

***“Statistics in the Wake of Challenges Posed
by Cultural Diversity in a Globalization Context”***

Cultural Indicators in Guatemala

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Introduction

This paper is a reflection based on the recent experience of the author in the debate of cultural policies in Guatemala as well as in two survey papers prepared for the United Nations Development Program, related to specific cultural aspects of its annual local human development reports.

While a lot of research and attention has been given to socio-cultural problems in a country with a complex historical, social and political background involving ethnic diversity and an internal conflict that lasted for over three decades and cost hundreds of thousands of lives, no advances have been made in Guatemala in order to collect specific statistical data or build quantitative indicators, on a systematic basis, to approach the objective knowledge of the country's cultural processes and to support cultural policy making. So far, no institutions are specifically in charge of cultural statistics and no facilities have been created within the existing institutions to fulfil this activity.

The purpose of this paper, though in a very preliminary way, is threefold: it intends to present the case of a developing, culturally complex country, that would logically be in high need of this kind of information but has not developed the capacity to do so; it presents a specific case of cultural indicators built on the basis of existing quantitative information that try to show patterns of production and consumption of cultural activities in such a country; and it tries to arrive to some conclusions on the organisation of quantitative information on culture that can be helpful to understand the diverse dimensions of culture and to formulate and assess cultural policies.

The structure of the paper follows this sequence.

The Cultural Particularities of Guatemala

In march 1995, the Guatemalan Government and the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union, representing the insurgent movements of Guatemala, signed the first of a series of agreements (so-called "peace agreements") that represented the formal conclusion of more

than three decades of internal political strife. It was not a coincidence that this first agreement dealt with the “Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People” – in fact, most of the casualties of this long war had been the indigenous population that represented, and still represents, the majority of the population of Guatemala. This was expected to be, therefore, the beginning of a new period where massacres, forced migrations, internal displacement of whole populations, and the destruction of whole towns and ethnic areas, had been the rule.

The indigenous groups being the majority of the peasant population of Guatemala, and the rural areas the main scenery of the conflict, it is not hard to conclude the urgency of such an agreement as a symbol of good will for the international community, highly concerned with the fate of ethnic groups in Guatemala. The contents of the agreement refer to the right for the acknowledgement of ethnic identities; fight against discrimination; civil, political, economic and social rights; and a single chapter is dedicated to “cultural rights”, namely language, proper names, religion, costumes, knowledge, education and media. Ten years earlier, the new Constitution of Guatemala had acknowledged that Guatemala is a “plurilingual” and “multicultural” society and had given the indigenous people’s language and cultures the dubious status of national heritage.

For almost five hundred years the Guatemalan state had dealt with ethnic issues in different though somehow efficient ways. In colonial times, the Spanish crown managed its new subjects by means of two parallel systems, (two “republics” or “public things”); while this implied that indigenous populations could manage their internal affairs by themselves as long as they provided what the conquerors expected (taxes and labour force), the cultural impact of the conquest and colonization had been strong. After independence in 1821, the difference of regimes was, at least officially, suppressed and eventually, under liberal regimes, the idea of assimilation prevailed (as it did elsewhere, *pari passu* with the exterminating expansions of, e.g., the United States and Argentina), supposedly for the sake of universal culture, but in practice in order to serve the economic dynamics of progress, even if that implied land expropriation and forced labour. In the middle of the twentieth century, the attempt to modernize the state and implement democracy was less efficient in providing a framework to deal with an ethnic reality that could not be solved under the assimilation paradigm. After the collapse of this experience, an era of civil strife and war went hand in hand with a succession of military regimes and eventually, as noted, the ethnic diversity of Guatemala got entangled in the conflict with the most tragic consequences for the indigenous populations of the country.

The result of this last stage of affairs is manifold. For ethnic groups it represented, perhaps, the worst period of history after the Conquest, with all the implications this has for the continuity of their lives, social organization and culture, but also the emergence of elites and organizations, of international support, and of enhanced spaces to voice out ethnic related claims. For the non-indigenous population, that had grown during the last century to almost equal in numbers its counterpart, it implied a challenge to their status quo and the exclusiveness of their cultural identity but, also, a challenge to its ability to understand, interpret and accept a new reality where, at long last, the ethnic dimension of their social context was not going to be dealt with any more as a different republic or as a different geography or as a military strategy. For the Guatemalan state the end of the political strife, the terms of the new Constitution, the peace agreement on indigenous identities, did not imply an automatic availability of means or institutions to face and respond to the expectations of its society.

