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

**Cultural Information Systems and Cultural Indicators:
The Experience of México**

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The Cultural Diversity of Mexico in a Globalization Context

In an increasingly changing and interconnected world, globalization is contributing to the appearance and the extension of similar conducts and values in individuals from different countries. This tendency towards homogenization represents a risk to the existence and reproduction of certain regional and national cultures that has been documented in all the world. Recognizing the risk that this implies in terms of loss of cultural heritage and the necessity to design policies and realize actions with international, national and local participation to avoid it, we must consider that this tendency does not act by itself. On the contrary, it coexists with a worldwide reaction of returning to the roots; of recuperating particularities and affirming differences; of making effective the plurality of contemporary society. What not so long ago seemed doomed to disappear and that even for some constituted an obstacle for development, now is valued as heritage of humanity.

Globalization is not generating a uniform global culture. Each society processes, combines and articulates the elements that circulate at a global scale, creating their particular appropriations and adapting the global processes. The tensions between the global and the local, lead to various processes of appropriation and new meaning by local cultures.

In any case, the unitary conceptions that conceive modernity as a process of world convergence, in accordance with a unique and ethnocentric model, show themselves incapable of explaining the events of these past years.

Culture is, at the same time, a stage for the globalization process and a road to affirm the particularities of a people. It is through culture that countries can take on development processes without losing that which characterizes and distinguishes them. Because, after all, culture is the origin and the end of development.

Furthermore, the notion about the importance of considering the cultural heritage as a means derives from elements associated with globalization, such as tourism and cultural industries.

In Mexico, since our origins as an independent nation in the XIX century, and until not so long ago, cultural and educational policies were centered on promoting national integration, without situating in its given perspective the regional and ethnic differences. National unity was a priority for educational and cultural institutions that promoted a sense of national identity, characterized by a cultural and linguistic homogenization, which went against the underlying diversity. It is not until the seventies that we see the preoccupation for diversity incises, gradually, in public policies and that it is not seen as an obstacle for national identity.

Today, Mexico is recognized as a multicultural nation. It is now understood that its greatest assets reside precisely in the plurality of its cultures and in the multiplicity of forms and creations through which these cultures express themselves. Therefore the cultural diversity shows itself as a reality we must preserve and as a value we must promote.

This new perception opens the historic opportunity of reinstating our cultural development and of making it correspond growingly to the new necessities of society and the challenges of today's world.

The Cultural Polices of Contemporary Mexico

Mexican society is recognizing the fundamental place that culture has in the diverse processes of our contemporary world and in the social and human development. This is why the State must include culture among the priorities of public action for the human development of all Mexicans.

Beyond economic growth; beyond translating this growth into development, that is into real benefits for the population, resulting equal and being sustainable; beyond all these goals, the final objective is reaching an authentically human development. We are talking about a more demanding definition of development that is not measured only by economic indicators, but by more intangible and profound criteria that have to do with principles of identity, democracy, liberty, self-respect and respect for the others, creativity, symbolic elements, heroes, solidarity and social cohesion and of equality of opportunities among individuals, organizations, communities and localities.

For the Mexican State, culture, first and foremost, must be an end in itself, and of equal importance, a privileged means for achieving a development that includes political, economical, and social liberty. It must also include the individual opportunities of receiving education, being healthy, creative, productive, critic, and of having emotional and intellectual liberty.

Culture is about guaranteeing the existence of the means and the spaces with the specificity and richness that the different sectors of society need. Culture enables the population to develop their full capacities, and strengthens their identity and self-esteem.

This is why in the field of culture it has been necessary not only to administer government programs efficiently, but also to initiate a process to bring the conception of cultural policy and the function of the State up to date, in the context of a political democracy.

As a fundamental issue in this reflection, we must acknowledge Mexico's multiple regional cultures with their own historical, artistic and human heritage. Identity is not precisely a group of identical traits. On the contrary, it is constituted through a conjunction of different ways of seeing and ways of being that, once they are related, produce a synthesis that surpasses the sum of the parts. Identity is never a resting point. It is a port of constant departure, from which one embarks on a journey heading for new astonishment.

