

The international politics of the nexus ‘culture and development’: four policy agendas for whom and for what?

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Culture and development are both ubiquitous and highly contested terms in social sciences. By paraphrasing Joseph Nye’s quote on power and love (Nye 1990, p. 177), I should perhaps acknowledge two things: whereas culture, like love, is easier to experience than to define or measure, development seems to be the reverse; it’s easier to define or measure than to experience. Of course, in recent years, there has been a proliferation of international norms and mechanisms dealing with the ‘culture and development’ nexus, and multiple actors have demonstrated a willingness to promote a specific set of ideas on the nexus. At the same time, the main question asked by an increasingly academic form of research is from which point of view to address the links among culture, cultural policies, and development (Stupples and Teaiwa 2016): sociological, economic, anthropological, institutional, or legal?

The chapter that follows is more empirical and analytical than theoretical. It does not aim to highlight if the increased attention has necessarily improved our understanding on the interactions between culture, cultural policies, and development. By contrast, it explores these interactions by contextualizing the dynamics of international policy agenda setting for this issue and by dealing with four main questions: who seeks to set an international policy agenda on the ‘culture-development’ nexus, for what reasons, under which conditions, and with which outcomes.

Here, I attempt to see how the relationship between culture and development has been defined and used by multiple actors in international relations, thereby demonstrating its importance for world politics. To address these questions, the chapter primarily discusses the initial political pathways through which the nexus travelled onto the international stage. It focuses, furthermore, on four policy agendas that have emerged within multilateral and international agendas since the early 1990s: the free trade-focused approach, the policy agenda based on the diversity of cultural expressions, the creative economy perspective, and the policy agenda based on the intangible cultural heritage. In the end, I examine how the post-2015 development agenda and the arrival of digital age could produce new insights into the links among culture, cultural policies, and development.

‘Culture and development’ in the multilateral arenas: first steps

Since the 1970s, UNESCO – as the sole UN agency with a cultural mandate – has sought to feed the multilateral debate on the links between culture and development (De Beukelaer 2015, pp. 50–55; Garner 2016, pp. 71–102; Vlassis 2016a). In the wake of decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s, UNESCO was faced with the needs and expectations of a number of newly independent States, and with an approach that saw culture as ‘a marker of identity’ (UNESCO 2007, p. 76). In 1970, the organization took the initiative to organize the Intergovernmental

Conference on the Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Culture in Venice, which acknowledged the responsibilities of national governments with respect to the cultural life of the nation (UNESCO 1970, pp. 7–11). Following this, in 1974, the 18th UNESCO General Conference established the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture, the first intergovernmental Fund dealing with the public support to cultural development. At the same time, UNESCO adopted in 1972 the World Heritage Convention, the first standard-setting instrument recognizing the importance of culture in international cultural policies. Additionally, UNESCO organized the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult), held in Mexico in 1982 and attended by 960 participants from 126 States. The Mondiacult Declaration argued for strengthening the links between development and culture in the broadest sense, and it called for ‘humanizing development’ (UNESCO 1982).

Alongside such developments, UNESCO went through an unprecedented institutional and financial crisis. The political controversy for establishing a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) advanced under the leadership of the Non-Aligned movement led to the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) withdrawing from the organization in 1984. In fact, the ‘Third World’ countries denounced the dominance of information and cultural products from the Western media industries as bringing about a cultural imperialism and called on UNESCO to pay special attention to maintaining national cultures and political independence for the development of the global South. In 1980, UNESCO published the report *Many Voices, One World*, prepared by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems chaired by Irish Nobel Prize winner Sean MacBride. The report stressed that the implementation of the free flow principle had resulted in an imbalance in international information exchanges, and it called for a more equitable circulation of information and cultural products. By contrast, the main US arguments for their withdrawal focused on two points: (i) an international debate threatening the ‘free flow information’ and ‘free trade’ principles in media industries; (ii) a harsh critique of the politicization of the UNESCO, and of a lack of efficiency, relevance and pragmatism on the part of the organization (Imber 1989).