In practical terms it is hard to describe the dimensions of this newly named multicultural society, but language and demography are among the most common measures to start with. By year 2001, Guatemala may be described as a developing country, with a population of about 12 million people distributed unevenly on a territory of about 110 000 square kilometers; the average amount of population in poverty was, by 1999, 54.3%, but in the most populated areas this percentage was of about 80%, and this refers mostly to areas where ethnic groups prevail. About one third of the population lives in urban areas and one half of the total population belongs to ethnic groups.

As mentioned supra, indigenous languages have been given special acknowledgement in the Guatemalan Constitution, but Spanish remains the official language and, in practice, the lingua franca; even the peace agreements did not go further than asserting the right to use, promote and preserve indigenous languages, including in education and cultural expressions.

Language diversity is the main evidence of ethnic diversity in Guatemala. Indigenous population is estimated in about half the total population, depending on the source; indigenous languages amount to 21, but the major four are spoken by about 75% of the total indigenous population. Most of this population do speak Spanish as a second language and illiteracy (Spanish illiteracy) in Guatemala refers to about one third of the population.

Against this reality, the public discourse has been slowly evolving during the last years; publications and debates on identity, ethnicity, racism, among other related issues, have arisen among the efforts to bring to light the specifics of the last decades war. Social institutions, specially government institutions, have been slow to respond and evolve, however, as they belong to frameworks where national identity was based in the appropriation of national heritage (or its transformation into tourism) and the promotion of the (western-rooted) arts and excluded ethnicity as an alive and ongoing reality.

To elaborate about these issues is beyond the aims of this paper, but it is important to discuss them briefly, in order to understand the inability of current institutions to deal efficiently with the complexities of cultural policies and, therefore, information.

While ethnic diversity is the most obvious, urgent and critical condition of the countries current affairs, cultural policies during modern history were mostly conditioned by other priorities.

To begin with, Guatemalan territory is part of a region endowed with important archeological sites, dating to several hundreds of years before the discovery of America. Having been constantly inhabited in precolumbian times, research, preservation and restoration of archeological sites have provided the country with potential and actual attractions for the touristic industry. This is perfectly complemented by the fact that the country, as a Spanish Colony, was a Captaincy General, meaning a second rank government that implied a significant investment in public and religious buildings and a concentration of an affluent population that also provided its own architectonic heritage and the required identity link of the local bourgeoisie with its European origin. In addition to this physical heritage, certain symbolic contributions of ethnic origin were assimilated by nationalistic projects as part of this national heritage, whether independency myths involving, e.g., precolumbian heroes, or consumption goods produced by ethnic groups. How these elements meet in the economic dynamics of tourism and handicraft exports is less important than the reification of the past

and the present of the ethnic diversity implied in the history of the territorial integration of Guatemala. In what refers to cultural policies it means that the profile of surviving public institutions is highly associated to the tendency of preserving physical heritage or contributing to the reification of cultural expressions which are still alive or, *contrario sensu*, to the symbolization of the production and consumption of goods and services proper to ethnic groups at the expense of their actual economic and social value.

So far, it is important to notice that multiculturalism and cultural heritage issues tend to revolve around the ethnic segment of the cultural continuum of Guatemalan society. Little effort has been done, indeed, to analyze the whole continuum in a systematic way – that is, to include the other half of the population associated with westernized values and ways of life. In this sense, the introduction of the notion of interculturality in the discourse of elites and NGOs remains partial.

Nevertheless, the fact is that what we understood as cultural policies in the recent past were conceived to enforce (or to comply with) what used to be called the universal culture, the term implying the array of social institutions equated to the arts, at least until T.S. Eliott declared the death of culture. In spite of all the debate resulting from this obituary that has prevailed “in the west” during the past fifty years or so, the official perception in Guatemala continued (and continues) to match the taxonomic orthodoxy of artistic creativity. During most of the last 125 years this was coherent with the ideology of governments and dominant social classes committed with advancing the country towards progress and modernity, a project shared by all the countries in Latin America.