In order to construct a State cultural policy, we must define a model for cultural development that takes into account the following principles:

- Access for Mexicans to cultural goods and services (a minimum array of cultural goods and services at the disposition --not imposition-- of all Mexicans).

- Total respect to the individual autonomy of the human being that contributes to the solidarity of creative collectiveness (and other transcendental values to any governmental policy such as creative liberty, information and criticism).

- Responsibility of the State to protect, preserve, and disseminate the tangible and intangible heritage of Mexico.

- Citizen participation in the formulation, evaluation and implementation of cultural public policies.

- Quality and excellence in the cultural services and goods supported and/or generated by the government.

- Obligation of the State to conform mechanisms that induce the social cohesion, stimulate the creative capacity of groups and individuals and strengthen the projection of identity.

All of the above, through institutional arrangements that give viability to such policy: clear, efficient and accurate cultural legislation; evaluating committees of excellence; consultative counsels of citizen participation; support and/or creation of an offer (infrastructure needed, goods and services required) and, at the same time, creation of demand (consumers, new public, artistic education and teachers); through conditions that will allow an authentic equality of opportunities in the access, recreation and enjoyment of culture.

Derived from this cultural policy, a new model for public administration in Mexico is developing. Given the lack of measuring tools for the impact, efficacy and profitability of the policies according to the objectives and principles mentioned above, as part of this model of public administration it is necessary to develop a system of cultural statistics and indicators that:

- Allow the efficient orientation of cultural programs and actions according to the objectives.

- Help measure the results of cultural institutions.

- Facilitate to render information to citizens and the transparency of the institutions.

- Allow an efficient following of the implemented public policies.

- Develop a greater awareness of the cultural situation of the country in all its diversity.

- Encourage the evaluation of the state of human development from a cultural perspective and show the results obtained.

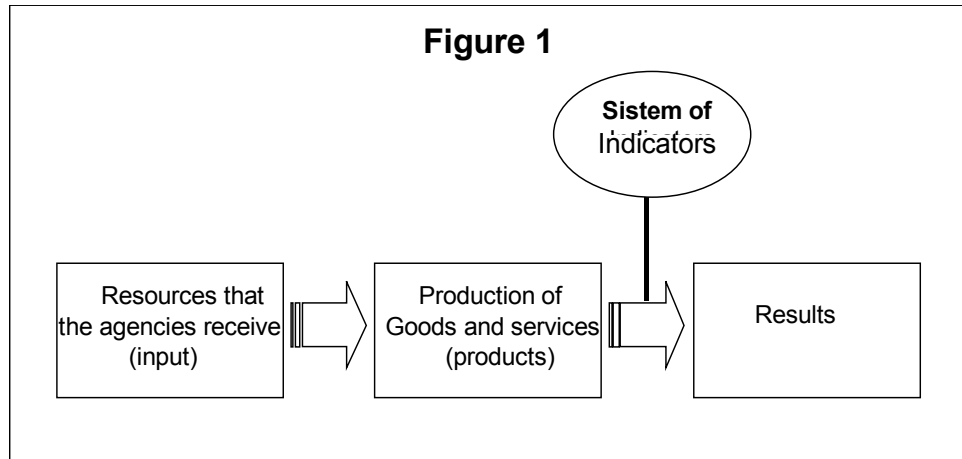- Develop information systems that produce recommendations for cultural policies.

The Importance of Cultural Indicators to Strengthen Confidence in Institutions

The need to generate efficient governments that are close to the citizen, sustainable on results and improvements visible on a long term, drove different specialists in public policy to analyze the importance of constructing systems of strategic indicators for measuring the actions, accomplishments and effectiveness of the decisions taken by governmental institutions.

In regards to this last point, it is a complex problem determining the parameters that allow us to evaluate government action. That is to say, based on what criterion will we measure the performance of the public management? There are various possible parameters: the citizens' expectancy, the previous experience, the experience in other countries, the performance of the private sector and of the civil organizations in activities similar to those of the government, to mention a few.