Despite financial and institutional challenges during the 1980s and 1990s,¹ UNESCO launched the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988–1997), the most tangible result of the Mondiacult conference, which aimed to place culture at the heart of development. As part of that Decade, in 1991, UNESCO established the World Commission on Culture and Development, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. In 1996, the Commission presented the report *Our Creative Diversity*. As argued in the report, “is culture an aspect or a means of ‘development’, the latter understood as material progress, or is culture the end and aim of ‘development’, the latter understood as the flourishing of human existence in its forms and as a whole?” (World Commission on Culture and Development 1996, p. 13). In the same vein, the Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development was held in 1998, again aiming to embed cultural policy as a key component of development strategy (objective 1 of the Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development) and to make more human and financial resources available for cultural development (objective 5 of the Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development). Yet all these initiatives did not advance far enough towards more prescriptive actions. The debates were thus limited to broad moral commitments, without establishing institutional mechanisms and standard-setting instruments.

Lastly, it's worth pointing out that these initiatives were based on the UN debates with reference to an alternative approach of development, beyond its economic aspects. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw the flourishing of new conceptions questioning economic and material criteria as hegemonic policy principles of development: the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986, the publication of the Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future' prepared by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, and the first publication of the Human Development Report in 1990 commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and based on Amartya Sen's philosophical ideas. Such initiatives paid attention to the non-economic dimensions of development and considered development as a multifaceted problem. That is, growth is not an end in itself but needs to have a positive impact on human well-being. Moreover, it was argued that development should be measured by a broad spectrum of data, including political rights, economic and social freedoms, nutrition, governance structures, gender policies, the health system, and environmental and educational policies (Rist 2007, pp. 345–416).

Four policy agendas on the 'culture-development' nexus

As Risse (1994) said, "ideas do not float freely" on the international stage, but they are linked to actors and institutions. With this in mind, the agenda setting as regards the 'culture-development' nexus is closely attached to interests and resources of a wide variety of actors who exercise power across borders, mobilize multiple strategies, and promote their own specific set of ideas. In this respect, this section explores the political dynamics of the setting of four policy agendas on the nexus, highlighting how the nexus is defined, which issues are created, and which norms and programs are established.

A free trade-focused approach on development

Since the early 1990s, the deregulation of cultural markets and the elimination of regulatory and financial measures in the cultural sector, as prominent conditions of development for the sector, have been a major priority of the US trade diplomacy as well as a stumbling block in the process of the international and regional economic integration (Vlassis 2015a). As Miller and Yúdice (2002, p. 174) note, "The US motivation was obvious: replacing national societies of culture with a global society of alleged efficiency". The goal of the US administration, followed mainly by several powerful industrial associations such as the Motion Pictures Association of America, was to include cultural goods and services within the agenda of international trade negotiations, including the last period of negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1993; the negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; and the negotiations around free trade agreement (FTA) between the US and Canada in 1989, as well as on the North American Free Trade Agreement among US, Canada, and Mexico in 1994.

The US position was largely associated with the Washington consensus in development policies, which has gained ascension since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar world order. The consensus asserts that global welfare would be maximized by the liberalization of trade, finance, and investment, and by restructuring national economies to provide an enabling environment for capital (Rist 2007). Consequently, the Washington consensus called for governments to focus on macroeconomic criteria and to open up their economies to market

forces. In this regard, by the 1990s, as neoliberalism emerged triumphant, the assumption was cultural policies should admit an underlying principle that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005, p. 2).

Even though a coalition of actors, driven by France and Canada, defended the term ‘cultural exception’ (*exception culturelle*) in order to exclude cultural goods and services from the agenda of the trade negotiations, the WTO does have a competence for trade of cultural services, and the latter are not permanently excluded from WTO negotiations (Pauwels and Loisen 2003). As of February 2016, 36 WTO members have agreed to make some commitments in the audiovisual services sector.² Whereas 18 governments³ of 134 founding members of the WTO took commitments in 1995, during the period from 1996 to 2016, 18 governments⁴ of the 27 new WTO members agreed to be subject to certain restrictions in the audiovisual sector. This reveals not only the strong US pressures – mostly to the economically developing countries – in order to push the liberalization of their audiovisual sector forward, but also the fact that a government negotiates its accession to the WTO without being able to build political coalitions favoring the protection of cultural policies.