The actual practice of these policies (the arts as a vehicle for modernity but also as the image builders of the international civilized image of the country) has come to be faced currently with a set of conditions to which they are inept to operate. To begin with, the legitimate claim of individuals to the practice of art as an expression of creativity, criticism and aspirations for an improved society was historically incoherent with the repressive regimes that prevailed during most of the independent life of the country; this did oppose official art to “clandestine” art in more than one sense throughout our “modern” history, and resulted in particular patterns of creativity and diffusion that have been inherited mostly by urban, non-ethnically oriented artists and movements. Official artistic institutions (mostly schools and performing groups), sponsored by the government, have lost projection and identification but prevail as part of the bureaucracy. The “transition to democracy” experienced since 1986 has provided, nevertheless, the necessary space for the organization and projection of artistic disciplines, but neither these movements nor public institutions have been able to produce paradigms that may include the creativity nature of the cultural expressions of ethnic groups in such a way that they do not appear diminished in the face of westernized institutions proper of the universal culture or become reduced to the status of anthropological categories.

So far, in the face of these complexities, what remains valid is that there are no institutions that are in the capacity to implement the aims, objectives and commitments included in the new Constitution of Guatemala and the peace agreement on indigenous identities. Less clarity seems to exist with regard to the fact that even in “non ethnical” fields, cultural policies are increasingly devoid of means and mechanisms to produce an important impact on society’s demands for cultural expression. This becomes obvious when we realize that the enforcement of cultural policies are perceived in a compartmentalized, subsidiary way – that is, they are assumed to be too sectorial or too specific, not central to, e.g., major

economic and political problems, and are not considered to be the overall responsibility of government and social institutions. This is clearly reflected in the nature and size of the Ministry of Culture, an hybrid ministry created in 1986 combining institutions that had been conceived mostly for the protection of physical (archeological) heritage and the sponsorship of the official groups of performing arts, whose organizational structure and budget remain well below the tasks expected of it.

For our purpose, finally, the complexities and deficiencies of these scenario and its institutional consequences help to explain the lack of systematic quantitative information on cultural issues (cultural statistics and indicators), both in terms of conceptual development and practical approaches.

Measuring Cultural Exclusion and Financing

Given the context described supra it was natural to expect that cultural indicators could become a part of the human development report for Guatemala. The first attempt was considered for the 2000 national report, that was to focus on social exclusion; the second, a year later, was interested in assessing the contributions of sectors different to the state in financing human development. In both cases culture was approached in a very preliminary way, with no preconceptions as to what was expected and with the certainty that the issue was sensitive and difficult to deal with in a quantitative way. The second survey did in fact include education and culture, but it helped also to make additional elaborations with the previous cultural data. Methodologically both surveys were conceived as desk research but they implied also collecting data on the sources and interviews with key actors of the cultural sector.

The results of both surveys did not contribute exactly to the general issues of both human development reports. Exclusion in culture was not proved by the collected data and indicators and there was not real measurement of the participation of, say, the private sector in the financing of cultural activities or production of cultural goods or services. Evidently, a lot of additional conceptual elaboration and data collecting is still required in order to produce sophisticated analyses of these topics. In terms of exclusion, it was obvious, for example, that little could be found with regard to non-urban, non-westernized aspects of cultural activities and governmental funding – existing institutions had been designed for the opposite purpose and whatever was happening out of this scope, happened at a very low profile or in conditions that, even if reported by sociological or anthropological research, has not been transformed into systematic information. Even performance information of public institutions like libraries, theatres or museums, for example, has not been recorded on a systematic basis; inventories and directories, if any, are still on the making. As for financing other than the State's, several conditions converged: culture (no matter the definition) is widely expected to be supported and funded by the State; private efforts are very incipient, refer mostly to philanthropic activities and their financial data are usually confidential; and activities at the community level fall in the ambiguous category of traditions, national heritages, touristic guides or handicraft catalogues. The economics of culture are also little documented and, besides, present additional problems of definition when ethnic diversity is taken into account.

Nevertheless, and perhaps because these surveys represented a first attempt to take a preliminary picture of cultural activities on a quantitative basis, the results were rewarding

and did provide some helpful evidence for the human development reports. In terms of attempting to quantify and produce some useful indicators that go beyond the demographics and linguistics of ethnic diversity they tried to be as informative as possible, even when the overall spectrum of the variables considered was incomplete.