Since there is not a continuous and thorough evaluation of the results obtained by the policies and programs of the public sector, the expectancies and hence the trust of society in the institutions and the governors diminish.

To evaluate the activities of the cultural institutions, we must distinguish between the resources that the agencies receive (input), the goods and services produced (products) and the results generated (results). With the aid of an illustration, let us think about the different stages that make up the working method of a governmental agency in charge of culture. In the first stage, the agency will receive the resources that will allow it to operate from the Secretary or Ministry in charge of assigning public budgets. The second stage consists in the establishment of substantive cultural programs (cultural spreading, protection of heritage, artistic education and investigation, etc.), by which the governmental agency will produce goods and services that are destined to different sectors of the population. Finally, in a third stage, the results of the different programs will be evaluated in conformity with various measurers of efficiency (for example, increasing cultural participation or creating new audiences). As figure 1 shows, it is possible to represent graphically this process.

Figure 1

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                              ╭─────────────╮
                              │  Sistem of  │
                              │ Indicators  │
                              ╰──────┬──────╯
                                     │
 ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
 │  Resources that  │  ⇒   │  Production of   │  ⇒   │     Results      │
 │the agencies receive│    │ Goods and services│    │                  │
 │     (input)      │      │    (products)    │      │                  │
 └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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A problem of traditional public administration is that it does not consider efficient mechanisms to evaluate the productivity and the governmental results. Usually, the programs are evaluated in terms of the fiscal resources they use (first step in the process), and not by the goods and services they produce, and more importantly, by the objectives of public policy that they reach through their instrumentation (second and third steps).

By not concentrating on work productivity and results, this evaluation model does not generate the adequate incentives so that public managers force themselves to improve the agency's competitiveness and capacity of response. This generates a bureaucracy which is mainly preoccupied with the level of expending in which it incurs and the activities and programs it undertakes, rather than its capacity to generate results in an efficient manner.

Many governments lack the institutional mechanisms capable of demanding the public officers of every level, the observance of their responsibilities with society. Finally we cannot ignore that often homogeneous administrative procedures are enforced upon all areas of government, whatever their strategic objectives and nature may be.

The gathering of results, in terms of satisfaction of social needs, has been subordinated to the implicit priorities in the determination of an optimum volume of public resources used and in the establishment of efficient mechanisms of control over their expenditure. Within this logic, it is more important to regulate the amount of spending, than to determine if the public resources are channeled towards the solution of real problems and the generation of the goods and services that the societies demand.

The new evaluation of cultural management that is emerging in Mexico is not worried with how many programs have been done and is not based in how many activities were organized. It does not matter if more festivals were organized or if more public libraries were built; what matters in the end is knowing, for example, how much the index of books read has increased, and (in an ideal scenario) how much did reading contribute to social and human development.

For the construction of indicators it is important to identified incentives, having in mind that the indicators have to launch clear messages about the politically relevant tendencies of what preoccupies society.

The scarcity of accurate data that has always accompanied the development and growth of the cultural market has been a constant that, at least during the last few years, has marked the type of debate that was possible in this matter.

This lack of statistics has conferred to the environments of culture, a certain characteristic of structural inconsistency. Any breakdown and any flaw that is perceived in them will always be justified by the absence of quantitative and qualitative support that enable a rigorous strategy. The knowledge of these matters and managerial capacity of the various responsibles in this fields, more often than not, are excellencies derived from the state of sensibility shown by the aspiring cultural administrator; there is a deliberate escape from the "scientists" to govern and lead the most indisputable territories of the spirit. This obviously does not mean that there are not capable managers in different cultural institutions. However, in the end, the success or failure will always depend on this fine sense of smell of the director who is forced to take decisions in an environment that lacks organized references.

This permanent separation between science and culture, or better yet, between knowledge technologies and cultural policies have converted this field of economic activity in an environment structured by improvisation and demagogy.

