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**PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PAPER FOR IDRC
ACTIVITIES IN VALORIZATION OF CULTURAL AND
NATURAL HERITAGE**

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Preliminary Concept Paper for IDRC Activities in Valorization of Cultural and Natural Heritage

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SUMMARY

The music, art, folklore, architecture, history, scenery and wildlife in many developing countries constitute the base of rich, diverse, but equally threatened, cultures. The situation in LAC is examined to show that cultural and natural heritage can best be preserved - and used for development in a sustainable manner – only if they are properly managed. IDRC has a small number of unconnected activities in this area, but it is felt that there should be a sharper focus and greater activity relating to managing cultural and natural heritage. This is a novel and important topic for IDRC to consider managing. The following paper lays out some preliminary concepts for further discussion and elaboration.

1. PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Brazil has 91 national parks, representing only 1.85 % of its area, while the world average is 6%. A recent survey by the Instituto Brasileiro de Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renovaveis (Terra, April 1999, p. 38) showed that the national parks system was suffering so badly from lack of finance and management that 64 of the parks were in a "medium to extremely critical" state. In addition, lack of facilities and promotion were significant reasons why these national parks only received 2 million visits in 1998, while, for comparison, national parks in the USA received 270 million visits and generated 10 billion \$ in revenue and 200,000 jobs.

In Uruguay, there are more than 2,000 known historical shipwrecks, dating from the early 1500s on. The state has a tiny archaeology commission, with no expertise in marine archaeology, few financial resources and little political clout. There are hundreds of active permits given by the state to treasurehunting divers and salvage firms to strip historical shipwrecks in any way desired to locate gold coins and other valuable artefacts. While the state gets 50% of the value of the finds, the cash goes into general revenues, not to the archaeology commission, the artefacts are auctioned abroad and the historical value of the ships is largely destroyed.

In lowland Bolivia, Indian villagers clustering around abandoned Jesuit missions have inherited from their ancestors what is probably the largest collection of Baroque music yet unstudied, unplayed and unrecorded. The villagers are intent on using this heritage themselves to develop their culture and small industries around tourism, music recording and instrument making, but with very few resources, this is a slow process. Unfortunately, it appears that without any proper conservation techniques, many of these priceless unstudied manuscripts are in real danger of disintegrating, taking with them the hopes of the villagers and representing a loss for all people.

Parks, shipwrecks and music can be viewed as resources, quite like mines, forests, farms or even technical research labs – resources that can assist development. More generally stated, these resources are natural environment and culture. However, like mines and forests, the interlinked natural environment and cultural heritages can be

destroyed or managed for developmental purposes. Unfortunately in Latin America today, just ignoring them does not mean they will be left dormant in a protected state, to be enjoyed by some future generations; they have a tendency to be rapidly destroyed, or if not destroyed, to miss potential market niches that are time dependent. Through proper management, many cultural and environmental resources can be conserved. With proper management, this heritage can be exploited in a sustainable manner that generates significant development benefits in addition to conservation. Proper management of this heritage can also convert "non-renewable" resources - like shipwrecks - into renewable resources - like museums, with significant, although unmeasurable, socio-cultural benefits, as the following examples show.

Costa Rica is one country that with good management of its cultural and environmental heritage, has created a tourism industry that is overwhelmingly small-scale, family-owned and oriented to ecological markets. Estimates are that more than 80% of foreign spending on tourism in Costa Rica stays in the country. In the Dominican Republic, in contrast, the tourism industry is mass resort oriented, characterized almost exclusively by mega-facilities. There, more than 80% of the tourism revenues eventually leave the country. Good management is critically important as for many countries in LAC, the cultural industries are large. In Cuba, tourism is the biggest export earner. Even in Uruguay, it is estimated (Gonzalo Carambula, *Autonomia municipal, democracia y desarrollo*. UNESCO Conference in Bogota, 16 July 1999) that 10% of the population is employed in cultural industries. A study by ALADI estimated that Latin American production of cultural goods is so low, that about 75% of cultural goods and services are imported from outside the region (reported in Carambula, op.cit).

In Canada, and other countries, it has been shown that by a mix of legislation, policing - and education and civic action - many "treasurehunters" can be converted to be the marine archaeologists= best allies, finding wrecks, assisting in research and protecting the sites. In Uruguay, it is not likely that the government will get resources to protect the wreck sites even if enough awareness could be raised to change the current legislation - unless a management plan could be put in place bringing together the two extremes of the "robbers" and the (archaeology)"cops". Short term financing could be generated for scientific excavation, preservation and museology through limited, controlled sale of non-historical artefacts, with long term financing coming from operation of the museums and associated tourism activities.

2. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AND HOW TO VALORIZE IT FOR DEVELOPMENT

The cultural "resources" of Latin America are rich and diverse. Latin America has an immensely important production of music. Known throughout the western world are Tango, from the Rio de la Plata, Inca music from the Andean regions, Reggae and Calypso from the Caribbean, Bossa Nova from Brazil. The tunes, the lyrics and the performers immediately spring to mind. Art is another huge area: the literature of Borges in Argentina, Marquez in Columbia, Allende in Chile; the paintings of Botero's "gordos", naive artists in Haiti. Handicrafts from Mexico and Columbia. Spectacular archaeological sites of the Mayans, the Aztecs and the Incas. Cultural festivals of the their descendants, the carnivals of Brazil and the day to day activities of native people in Amazonian jungles. Archaeology sites, both Amerindian and colonial are among the most spectacular and important anywhere in the world. Historical cities abound, with magnificent architectural complexes.

The environmental "resources" are also rich, famous and diverse. The Amazonian rain forest, imagined, if not known, to every school child in Canada. The second largest set of coral reefs in the world, in Belize. Torres del Paine park in Chile - a magnet for mountain climbers. Tropical beaches. Sea kayaking in Tierra del Fuego. In addition to the top attractions, there are many other smaller, less well-known attractions and activities. Language training for students and professionals. Visiting traditional farms in the Pampas and Rio de la Plata valley. Spectacular dinosaur finds in Argentina. The things desired for visiting are hugely diverse, covering the full range of human interest - one of the authors of this paper (Scott) has relatives who are farmers who are keen to come to Brazil to see how they cultivate soybeans - because they can double crop!

Often, the distinction between the cultural and the environmental resource becomes blurred, for both the owners and the consumers. For people visiting Indians in the Amazonian jungle it is culture and environment at the same time. In other cases, people will travel to see the cultural resource because it is also contiguous to an environmental resource; hikers on the Inca trails in the Andes want to see Machu Pichu as well as walk through the mountains. In fact, it is difficult to separate culture, resources and environment; they must be treated in an integrated fashion to promote development.

In addition to the direct, tangible benefits from proper management, there are significant cultural benefits. Although difficult to define and measure, these cultural benefits can be very important inputs to development. Especially for marginalized communities, increased pride and self-respect along with the success in community action, can be critical to create a solid base and orientation for further development actions. Some of the more tangible ones are: flexible and strongly adaptive sources of employment and SMEs structures; creative and instructive mechanisms of public-private investments and institutional partnerships; social communication processes and new channels for coordinated and integrated actions at a regional level. Decentralization and strengthening of local governments, and economic regionalization in LAC, for example, are two processes where culture is critical to generate and sustain social capital.

Equally diverse are the ways to "exploit" these potential resources in a properly managed setting. The most obvious way is for art, handicrafts and tourist services to be sold by individuals, cooperatives and small companies. These industries can start small and grow steadily. In the Canadian province of Alberta, tourism based on national parks is now the biggest industry, ahead of agriculture, transport, oil and gas, high technology. Tourism often has a bad reputation among development professionals, who see the most obvious - and often bad - manifestations of extreme culture shock, tasteless commercialization, destruction of sensitive shoreline habitat and control by large multinationals leaving locals in menial jobs. This is obvious and extensive, but it does not mean that all tourism need be of this type. IDRC's current project in electronic commerce and sustainable tourism, for example, is exploring small scale, family-run activities that help preserve environmental and cultural heritage and bring immediate and significant development benefits to LAC communities, under their control. The example given above of Costa Rica proves that tourism can be positive and sustainable. It also is a striking example of how deeply this industry resonates with the national consciousness about preservation of the natural environment and stimulates a strong sense of participation in the national society and economy by so many people. What we commonly lump together as Aeco@ tourism actually deals with environmental tourism, adventure activities, culture, music, art, anthropology, handicrafts, language training. These are obviously much more sustainable activities which can be managed to promote development in ways that are consistent with IDRC's philosophy promoting equity and democratization.

The tangible benefits of cultural and natural heritage extend far past the initial tourist activities. If conditions are suitable, they can also provide opportunities for a range of specialized support products and services. For example, in Vancouver, the large adventure sport practices in nearby wilderness parks gave rise to a university student cooperative selling low price mountaineering equipment. Over the past 15 years, this coop has now grown to be one of the biggest and most diverse retailer of outdoor sports equipment in the world, integrating into Canadian manufacturing, research and design of specialized equipment and advanced materials.