As expected when dealing with culture, the problem of definitions arose from the beginning. In order not to get lost in a forest of very sensitive debates, some functional decisions had to be taken. It is obvious that speaking of culture in a country where multiculturalism is an ideological and political issue and where anti-artistic movements are colliding with traditional artistic disciplines as part of post-war phenomena is not easy and will always be unsatisfactory. Initially, the decision was to deal within a certain range of possible definitions that did not fall in the extremely universal nor in the extremely specific. An attempt was made to make operative some of Bourdieu's¹ proposals on cultural capital and cultural field of production but it was obvious that, trying to make these concepts measurable was an infringement of Bourdieu's caveat that prevented an analysis of the type of the economics of culture. In the end, for practical reasons, enriching as the discussion might have been, the implications of the topical subjects of the human development reports prevailed – while trying to measure exclusion and the financing of human development what mattered was to identify the extent to which a given society makes resources available to its members in order to make possible, on a democratic basis, the development of their cultural expressions regardless of their cultural definitions.

Having arrived at this compromise, collecting information followed. In both cases the surveys were performed by a researcher (the author) and a part-time assistant; in both cases the deadline was two months. This implied very limited conditions for a subject so far not researched.

Major existent sources included the central government's budget and the specific budget of the Ministry of Culture, but in order to identify the institutions, resources and activities of the public sector information was collected directly in the sources. An additional decision had to be made here. Physical national heritage being of public concern, it would have been expected to account for cultural infrastructure (namely museums, public libraries, archeological parks and sites) and for its projection (briefly, statistics on people visiting these facilities); unfortunately that was not so, and estimations of the social importance of these facilities was not available then.

Information on private activities was collected through informal networks of art producers and promoters and artists, including some artistic associations. Of course, a high degree of speculation was allowed in these cases. What was surprising, mostly, was not the lack of

¹ “Two forms of capital are particularly important in the field of cultural production. *Symbolic capital* refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*). *Cultural capital* concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions. ...Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts. ...The possession of this code, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education).” Randal Johnson (editor): “Introduction” in Pierre Bourdieu: **The Field of Cultural Production**; Columbia University Press, 1993. Page 7 and ff.

information but the relative availability of scattered data, records and information expecting to be organized, updated and transformed into something more systematic and accessible. Private sector activities were only quoted, but it was clear that the impact of the philanthropic institutions in cultural activities is very limited. With regard to economics, that is, the production of cultural goods and services, except for systematic information on book publications (something virtually inexistent two decades ago) and some data of the trade balance, there was little more.

A final source, which was very important and helped to fill in the picture of the “availability of resources for cultural development” was the National Inquest of Family Income and Expenditures². The inquest, performed between 1998 and 1999, was not of course intended as an input for the analysis of patterns of cultural consumption; it did not even consider the notion of expenditure on cultural goods and services. Fortunately, it was possible to go to the fine detail of the data basis and identify, one by one, all the items that could be classified as consumption of cultural goods and services.

For the sake of a global figure that could tell something about the amount of resources the Guatemalan society was making available for cultural expression, the combination of some of the data collected did, in a very speculative way, provide a sort of indicator of “investment in culture”. To build this figure several compromises were obvious:

- 1) It was assumed that the budget of the public sector for the Ministry of Culture represented all the governments investment in culture, comprising cultural promotion (the activity most linked to ethnic diversity), performing arts (production and education) and national protection, conservation and restoration of the national heritage; it was also assumed (and there is a great certainty in this sense) that the public sector cultural activities and services are almost completely subsidized and their consumption imply no cost.
- 2) It was assumed that the contribution of the philanthropic private sector was not significant (a valid assumption for the case of culture, though not for education).
- 3) It was assumed that the exports of cultural goods and services were not significant;
- 4) It was assumed that the Inquest of Familiar Income and Expenditures was highly representative of the amount of money the consumers were using to pay for purchasable cultural services and goods – that is, those provided by the private sector producers and imports.

The implicit production equation of this set of assumptions allowed for the construction of a very simple and tentative figure, namely the addition of the cultural items of the public budget and familiar consumption; when data related to education is added in the same way, we could be speaking, in a very perverse way, of something very like Bourdieu’s notion of investment in capital production.