In the field of culture, as in many others, there is a growing demand for a wide array of statistics and indicators that cover activities and products, spending and consuming, jobs, finances, institutions, costs and prices, etc. The need to measure, explain, evaluate and compare the progresses has almost become an obsession.

The data and information provide us with clues to discover the black box of creativity, beauty and innovation. However, the investments in culture rest too much upon acts of faith or on eccentricity, which does not reach the common citizen easily. More and better information is needed to deal with the risk, assign resources and time effectively, reorient the targets and invest capital.

Getting the governments to account for their actions in the field of arts and culture, is a previous essential condition for greater and faster supports. Culture belongs to humanity considered as a whole; hence, interchanging and communicating experiences and cultural activities at a worldwide scale is a fundamental ingredient for cultural progress. Now, any interchange of this type requires statistics and indicators of the highest quality that can be compared and contrasted at an international level.

It is therefore clear that all possible efforts must be made to normalize the statistical concepts, definitions and classifications at a worldwide level. The aim should be to develop a system of cultural statistics and indicators that allows us to analyze the cultural sector at local and national levels, and make significative comparisons with other localities, nations and regions of the world.

The Making of Reliable Cultural Indicators

The subject of measuring culture and of making relevant indicators is growing in importance in the actual context of investigation and in the political agendas.

The indicators are a tool for political dialogue that differ from statistical data; they hold information that can be used for evaluation and not mere descriptive information. The methodology for creating indicators should start by defining a conceptual frame. In the *World Report on Culture: Culture, Creativity and Markets*, 1999, UNESCO proposed to establish the principal characteristics of the cultural indicators, which intend to evaluate the level of human development from a cultural perspective. In other words, indicators which are particularly directed towards evaluating the way in which the quality of life is determined by the capacity of individuals to live in community and by the systems of values in which their relations are supported.

This is not only about knowing if culture allows life in community or not, but we must also know if it allows for good life in a community. We start from the hypothesis that the true test bank of a culture consists in determining if it favors or not the strengthening of human qualities and if it contributes to widen the array of choices offered to each individual.

In our view, the task of evaluating cultural development is very elusive. In other words, it is to determine if one culture is more "developed" than another. Since cultures are unique and diverse, the results of measuring them with the same parameters would be misleading. What we can intend is to evaluate their contribution to human well-being.

No indicator by itself can capture the complex reality of a culture. The dimensions of culture must be identified in relation with two aspects of development; the results and the processes. In regards to the first, it has been proposed that universal ethics, cultural vitality and cultural diversity are key dimensions; in regards the second, participation in creative activity, access to cultural goods and services, and respect for cultural identity.

For the creation of cultural indicators it is of great importance to recognize that their function is to stimulate political dialogue. The indicators must fulfil evaluative ends and not descriptive ends. They must be relevant and must emit clear messages about matters of actual interests and matters that could be affected by a political response.

In deciding what quantitative aspects of culture must stand out and how they should be presented, a problem arises immediately: It is in the production and consumption of cultural goods that have a price in the market, where we find the greatest number of indicators. Therefore it is not surprising that the richer the country, the more cultural goods it produces and consumes. Not only is there more data available in developed countries, but also this information privileges production and consumption of cultural goods through market mechanisms.

It is therefore important to introduce multicultural considerations in the selection of indicators, in order to allow significant comparisons between different countries. The objective should be to establish a scope of indicators that integrates cultural characteristics common to all countries.

There are three fundamental challenges in the area of statistics and cultural indicators:

1. The first refers to the establishment of a system of cultural statistics and indicators that reflects the complexity and diversity of cultural themes and to the relation of these indicators with multiple aspects of social and economic development. This implies to bind together and put on line a lot of existing data bases and sources, including demographic censuses, archival records, population surveys and surveys among the public, and at the same time improve the processes of collection and dissemination of data.

2. The second challenge is of an institutional and political nature. Statistics are inherently a problem of confidence. Statistic information and transparency are needed for generating confidence. On the other hand, confidence and social capital are necessary for generating statistics of good quality. Confidence must be present among the participants of a survey, between politicians and statisticians. Confidence is particularly important in culture, a field that touches the minds and hearts of people, individual freedom and collective beliefs.