However, the value of the heritage is also in the process of recognizing and managing it. In IDRC's Montevideo Bay Marine Archaeology project, most of the effort has been spent in getting stakeholders to recognize the importance of others and how to work together instead of alone. Rescuing fragments of wrecked ships is not to stop with the publication of scientific papers, but hopefully lead to the creation of a museum in the port area which will give further impulse to revitalization of the downtown historical district and environmental cleanup of the heavily polluted bay itself. In doing this, new forms of public-private cooperation need to be developed to finance operations, overcome jurisdictional limitations and create expanding systems. Some of these new forms of cooperation come slowly, but others can spring up unexpectedly, such as the expressed intent of a major bank to donate a historical property downtown for a museum, in the interest of showing Montevideo as a city with a long heritage of international business.

Because this paper should be seen as a "thinkpiece", we are reluctant to use standard categories to describe the ways of valorization of this heritage, and prefer to create a different way of describing clusters of interest, so we can perhaps see new approaches more clearly. Here is a list of our preliminary ideas.

- Obviously, the tourism industry is a major cluster of interest, although we would likely be focusing on the small-scale Asustainable@ end of it.
- Closely allied is a cluster relating to plastic art, theatre, literature, music and design.
- There is also a cluster around sport, recreation, health and religion/spirituality.
- Small enterprise development and management is a critical area, sometimes involving specialized industries like museums and galleries.
- Electronic commerce and other uses of web and internet are having major impacts here, both positive and negative.
- We need to consider a set of activities around community development and education.
- In a more general sense, the previous line relates to issues of governance, democratization and participatory action, as local communities learn how to take charge of their situations in what will quickly become a global context. Culture is a natural driving force to build social capital and local identity.
- There is a set of issues around urban regeneration, development of historical city cores and regional development as well, of traditionally peripheral areas.

- Art is even being used to prevent youth violence in some new programs developed in the USA (<http://arts.endow.gov/>)
- Finally, there is environmental cleanup, recuperation and protection.

3. RATIONALE FOR A STRENGTHENED IDRC INVOLVEMENT

There are several key reasons why IDRC should consider closer involvement in this area. First, despite the obviousness of the underlying concepts and the importance of their resolution, it seems to be not well explored. In LAC, UNESCO is really the only long-standing and serious player. The OAS has a few small programs in urban heritage preservation. BID is apparently interested in this area and may have some programs, of which we are not yet aware. Serageldin (in the book on Global Public Goods, published in 1999 by the UNDP) has the only chapter on valuing cultural goods, and he points out that there seems to be rather little attention paid to the formal valorization of cultural heritage, unlike environmental goods, where the methodologies of valuation are extremely complex and there are many studies. In one sense, this is not surprising. Culture is the great invisible. Cultural goods are largely intangible, like spiritual values. Yet few would deny that culture is ultimately one of the most important elements of any society which condition any development path. Although the valorization of cultural heritage will never become measurable and manipulable like environmental resources, it should be no less considered an area for IDRC involvement. In the words of Octavio Paz, *Una sociedad se define no solo por su actitud ante el futuro sino frente al pasado: sus recuerdos no son menos reveladores que sus proyectos* (Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Economica p.23)

Second, there is need for assistance. Our current impression is that most states in LAC do not have the skills, organizations, political will or - most importantly - the financial means - to manage cultural and environmental resources in an optimum way. Partly as a consequence, the developmental benefits arising from these resources tend to be significantly suboptimal. In a large number of cases, critical resources are being destroyed. There are noteworthy exceptions to this statement, of course; Costa Rica is doing an excellent job on ecotourism; Mexico has very sophisticated management of Aztec and Mayan cultural resources. Ecuador has strong control of Galapagos activities. However, even in the best situations, there is always significant room for improvement in delivering benefits. The current debates around the future of the most famous national park in Canada, Banff, shows the extreme difficulty of optimizing management, as well as the high stakes involved - and the critical importance of research as the basis of process management and decision-taking. A recent article in the Bolivian Times (Thursday, Sept. 9, 1999, pp 5 -7. *The Dark Side of Ecotourism*, Mike Ceaser.) describes the same issues in both the highlands and Amazonian basin of Bolivia.

Third, it is appropriate for IDRC. IDRC has touched on tourism a number of times and has several active projects in the area, although without formal interrelationships. Currently, there is a major project in Peru, one on electronic commerce and ecotourism, and another relating to coastal management in Cuba. There has been some confusion about past decisions on our involvement with tourism; some people have said that AIDRC has taken a policy decision that we should not do tourism projects@. We have tracked this discussion to its source, with the help of Beth Rohr and the people most closely involved with the issue, and it appears that the only

decision to have been taken was an informal one that implied that IDRC will not create a separate PI around tourism.