² Instituto Nacional de Estadística: Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos Familiares 1998-1999. Guatemala, 2000.

For our case, a summary of the results of our survey is shown in Table 1, *infra*. The first items show the speculative figures of expenditures in culture; the remaining items are either a result of existent data or data collected originally for these surveys.

Tables 2 to 5 were an additional and interesting by-product of our research and were produced for the second survey, which also included data on education. Though they have not been subject to analysis yet, they are quoted here because they represent an interesting profile of patterns of consumption of cultural goods and services according to ethnic, urban-rural and geographical continua; as long as the same data can produce Graphic 1, they also present an idea of the socio-economic dynamics of cultural consumption in Guatemala (figures are in quetzales, the local currency, approximately equivalent to US\$ 7.8).

Table 1
Guatemala Cultural Indicators

Expenditure	
Investment in cultural capital (speculative; public investment + familiar consumption; refers to education and culture)	US\$ 1,026 millions US\$ 93 per capita 5.13% of GDP
Public budget for education, culture and sports 1998	US\$ 375 millions (of which 10% only for culture) 15.7% of total budget US\$ 34 per capita
Familiar expenditure in education, leisure and entertainment	US\$ 650 millions (of which only 20% for culture) 7.9% of total familiar expenditure
Trade of cultural goods and services	
Imports 1998	US\$ 24.5 millions
Exports 1998	US\$ 3.3 millions
Balance (Net imports)	US\$ 21.2 millions
Persons working in culture	Approx. 0.04% of EAP
Artists funded by the State	223
Association of writers	265
Association of composers and musicians	428
Painters participating in the major national-wide exhibit (Bienal Paiz) 1998	435
Activities produced by the government	
Public presentations of official groups per year	100-150
Art schools	18
Students in art schools	1,744
Teachers in art schools	129
Active cultural promoters	38
Public museums	20
Editorials	1
Theatres	3 Approx. 3,000 seats
Radios	1
Projects funded by ADESCA (a decentralised fund for culture and arts) 1999	
Projects	69
Amount funded	US \$ 500,000
Other institutions	
Casas de la cultura (cultural centers in communities)	154
Foundations supporting socio-cultural activities	12 Of which only 3 dedicated exclusively to the promotion of cultural activities
Private museums	12
Municipal and university museums	13
Private art schools	35 (in the city)

Movie houses	63
Publishing	
Published titles 1999	360
Total number of issues 1999	1,100,000 issues
Issues per 1,000 inhabitants 1999	105
Active publishers	63

Table 2
Guatemala
Total Expenditure of Homes in Cultural Capital
According to Ethnic Group
1998-1999
Quetzales per month

Expenditure	Total		
	Total	Indigenous	Non indigenous
TOTAL EXPENDITURES IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT	428,335,342	91,285,016	337,050,326
EDUCATION	178,254,014	36,081,123	142,172,891
CULTURAL GOODS	79,592,477	18,746,166	60,846,311
CULTURAL SERVICES	6,628,523	198,223	6,430,300
SPORT GOODS AND SERVICES	5,396,707	1,008,698	4,388,009
ENTERTAINMENT GOODS AND SERVICES	152,228,299	33,721,677	118,506,622
OTHER EXPENDITURES	6,235,322	1,529,129	4,706,193

SOURCE: National Inquest of Familiar Income and Expenditures.

Table 3
Guatemala
Total Expenditure of Homes in Cultural Capital
According to Urban or Rural Area
1998-1999
Quetzales per month

Expenditure	Total	Urban	Rural
EXPENDITURE IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT	428,335,342	339,249,168	89,086,174
EDUCATION	178,254,014	150,094,049	28,159,965
CULTURAL GOODS	79,592,477	61,488,511	18,103,966
CULTURAL SERVICES	6,628,523	6,585,850	42,673
SPORT GOODS AND SERVICES	5,396,707	4,252,595	1,144,112
ENTERTAINMENT GOODS AND SERVICES	152,228,299	112,274,578	39,953,721
OTHER EXPENDITURES	6,235,322	4,553,585	1,681,737

SOURCE: ID.