Likewise, the US sought to judicialize its trade disputes in terms of cultural services through the WTO Dispute Settlement Body. In 2009, following a complaint lodged by the US administration in 2007, the WTO condemned China for its trade practices within the cultural sector and especially for its strict regulatory policies on audiovisual services, such as the annual quota of 20 foreign films to be distributed, and revenue sharing (Neuwirth 2010; Vlassis 2016b). As a result, the US and China signed a ‘Memorandum of Understanding on WTO Related Problems in the Film Industry’, which provides that China allows the importation of 14 more Hollywood movies and increased the percentage of sharing revenues to the foreign operators from 13 percent to 25 percent.

However, since 2001 (the Doha Round), the WTO has struggled to conclude a round of trade negotiations among its members, illustrating an institutional crisis of its multilateral model. The US administration, therefore, has opted for the bilateral pathway, concluding FTAs with several countries. During bilateral negotiations, the lack of human resources and of expertise, the lack of pressure from culture professional organizations – often loosely organized and representing poorly developed industries, as well as the ability of other more powerful sectors to influence the decision-making process, often lead developing countries to give in to the demands of trading partners, such as the US, and to not preserve the cultural field (Vlassis and Richieri Hanania 2014; Gagné 2016). Conversely, the bilateral nature of negotiations offers a power asymmetry to the benefit of the US administration, whereby the negotiating countries cannot hide behind alliances in favor of cultural policies and the recognition of cultural specificity. That is, seven countries – Oman, Panama, Bahrain, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador – inscribed few reservations within their bilateral agreements with the US regarding the cultural sector; therefore, they have significantly limited their capacity to implement public policies in that sector.

Diversity of cultural expressions: recognizing cultural industries in development policies

Rapid financial globalization, international and regional economic integration, and the liberalization of trade exchanges raised major concerns for several actors over the implications for cultural policies, flows of cultural goods and services, and cultural diversity. By the end of the 1990s, an alliance of actors including national governments, such as Canada and France; intergovernmental organizations, such as *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* and Council of Europe; sub-national governments (Quebec and Catalonia); and non-governmental organizations (National Coalitions for Cultural Diversity⁵) has mobilized in favor of ‘the diversity of cultural expressions’ and the establishment of an international policy tool on this principle (Musitelli 2005; Vlassis 2015a).

Just as during the debate on the NWICO, several countries made a strong plea for balanced and equitable flows of cultural goods and services around the world, whereas the US administration called for two policy principles: free trade and free flow of information and images. Following hard negotiations on a number of issues such as the link between trade agreements and culture, the appropriate cultural policies for the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions, or the type of contributions for a fund for cultural diversity, the new standard-setting instrument – the Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereafter CDCE) – was adopted by UNESCO in 2005. As of December 2016, it has received the support of 144 Member States and of the European Union (EU). Instead, the US – fierce opponent of the CDCE – Russia, Japan, Turkey, Pakistan, as well as several Southeast Asian (Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand) and Middle Eastern (Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria) countries have not yet ratified the CDCE.

The object of the CDCE does not refer to cultural diversity in the broadest sense of the term, but to a specific aspect of the latter with reference to the cultural goods and services created, produced and distributed by cultural industries. The CDCE recognizes the specificity of cultural goods and services and the importance of cultural policies for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. Furthermore, even though the main interest of CDCE’s promoters was to offer an international culture-driven response towards the international trade regime, the CDCE included also concrete provisions to the link ‘culture and development’. These provisions are the result of a request by several developing countries and independent experts that did not want to make the CDCE a normative tool serving only the interests of developed countries (Vlassis 2011, p. 498).