3. The third challenge, the most complex and intriguing of all, refers to the issue of measuring. Some of the difficulties with indicators emerge not because of the lack of data, but because of the lack of an adequate conceptual framework. Nowadays there is a growing awareness, not only among the specialists but also among the general public, that cultural expenses under certain conditions are an investment in social and human capital, and that certain cultural services, produced by voluntary or house-work must be considered as products.

Unfortunately, these theoretical concepts have not been turned yet into actions for obtaining normalized statistics that measure results, assets and well-being.

Here we can formulate some questions: What proportion of its wealth a society dedicates to what it defines as culture and according to which tendencies, by which channels and agents? Which are the cultural products of a society and how are they elaborated and diffused? How much employment generate those sectors? Which are their contributions to national wealth? Have they links with non-cultural sectors? What relationship have the men and women of a society with the cultural, commercial or non-commercial, producers? Which obstacles –financial, geographical, social or educative-- stand between entire sectors of a society and the access to a more developed cultural life? How and on which bases can be better related among themselves the diverse actors of cultural life (citizens, artists, associations and private and public executives? How and on which bases can the States dialogue and coordinate their actions to promote development and cultural cooperation, beyond the great declarations of principles?

The Mexican Experience with Cultural Information Systems and Cultural Indicators

Mexico has an experience of decades in data bases and systematization of cultural information. Most of it refers to the register and catalogue-making of the tangible heritage (archeological, historic, and artistic), but also to fields such as libraries and editorial

production. The information gathered so far is an important antecedent that must be taken into account for any project about cultural information in the country.

With such background, the System of Cultural Information (SIC) has recently been developed by CONACULTA, which is the federal agency responsible for cultural policies, responding to the necessity of counting with relevant, accessible, systematized, accurate and timely information, to help decision making on the formulation and evaluation of policies.

Before beginning this effort, in most cases the information was fragmented among different administrative units that operated with different criteria; was not actualized on a regular basis, neither was systematized. Therefore, each information requirement supposed a search that involved different sources and was solved in a casuistical manner and through manual procedures. This showed that there was not open and transparent access to information, either between federal and state cultural organisms, or to researchers, artists and public in general.

For this reason, as a first step, the SIC proposed to integrate information generated by different areas of CONACULTA and by the states cultural organisms, through a system that operates under a decentralized structure, not only in regards to the feeding of the information, but also in the definition of its contents and evolution.

At the beginning several obstacles were faced to take: the lack of experience to handle systemized information and to share it interinstitutionally in a common data base; the scarcity of human resources and computer equipment that could be regularly dedicated to these tasks; and the technical difficulties to design a data base of this type that would interconnect all the states of the country.

The design of the system was based on the following criteria:

- Focusing on the most widely accepted fields of cultural order.

- Include information that would respond to the necessities of the institutions and to the most frequent requests they received form cultural promoters, researchers, artists and the general public.

- Develop a data base of public access through the Internet that as a network of federal and state institutions.

Considering the scarcity of cultural information and a certain degree of skepticism among some of the institutions invited to collaborate in this project (resulting from previous failed experiences to generate information systems) in the chosen strategy the development of a system was proposed that would quickly become useful to the institutions that provided the information.

In its present version, the SIC is available at *http://sic.conaculta.gob.mx*, where you can find more than 30 thousand entries related to the following subjects:

The presence of CONACULTA in the States

- General Direction of Libraries
- General Direction of Popular Cultures
- National Institute of Anthropology and History
- National Institute of Fine Arts
- National Center for the Arts
- Tijuana Cultural Center
- EDUCAL Books and Art

Cultural State Organisms

Cultural Infrastructure

- Auditoriums
- Libraries
- Handcraft Houses
- Culture Houses
- Indigenous Coordination Centers
- Cultural Centers
- Artistic Investigation Centers
- Artistic Education Centers and Schools
- Art Galleries
- Museums
- Theaters