Table 4
Total Expenditure of Homes in Cultural Capital
According to Geographical Region
1998-1999
Quetzales per month

Expenditure	Geographical Region							
	Metropolitan	North	North East	South East	Central	South West	North West	Petén
NOMBER OF HOMES	514,163	136,712	218,010	173,081	223,591	435,694	242,333	53,953
EXPENDITURES IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORT, AND ENTERTAINMENT	258,401,924	13,695,799	24,647,309	17,492,779	38,967,951	47,375,098	20,711,007	7,043,475
EDUCATION	119,798,044	4,290,351	7,975,733	5,019,588	13,284,962	18,770,716	7,038,700	2,075,920
CULTURAL GOODS	42,274,018	2,336,690	6,642,935	4,133,504	7,731,290	11,273,063	3,700,183	1,500,794
CULTURAL SERVICES	6,125,186	18,018	176,105	42,765	141,354	79,522	35,445	10,128
SPORT GOODS AND SERVICES	2,895,532	178,129	383,559	138,961	483,142	1,001,954	252,499	62,931
ENTERTAINMENT GOODS AND SERVICES	84,155,614	6,671,400	9,304,921	7,891,009	16,952,882	15,625,935	8,533,615	3,092,923
OTHER EXPENDITURES	3,153,530	201,211	164,056	266,952	374,321	623,908	1,150,565	300,779

SOURCE: ID.

Table 5
Total Expenditures of Homes in Cultural Capital
By Decils of the Population
1998-1999
Quetzales per month

Expenditure	Decil de ingresos del hogar									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NUMBER OF HOMES	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754	199,754
EXPENDITURES IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT	2,755,203	6,263,408	10,150,408	12,893,822	17,525,530	23,740,112	31,871,122	43,255,286	70,547,367	209,333,084
EDUCATION	664,271	2,123,512	4,033,604	4,055,936	5,731,132	9,593,076	12,420,766	17,943,023	31,451,322	90,237,372
CULTURAL GOODS	397,600	1,455,472	1,762,440	2,045,400	4,874,365	5,220,649	7,079,510	9,615,358	14,374,653	32,767,030
CULTURAL SERVICES	0	0	7,314	2,220	13,344	72,826	169,301	78,451	457,990	5,827,077
SPORT GOODS AND SERVICES	35,134	20,786	64,363	73,657	195,674	372,273	440,923	549,918	693,945	2,950,034
ENTERTAINMENT GOODS AND SERVICES	1,652,809	2,578,354	4,219,011	6,022,139	6,450,845	8,293,953	11,446,428	14,301,618	23,122,101	74,141,041
OTHER EXPENDITURES	5,389	85,284	63,676	694,470	260,170	187,335	314,194	766,918	447,356	3,410,530

SOURCE: ID.

Graphique 1
Distribution of per month expenditures in education, culture, sports and entertainment