The CDCE stipulates the integration of cultural industries in sustainable development (Article 13), and it aims to strengthen international cultural cooperation through various tools, such as the expert and information exchange among the Parties (Articles 9 and 19), the collaborative arrangements (Article 15), and the preferential treatment for developing countries (Article 16) as well as the setting up of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), a multi-donor voluntary fund established under Article 18 (Albornoz 2016; Vlassis 2014). As of March 2017, the IFCD has supported 84 projects in 49 developing countries, and the total contributions received reach 8.8 million USD. More than 75 percent of the projects are either in Africa or in Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet the contributions are increasingly disparate. On the one hand, the combined contributions of France, Finland and Norway reach more than 3.8 million USD,⁶ and those of three new international powers, namely, Brazil, China, and Mexico, are so far regular and dynamic, reaching more than 1.1 million USD. On the other hand, the UK, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea and Italy, very developed countries in terms of cultural goods and services, have not yet contributed to the IFCD resources.

In addition, throughout 2011–2015, UNESCO established an expert facility project, funded by the EU in order to implement the CDCE through the strengthening of the system of governance for cultural industries in developing countries. Besides, the expert facility activities for 2015–2017 are funded with the support of Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, which also gave resources for the elaboration of the 2005 Convention Global Report published in 2015. In this respect, during the period of 2011–2017, the project has allocated in total €3.7 million for creating a pool of 57 experts in public policies for cultural industries. Twenty-five technical assistance missions have been put in place in order to transfer knowledge and know-how towards countries in Africa (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, Tunisia, Zimbabwe), Latin America (Argentina, Colombia, Honduras), Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam), and the Caribbean (Barbados, Cuba, Haiti).

Lastly, the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation is a new policy instrument elaborated by the European Commission in order to promote the CDCE's implementation through trade agreements, and especially Article 16 regarding the 'Preferential treatment for developing countries' (Loisen and De Ville 2011; Vlassis 2016c). Since 2008, the Commission has introduced in total four protocols, with the Caribbean States (Cariforum) signed in 2008, with the Republic of Korea concluded in 2009, with Central America signed in 2010, and with Peru/Colombia concluded in 2011.

Creative economy: linking 'culture and development' to informational society

Since the early 2000s, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), an international organization traditionally "reflecting the aspirations and needs of least developed countries" (Davies and Woodward 2014, p. 348), has elaborated a new approach on the nexus 'culture and development', based on the concept of 'creative economy', which is seen as a "feasible development option" (UNCTAD 2010). Under the leadership of the UNCTAD Secretary-General from 1995 and 2004, Rubens Ricupero, former Brazilian minister of finance, and the support of Brazilian culture minister Gilberto Gil, the UNCTAD XI Conference held in Brazil in 2004 introduced the creative industries into the international economic and development agenda (Isar 2008). The Sao Paulo Consensus, adopted by 153 Member States, stressed, "The international community should support national efforts of developing countries to increase their participation in and benefit from dynamic sectors and to foster, protect and promote their creative industries" (UNCTAD 2004, p. 19). In this context, a UN multi-agency Partnership for Technical Assistance for Enhancing the Creative Economy in Developing Countries has established at a 'UN Global South-South Creative Economy Symposium' held in Shanghai (China) in December 2005. This partnership was mobilized for the preparation of the first Creative Economy report, launched during the UNCTAD XII Conference in Ghana in 2008.

The aim of this policy-oriented report was to make an intellectual contribution of UN agencies to the discussions of creative economy with a view to assist governments in formulating policies and to reshape the development agenda with creative industries in mind. The report gives a central role in the linkage among creativity, intellectual property, knowledge, and access to information. It sees the creative industries as a key new growth sector of the global economy and as contributors to wealth creation, employment growth, and export performance for developing countries, giving a potential to diversify their economies.

The creative economy has become an even stronger driver of development: world trade of creative goods and services totaled a record 624 billion USD in 2011, more than doubling between 2002 and 2011. The average annual growth rate of the sector during that period was 8.8 percent, and the exports of creative goods were even stronger in developing countries, averaging 12.1 percent in growth annually over the same period”. (UNCTAD 2013, p. 153)

In fact, the UNCTAD classification of creative industries seems to “integrate and assimilate the cultural industries” (Tremblay 2008, p. 67), and it is divided into four broad categories: cultural heritage, arts, media, and functional creations (design, architecture, advertising, research and development, computer services, etc.). UNCTAD and UNDP took the lead in preparing the 2008 and 2010 reports,⁷ whereas the 2013 report was notably executed by UNESCO and UNDP. The reports brought contributions from UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and International Trade Centre. Moreover, the last few years have seen a boom in interest in the idea of ‘creative industries’. That is, the creative economy policy strategy was manifested in initiatives across several Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian countries, such as Peru, Colombia, Barbados, Jamaica, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, or even in EU, whose new program for the cultural and creative sectors (2014–2020, budget €1.46 billion) is called *Creative Europe* (Littoz-Monnet 2012).