Festivals

Social Actors

- Artists and Writers
- Artistic Groups

Editorial Production

- Cultural Magazines
- Editorial Funds

Scholarships, Awards and Funds for Artistic and Cultural Projects

- National Culture and Arts Fund
- States Culture and Arts Funds
- Other awards and funds

Cultural and Artistic Projects that Received Funding

Media

As we can appreciate at first glance, the SIC is an inventory of cultural resources in Mexico that includes institutions, infrastructure, artists, cultural goods and services, and artistic and cultural projects. It constitutes a basic and indispensable tool for any effort of recollection and dissemination of cultural information. To give an example of what it represents, the INEGI, an organism in charge of national statistics in Mexico, acknowledges for 444 museums, while the SIC registers more than 900.

This information is organized in a relational data base that is useful for various consultative and analytical purposes. One can, for example, find out what theatres throughout the country have certain technical specifications; what is the cultural infrastructure of a state or municipality—be it in absolute terms, per capita or in terms of the specific demographic characteristics (by age group, education level, etc.)—what options of artistic education exist by level or discipline; what festivals take place with a specific theme; what supports are offered by speciality and what projects have been financed with these resources, to cite some options.

The SIC allows for institutional users to automatically generate a great variety of reports, graphics and maps, which represents an atlas of the cultural resources of Mexico permanently updated. Examples of these maps are included in this text and will soon be presented in a publication called *Atlas of the Cultural Infrastructure in Mexico* that is being prepared, as a tool evaluating the state of cultural equipment in the country.

MEXICO
National Distribution of Public Libraries by Municipality

Number of libraries
by municipality

■	11 to 76	(83)
■	5 to 10	(173)
■	3 to 4	(300)
■	2	(348)
■	1	(1207)
■	0	(332)
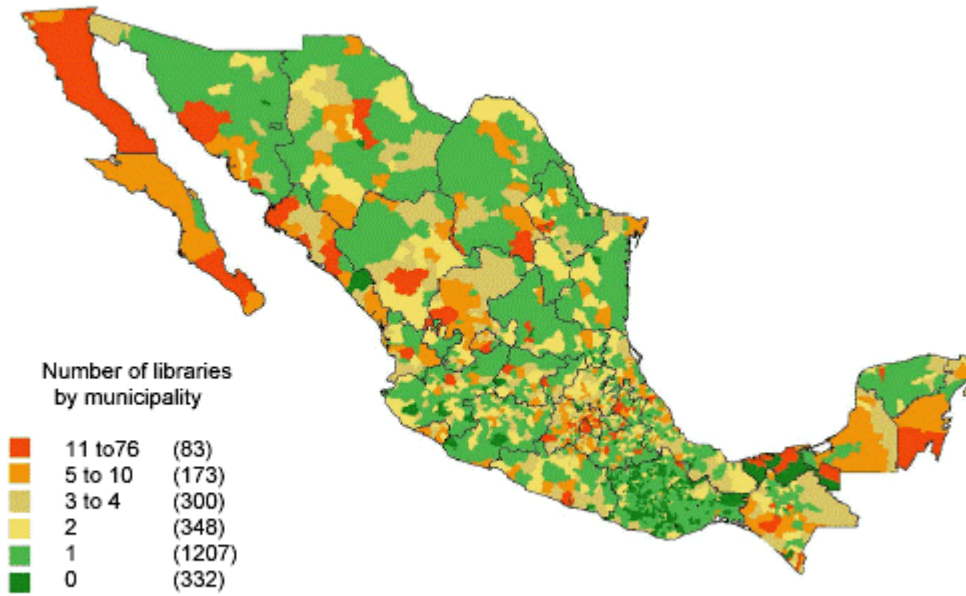
Source: Dirección General de Bibliotecas, CONACULTA (02.10.02)
Total of public libraries: 6260
Does not include school, university or specialized libraries
Total of municipalities: 2443