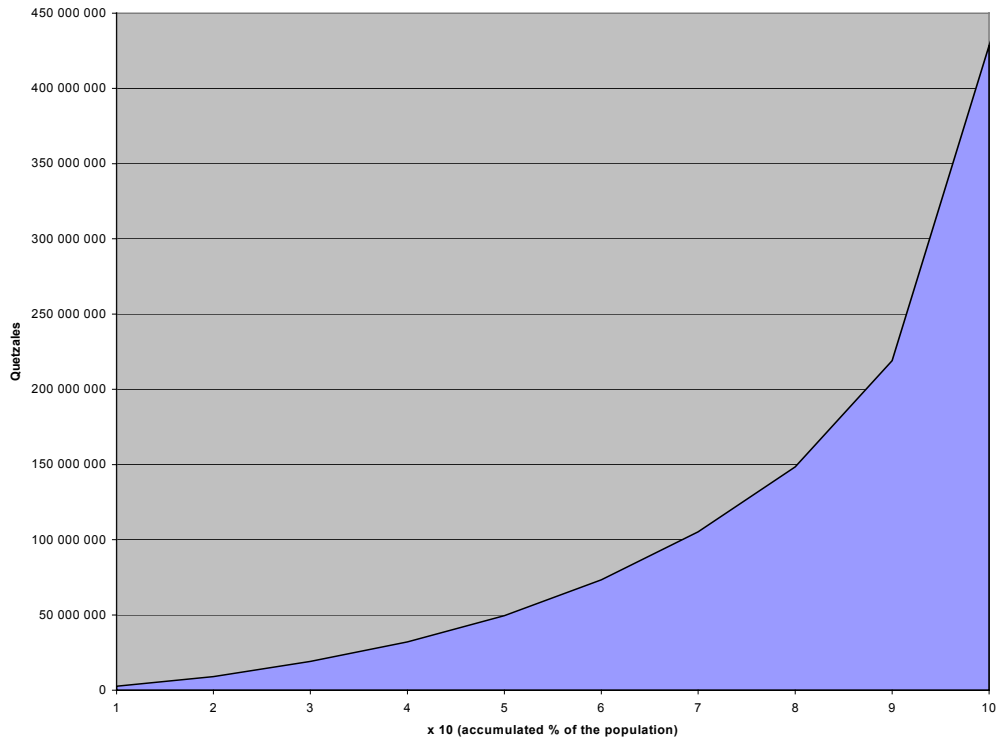


Table 6
Total annual expenditure of homes in cultural capital
1998-99
Quetzales

Expenditure	Annual Figure
NUMBER OF HOMES	1,997,537
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	54,105,846,492
TOTAL INCOME	77,204,964,853
EXPENDITURES IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT	5,140,024,104
EDUCATION	2,139,048,168
CULTURAL GOODS	955,109,724
CULTURAL SERVICES	79,542,276
SPORT GOODS AND SERVICES	64,760,484
ENTERTAINMENT GOODS AND SERVICES	1,826,739,588
OTHER EXPENDITURES	74,823,864

SOURCE: ID.

Cultural Statistics as a Time Framework

While perhaps extremely preliminary, the experience of these surveys was enlightening in many senses.

To begin with, it made clear that gathering quantitative information on cultural variables is not a difficult task, given adequate resources and time – information is available through different sources, either directly or indirectly, and cultural actors are willing to provide it. The survey also helped making clear that, whenever basic information is missing from the analysis, there is a tendency to over elaborate on theoretical and conceptual issues, delaying the approach to practical matters. This is particularly true of a country where social sciences were constrained to desk research for too long, at the expense of field research. The opportunity to profit of data basis, not necessarily designed for cultural purposes, like the Inquest of Familiar Income and Expenditures, shows the potential of a more systematic cooperation between institutions – given the possibility of interacting with the design of such projects would give cultural policy makers the opportunity to collect a wide range of information related to, for example, social patterns of production and consumption of cultural activities, goods and services.

However, without being its purpose, the surveys were more successful when dealing with macro data and with information related to artistic activities (the creativity segment of the spectrum) than with information related to the private sector and, most relevant, to the social availability and use of the national heritage and the specifics of ethnic diversity with regard to cultural expression. Doubtlessly, there is a great amount of reflection and discussion to be made in this regard but our suggestion is that these should lead, when dealing with quantitative information, to very pragmatic approaches.

Guatemala is a very particular case, but to say that it is unique would be an exaggeration. It is a developing (or underdeveloped) society defined by ethnic diversity, coming out of a long term internal war, submitted to the pressures of globalization, urban growth and poverty and, none the less, in great need of reinventing its culture and looking forward, in spite of its current complexities and its complicate past. But, as usual, in order to move on, it is important to begin with as an objective an information of our present as possible.

Whatever the institutional framework that will eventually prevail, it is important that cultural statistics and indicators give a clear image of the temporal dimensions of culture, understood basically as the means by which a society understands its past, manages its present and conceives its future. These three time vectors are enough to define the fields of information on which policy makers should focus, to the extent that:

- 1) The past, represented by cultural heritage, whether incorporated in archeological sites or in traditions, is a source of identity and should be not only documented, but integrated in the present needs of society.
- 2) The present is determined by ethnic diversity, and requires as objective and precise data as possible.
- 3) The future is the product of the creativity of the society, that is, its will and capability to reinvent itself.

For the case of Guatemala, heritage, diversity and creativity constitute the great areas in which policy making should focus and are the organizational basis for the implementation of a systematic effort to collect, process and produce cultural statistics and indicators.

[N.B. : Titre du graphique : SUGGESTED ORGANISATION OF...]

[N.B. : «Implicatio» doit s'écrire «Implications»]

[N.B. : «Enhancemnt» doit s'écrire «Enhancement»]

GRAPHIC 2
SUGGESTED ORGANISATION OF
FIELDS TO BE COVERED BY CULTURAL STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