Noteworthy is that the concept ‘Creative industries’ first has been elaborated in Anglo-Saxon countries (Garnham 2005; Cunningham 2009). It has emerged in Australia with the Labour government’s ‘Creative nation’ initiative of 1994. It was given wider exposure with the election of ‘New Labour’ in the UK in 1997 when the Blair government set up the Creative Industries Task Force as a central activity of its new Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Hence, it established the creative industries “as a plank of the UK’s ‘post-industrial’ economy”, strongly linked to policy agendas surrounding technological convergence, innovation policy, and information society and going beyond the traditional ideas of the subsidized arts (Flew and Cunningham 2010, p. 113).

As Galloway and Dunlop (2007, p. 18) argued, culture was abandoned as elitist and exclusive, whereas ‘creativity’ was embraced as democratic and inclusive. In the early 2000s, policy consultant and journalist John Howkins (2001) claimed in an influential and widely read book that creative economy would be the dominant economic form in the twenty-first century. In the meantime, the US academic and policy consultant Richard Florida (2002) popularized the idea that creativity is central to new economies, leading to a change in the class system itself, with the rise of a ‘new creative class’ (Hesmondhalgh 2008, pp. 560–561). In this context, in 2008, the document *Creative Britain* “sets out an ambitious agenda which sought to reiterate the significance of the creative industries to the UK’s economic future” (Banks and O’Connor 2009, p. 365). Nevertheless, several countries that made a strong plea for the cultural exception (see above) appeared reluctant to the new concept, insofar as the amalgamation of cultural industries and creative economy harbors a real danger: “that of watering down the specificity of cultural industries and the weakening of arguments in favor of the intervention of public authority” (Tremblay 2008, p. 83).

Intangible cultural heritage: deconstructing the Western development paradigm?

At a diplomatic level, the building of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter CSICH) is mainly based on the political support of non-Western countries, such as Japan – the first country that recognized the ‘intangible cultural properties’ in 1950 – Republic of Korea, China, Turkey, Peru, and Colombia. The objective was to rebalance the global political economy of the cultural heritage and to put on the international cultural policy agenda an issue-area of their choice.

The first international legal instrument dealing with the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage was the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore adopted by UNESCO in 1989. Subsequently, several initiatives have affirmed the necessity for a convention that would address the protection of intangible cultural heritage: the establishment of the UNESCO-Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 1993; the program ‘Living Human Treasures’ proposed by the Republic of Korea in 1993, identifying persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills for performing or recreating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage; and the program titled ‘Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity’ in 1997 (Kozymka 2014). At the end of 1990s, several governments were already committed to safeguard intangible cultural heritage as their national heritage, revealing the bottom-up character of the Convention: according to UNESCO’s 2000 World Cultural Report, 57 States adopted national cultural policies related to intangible cultural heritage and 80 States provided moral or economic support to individuals and institutions promoting intangible heritage (UNESCO 2000, p. 175).

The political process to the adoption in 2003 of the CSICH has also been facilitated by two factors. First, the international debate on intangible heritage met the cultural turn in development questioning Western ethnocentrism. At the end of 1990s, several multilateral institutions such as World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and UNDP began to focus on ‘culturally appropriate development’ (Stupples 2014) or ‘culturally sensitive approaches’ (Sims 2015, p. 6)⁸. Second, the intangible cultural heritage took part of the main mandate’s priorities of the UNESCO’s Director-General, Kōichirō Matsuura, a Japanese career diplomat, elected in 1999.

