55). The Convention provides visibility for the link between cultural diversity and sustainable development, but does not have the breadth to deal with sustainability in a transformative way and with cultural diversity beyond cultural expressions. While the Convention provides a framework that allows for transformative shifts towards sustainable development, decisive action in this regard remains

voluntary and dependent on the willingness of parties to read these elements in the text.

## Notes

1. “Cultural diversity is a rich asset for individuals and societies. The protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are an essential requirement for sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations” (UNESCO, 2005a, p. 4).
2. The MDGs are the UN development agenda for the period 2000–2015. This framework provides eight quantifiable goals: (1) eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) global partnership for development. The negotiations for the follow-up of this agenda is tentatively called the “post-2015” development agenda, because it covers the period after the expiration of the MDGs and no definitive delineation of these aims (as of June 2014) has been decided.
3. For a comprehensive overview, see UNESCO (2010), *Towards a UNESCO Suite of indicators on Culture and Development (2009–2010) Literature Review*, available at [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Conv2005\\_CDindicators\\_Literature.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Conv2005_CDindicators_Literature.pdf), accessed 7 June 2014.
4. The Joint Programmes and the UNESCO Culture Conventions, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/achieving-the-millennium-development-goals/Conventions/> accessed 5 February 2014.
5. Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) Terms of Reference, available at [http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/MDGFTOR\\_Culture\\_FinalVersion%2017May%202007\\_English.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/MDGFTOR_Culture_FinalVersion%2017May%202007_English.pdf), accessed 5 February 2014.
6. UNGA A/68/440/Add.4, *Globalization and interdependence: culture and development*, 13 December 2013, available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/440/Add.4](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/440/Add.4), accessed 5 February 2014.
7. Despite differences of perspective at the global level, the topic was clearly recognized as important at the UN Summit on the MDGs in 2010, [http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/outcome\\_documentN1051260.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/outcome_documentN1051260.pdf), accessed 18 August 2014, and reiterated in the following year on a General Assembly resolution on culture and development, available at [http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/outcome\\_documentN1051260.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/outcome_documentN1051260.pdf), accessed 18 August 2014. Another fundamental resolution was [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/223](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/223), accessed 18 August 2014.