Distribution of Public Libraries by Municipality
State of Oaxaca

Number of libraries
by municipality

■	de 8 a 27	(2)
■	de 4 a 7	(2)
■	3	(6)
■	2	(26)
■	1	(276)
■	0	(257)
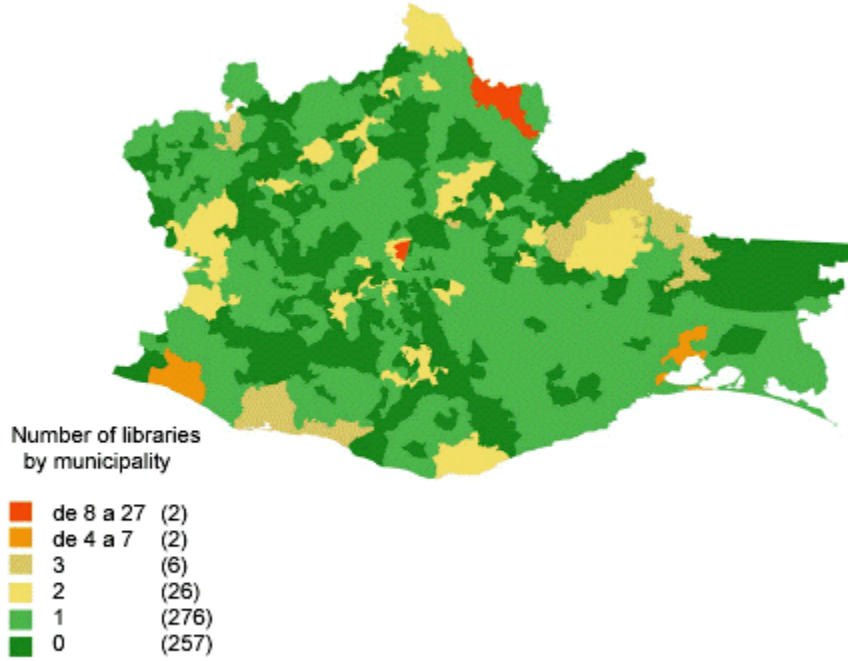
Source: Dirección General de Bibliotecas, CONACULTA (02.12.02)
Total of public libraries in Oaxaca: 405
Does not include school, university or specialized libraries
Total of municipalities in Oaxaca: 569

The system was designed to share information with other data bases of statistical information available on the net, which allows to construct indicators that incorporate demographic, economic, educational and public finance variables, among many other options. In particular, it is possible to consult information automatically and construct indicators with the municipal data base systems developed by the office responsible for national statistics in Mexico.

In addition, the SIC has links with all the registers that are present on the Internet—actually more than 1,600 and counting—which allows to broaden the access to information. From this perspective, the system operates like a specialized search engine or a portal that offers an ample scope of what is available on the net about different aspects of Mexican cultures.

Perspectives

Based on what has been achieved thus far, and taking into account the conceptual considerations of the first part of the text, the design and construction of a system of statistics and cultural indicators is under way as a tool for evaluating the impact of policies, programs and projects and the performance of cultural institutions.

This process will take the cultural diversity of Mexico into consideration, the need to build indicators that incorporate the cultural component of social and human development, as well as methodological criteria which allow to make comparisons with other sectors and countries.

It is important to point out that we recognize that the definition of indicators is a political process in which it is necessary to incorporate institutions of different levels of government, creators, cultural promoters and researchers in order to fully socially legitimize this task.

The process of construction of indicators, which is underway, comprises the following tasks:

- Review and make an inventory of existing data collections in Mexico, that not only includes those generated by the different administrative units of the CONACULTA and the INEGI, but also other public and private institutions that regularly compile information related with different aspects of the cultural sector (like the management chambers of the different cultural industries).

- Make a study about good practices and experiences on cultural statistics and indicators in other countries and the recommendations of international organizations.

- Elaborate a strategic proposal of design for a National System of Cultural Indicators, based on a conceptual framework that will benefit from the results of the above mentioned points.

- Define the instruments for collecting and processing the data, as well as evaluation, interpretation and dissemination mechanisms (including products, responsibles and periodicity).