Fourth, we have programming mechanisms that could be adapted to handle this topic, if we choose not to create a new independent area. IDRC touches on the valorization of natural resources in LAC within SUB and SMMEIT. We could consider this kind of grass-roots, community level activity as part of the same topic. Similarly, MINGA, Ecosystem Health and ASPR also touch on aspects of community development and social processes, although their treatment of culture as a "resource" that can be managed for development does not seem to be supported as of now within these programs.

Fifth, it allows us to explore new and important terrain which has always been difficult to conceptualize, the impact of religion and spirituality on development. Take the following example, a group of villages in the Altiplano of Bolivia, where there is a millennial tradition of Kallewaya, or curanderos-sacerdotes (traditional healers, approximately). These healers are life-long pilgrims who travel around South America in search of knowledge about natural medicines and healing. They are an integral part of the highland native culture and a repository of knowledge about medicinal plants. Of course, in their belief system, physical, social and spiritual realms are interconnected and their healing interventions take place on all three levels at once. In IDRC project terms, this type of approach in cultural heritage offers the possibility of dealing with development projects that link culture and religion, two of the most powerful, but difficult to tackle areas.

Sixth, it also presents us with the possibility of developing new ways to integrate what seem to be somewhat irreconcilable concerns. Take the previous example of the Kallewaya again. Not only can we link culture and religion, but also community development, health, medicinal plants, industrial development and biodiversity preservation. No single aspect makes sense without being considered in the total context.

In summary, we think there is room for strengthening IDRC=s involvement in this area. We have used examples in this paper relating to LAC only, but it is obvious that the opportunities are similar in all regions, and project activity could be made more global. This could be a critical input to development. It will have direct impact on poor and marginalized communities, and deal with central issues of governance. A stronger, more explicit focus on the role of culture and values in development will break new terrain for us and our clients. It is possible to generate projects that build on Canadian strengths and interests in this area. This is natural area for Canadians, with a tradition of multicultural integration and exploitation of both cultural and environmental resources for regional development in a sustainable manner. There are complex knowledge issues that need exploring and application. The aspects of gender will be extremely evident in this area and the issues of democratization and governance are central. Development banks are active in financing large activities in some of the areas, but with the possible exception of UNESCO, no other major development agency seems to have a strong presence in the field.

How could such an area be dealt with in IDRC? Given the parallels with natural resource management, and the indissociable connection to environmental resources (eg as pointed out by the World Bank=s Ismael Serageldin), the area might eventually become a new PI and placed within the new Environment and Natural Resource focus, with a slight change in name, Environment, Cultural Heritage and Natural Resources, for example. Obviously, to do justice to this concept, it should be organized in the same way as other P Is are. This would take time given the current realities, but it could begin

with projects under some of the P Is already mentioned. Work in this area would fit under the proposed Knowledge Management activities currently being discussed.

The problem is where to get the money to run this new area and when to begin developing it? Although there is a GEF for environmental management research, it would not be realistic to think that cultural issues could ever get the same kind of attention and financing. Culture may always be the poor handmaiden, even though cultural Aindustries@ like tourism are some of the biggest global activities. In closed systems, the only way to get resources is to take it from some other program. Perhaps we should start thinking how to deal with key elements of this area that are open system structures, since it is highly unlikely we have any significant resources in the short term to take from another program area. One example of an open system is packaging the highly marketable aspects of saving ecosystems and as well, cultural systems, to the general public. We might conceive of a mechanism whereby we develop attractive and important packages of projects linking endangered species and cultures. Use the Kallewaya example again. There will be numerous instances where the healers need a specific plant which might be endangered. Preserving the plant will preserve the culture. Using a Web marketing approach we could publicise these situations to segments of the general public and then using micropayment technologies from ecommerce software packages, solicit and receive donations. Each dollar received would be matched by IDRC to fund research development projects. These projects would then be on-line and allow participation by groups like school science and culture classes.

4. POSSIBLE ACTION

To go any further, there is a need to undertake more concerted exploration, involve others in the thinking and create better knowledge. Therefore, we suggest the following clusters of actions:

- Flesh out the preliminary concepts above with a larger exploratory analysis by an outside expert and undertake the work to initiate a process of participation within IDRC.
- As a result of this work, create a few new research-action projects within existing Pis to explore critical concepts.
- Possibly invest some small seed money in a structure that would try to put the principles for open system management to the test.
- Formalize the area more strongly in a manner appropriate to the new IDRC management structure.