The CSICH recognizes a new type of heritage as an expression of the cultural identity of peoples and communities, thereby questioning the Western and monumental approach on heritage, depending on the 1972 World Heritage Convention and based on a sacralization of the object rather than on the practices. In turn, the CSICH deals with the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, meaning the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. It proposes five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested: oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices, rituals, and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. The Convention thus stresses the importance of international cooperation for development and provides for the establishment of the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. “The intangible cultural heritage is the mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development” (UNESCO 2007, p. 133).⁹

Clearly, the World Heritage List, inspired by movable cultural property and material cultural expressions, which are specifically Western concepts, favors European monuments and buildings, and is unbalanced in terms of regional distribution (Frey and Steiner 2011). As of December 2016, 52.5 percent of all cultural sites ‘of outstanding universal value’ are to be found in Europe and North America – 426 out of 814 cultural sites.

On the one hand, accompanied by fears of global cultural homogenization and hegemony by the West, the CSICH questions “Western ethnocentrism as the implicit culture of developmentalism” as well as the paradigm ‘modernization/westernization’. In this respect, it illustrates “the retreat from structural and macro approaches in development practices in favor of micro and actor-oriented approaches” (Nederveen Pieterse 1995, p. 176). Consequently, it strongly challenges the Eurocentricity of the World Heritage List. As of December 2016, 40 percent of all the elements within the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage are to be found in 11 non-Western countries (171 out of 430 inscribed elements): China (39), Japan (21), Republic of Korea (19), Turkey (15), Mongolia (13), India (13), Iran (12), Vietnam (11), Peru (10), Colombia (9), and Mexico (9). Obviously, “the West is no longer a privileged interlocutor in the age of polycentrism” (Nederveen Pieterse 1995, p. 176).

On the other hand, CSICH Article 15 recognizes the communities as a main actor for creating, maintaining, and transmitting intangible cultural heritage. This has led several Western countries to wonder about the risks from a political use of the CSICH and to express reluctance about the promotion of the ‘intangible cultural heritage’ on the international development agenda. In this sense, five Anglo-Saxon countries with strong communitarian traditions, namely the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, have not yet ratified the CSICH. They particularly worried either about the manipulation of the CSICH by the country’s communities or the exploitation by the central national government of the communities’ heritage (Maguet 2011). Last but not least, note too that Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, parties to the CSICH, have not proposed any element for inscription within the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Conclusion: beyond the four policy agendas?

Today, the interactions among culture, cultural policies, and development could be defined in new ways by the rising of two major issues: the post-2015 UN development agenda and the arrival of digital age, which have spurred additional calls for new norms and new responsibilities for the actors involved.

On the one hand, throughout 2012–2015, several actors were advocating that culture be explicitly integrated within the post-2015 agenda on the Sustainable Development Goals, replacing the Millennium Development Goals. UNESCO, followed by many Latin American, African, and Asian countries, intergovernmental organizations (UNCTAD, UNDP), and NGOs on cultural affairs, stressed that culture should play an essential role in the social, environmental, and economic development pillars of sustainable development agenda. Yet the political strategy of these actors was a broad and potentially contradictory mixture of components from three of the policy agendas examined above: diversity of cultural expressions, intangible cultural heritage, and creative economy.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, it included ambivalent policy principles relating to crucial issues: the role of government policy in the cultural sector, the importance of marketization and of private entrepreneurship in the domain of culture, and the impact of indigenous peoples and local communities in maintaining and promoting traditional cultural expressions. Thus, references to culture in the final version of the agenda are minor. Notably, international mobilization for the inclusion of culture in the post-2015 development agenda faced the reluctance of developed countries, based on two main arguments. One, culture is broad, abstract, and has no quantifiable domain, complicated by developed countries seeking to rationalize the objectives and economic resources of the future UN development agenda and emphasizing an operationalized agenda dealing with measurable targets and indicators.

Two, culture is a controversial concept, raising the risks of cultural relativism. In other words, culture could justify policy practices that would be the reverse of the previous national commitments to key priorities of the agenda, such as human rights, status of women, or environmental protection (Vlassis 2015b, pp. 1655–1657).