It is essential that the system of indicators designed should give information about the practices and standards of cultural consumption that are not registered trough marketing transactions nor in spaces commonly qualified as "cultural" and that constitute expressions of wide sectors, such as the ethnic communities, peasants, neighborhoods and other popular sectors.

As a result of what has been analysed so far, cultural statistics available today in Mexico present serious limitations considering:

- Their reliability, given that the collecting mechanisms do not offer certainty in relation to the reported quantities.

- Their covering, since many institutions and spaces are not included.

- Their dissemination, since as today the results are barely known.

- Their relevance for measuring the objectives of cultural policies and human development.

All of the above mentioned show that a deep transformation of the cultural statistics system in Mexico is necessary and urgent in order to break the vicious circle that generates information that is compiled by routine and that is not useful for the institutions and of no interest for the citizens.

Taking into consideration the limitations of available resources and the considerable task that represents to collect a substantial number of indicators, in a reliable and suitable way, it is intended to exploit as much as possible sources such as demographic census and various surveys that are regularly carried out and to be very selective in a limited list of selected indicators.

Paradoxically, next to the apparent lack of reliable data, it has been detected the existence of information that is gathered regularly by tools as the *National Survey of Home Income-Expenditure, National Survey of Employment, National Survey of Tourism* and others, that until now have not been used as sources of information and yet contain relevant data about certain aspects of the cultural sector.

In the process of establishing cultural indicators, the studies of opinion and in particular the different types of surveys are of great usefulness in the gathering of results that other tools would not allow us to detect. Due to the above mentioned, a *National Survey on Cultural Practices and Consumption* will be carried out shortly. This survey, that will take place every four or six years, is fundamental for getting to know the practices and patterns of cultural consumption in Mexico in a detailed manner, differentiated by age, gender, level of education, income, occupation, size of locality and state or region.

The survey includes attendance to cultural infrastructure, reading habits, exposure to media, use of leisure time, practice of artistic activities, cultural equipment, values and attitudes, and knowledge and opinion regarding cultural institutions. We are ready to make the necessary adjustments in the questionnaire in order that this information can be compared with data obtained by similar surveys in other countries.

In particular, considering that the UIS and the cultural sector of the UNESCO are working on the design of a survey on cultural practices and consumption that will be launched in various member countries of the UNESCO in 2003, for Mexico it would be extremely useful to benefit from this experience, for the design of the questionnaire, as well as for the analysis and interpretation of the information.

Complementing this population survey, public surveys will be made to get to know in detail the profile of the users of cultural goods and services, their level of satisfaction and the evaluation of performance of the different institutions. This kind of surveys will be made every six months where users of various areas such as libraries, museums, art galleries, archeological sites, movie theaters, concert halls, artistic education, festivals, etc, will participate.

We will also promote the participation of external researches (national and international) in matters of interest such as design of indicators, evaluation of policies and projects, case studies and in the design, analysis and interpretation of the surveys.

Finally, we have established contact with the PNUD with the purpose of evaluating the possibilities of cooperation for the elaboration of a *Report on Culture and Human Development in Mexico* aimed at firmly including culture as a fundamental element in the agenda of development.

In all these projects, it is fundamental for Mexico to establish permanent cooperation and exchange programs with international organisms such as the UNESCO, particularly with the Institute for Statistics, with the European Union and with any country willing to share their experience in the matter. The development of a basic common framework of international reference and international recommended standards, to which the largest possible number of countries would subscribe, seems of fundamental usefulness.

What has been accomplished so far is of great importance. The framework developed by UNESCO in 1986 is certainly a starting-point that should benefit from numerous experiences and reflections generated thereafter. For instance, the achievements of the Leadership Group on Cultural Statistics established by the European Union are particularly significant as a conceptual and methodological basis for harmonizing statistics.

There are certainly many more experiences to benefit from in the effort to devise a common international framework, that sets agreed-on standards, reflects cultural complexity and diversity and stresses the value of culture and the linkages between culture and development. The establishment of a network of national systems of cultural statistics and indicators as a basis for international cooperation will be essential for advancing more rapidly towards these goals on a global scale.