On the other hand, the reality of the dematerialization of cultural content, of technological convergence, and of the deterritorialisation of cultural offerings raises enormous challenges for the *raison d'être* of cultural policies. New powerful digital actors such as content aggregators (iTunes), video sharing websites (YouTube), video on demand services (Netflix), social networking services (Facebook), electronic commerce companies (Amazon) have unequalled capacities to disseminate cultural expressions and “exercise considerable influence over whether and how cultural expressions can be accessed, in turn controlling much of the cultural offerings and influencing the evolution of the diversity of cultural expressions” (Guèvremont 2015, p. 149). Besides, as the European Digital Agenda highlighted, the free trade approach and the creative economy brand become increasingly attractive for the formulation of cultural policies. This suggests laying emphasis on economic competitiveness, innovation, and free flow of cultural contents. This would be superficially effective, insofar as regulatory measures seem to be obsolete at the digital age and the great multiplication of cultural offers and the remarkable facilitation of access give the illusion of balanced flow of cultural contents.

However, at the end of the day, cultural policy and development should acknowledge that the arrival of the digital age turns upside down the components of the four policy agendas discussed above, and it poses five significant opportunities and risks for the interactions among culture, cultural policies, and development (Rioux et al. 2015, p. 10): One, the greater affordability of cultural products and the possibility to reach dispersed and far away publics, but decreasing financial means because of piracy, free sharing, and the marginalization of certain populations because of this digital fracture. Two, the establishment of new forms of financing (participative financing), but the emergence of new powerful actors playing a decisive role in access to cultural content. Three, the increasing accessibility of content on the web, but institutional and economic uncertainties. Four, hyper-multiplication of cultural contents, but the amplification of a process of concentration in Internet economic powers controlling data and networks. Five, the potential strengthening of international cultural exchanges, but major problems of effectiveness of national cultural policies regarding regulations, fiscal systems, and property rights regimes.

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¹ The UK and the US returned to UNESCO in 1997 and in 2003, respectively.

² According to the WTO, the audiovisual sector includes motion picture and videotape production and distribution services, motion picture projection services, radio and television services, and sound recording.

³ Central African Republic, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Singapore, Thailand, US, and Vietnam.

⁴ Armenia, Cape Verde, China, Gambia, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Panama, Russia, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Yemen.

⁵ In September 2007, the International Federation of the Coalitions for Cultural Diversity was created by 42 national coalitions for cultural diversity grouping in the aggregate more than 600 cultural professional organizations representing creators, artists, independent producers, distributors, broadcasters, and editors in the publishing, motion picture, television, music, performing arts, and visual art fields. The Federation is incorporated in Canada and has its Secretariat in Montreal.

⁶ It's worth noting that many countries seek to favor more the development aid by bilateral or plurilateral channels perhaps more efficient than the multilateral institutions. For instance, it's important to mention two policy instruments towards the film cooperation: the French financial aid *Aides aux cinémas du monde*, with an annual budget of €6 million and the program IBERMEDIA, including Spain, Portugal, and several countries in Latin America, to which Spain has contributed 36 million USD in the period of 1998–2014.

⁷The 2008 and 2010 Creative Economy Reports have been coordinated by Edna dos Santos (Brazil), a development economist working as Chief of the UNCTAD Creative Economy and Industries Program and Francisco Simplicio (Brazil), Chief of the Division for Knowledge Management and Operations of the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, with the strong support of Yiping Zhou, former senior trade official for the Chinese government and Director of the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation.

⁸ The World Bank, under the leadership of its former Egyptian vice president Ismaïl Serageldin (1992–2000), made a plea for the contribution of culture and identity of peoples to economic development. In 1998, the organization hosted, with UNESCO's sponsorship, the international conference 'Culture and development at the Millennium: the Challenge and the Response' in Washington DC, and in 1999, it published the report *Culture and Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action*.

⁹It's worth mentioning that in 2000, the WIPO members established an Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore. In 2009, they tasked the Committee to undertake negotiations for the development of an international standard-setting instrument that would give traditional knowledge, genetic resources, and traditional cultural expressions effective protection.