

Original article



The Identification-Enhancement-Utilization cycle in the contribution of the cultural dimension to local development

El ciclo Identificación-Puesta en Valor-Utilización en la contribución de la dimensión cultural al desarrollo local

O ciclo de Identificação-Aprimoramento-Utilização na contribuição da dimensão cultural para o desenvolvimento local

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ABSTRACT

The study was based on the premise that cultural dimension is a transversal and constitutive substrate of local development, whose effective contribution requires a mediation process managed by local actors. To operationalize this process, the dialectical cycle of Identification, Enhancement and Utilization, was proposed and applied in the Cuban municipality of Guáimaro. The objective of this paper is to present the theoretical and methodological foundations of this cycle and analyze the results of its implementation. Using a participatory action research methodology, techniques such as social cartography workshops, collective analysis of Endogenous Territorial Value and Development Potentiality Index, and the construction of strategic alignment matrices were employed. The results

validated the cycle's usefulness in converting symbolic-cultural capital into inputs for the development strategy. However structural limitations were also identified, primarily the persistence of an economic habitus that filters the identification of assets and the fracture between community knowledge and technical-managerial knowledge, which hinders final programmatic integration. It was concluded that the Identification, Enhancement and Utilization cycle is a viable model, but its transcendent success depends on transforming cognitive and institutional structures to strengthen the mediating agency of local actors.

Keywords: actors; culture; local development; agency; municipal strategy.

RESUMEN

El estudio partió de la premisa de que la dimensión cultural es un sustrato transversal y constitutivo del desarrollo local, cuya contribución efectiva requiere un proceso de mediación gestionado por los actores del territorio. Para operacionalizar este proceso, se propuso y aplicó el ciclo Identificación-Puesta en Valor-Utilización en el municipio cubano de Guáimaro. El propósito de este artículo es exponer los fundamentos teórico- metodológicos que lo sustentan y analizar los resultados de su implementación. Mediante una metodología de investigación-acción participativa, se emplearon técnicas como: talleres de cartografía social, análisis colectivo del Valor Territorial Endógeno y del Índice de Potencialidad de Desarrollo, y construcción de matrices de alineamiento estratégico. Los resultados validaron la utilidad de este ciclo para convertir el capital simbólico-cultural en insumo para la Estrategia de Desarrollo Municipal. Sin embargo, también se identificaron limitaciones estructurales, principalmente la persistencia de un habitus economicista que filtra la identificación de activos culturales, y una fractura entre el saber comunitario y el técnico-gerencial que dificulta la integración programática final. Se concluyó que el ciclo Identificación-Puesta en Valor-Utilización es un modelo viable, pero su éxito trascendente depende de transformar las estructuras cognitivas e institucionales para fortalecer la agencia mediadora de los actores locales.

Palabras clave: actores; cultura; desarrollo local; agencia; estrategia municipal.

RESUMO

Este estudo partiu da premissa de que a dimensão cultural é um elemento transversal e constitutivo do desenvolvimento local, cuja contribuição efetiva requer um processo de mediação gerido pelos atores locais. Para operacionalizar esse processo, o ciclo de Identificação-Valorização-Utilização foi proposto e aplicado no município cubano de Guáimaro. O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar os fundamentos teóricos e metodológicos que sustentam esse ciclo e analisar os resultados de sua implementação. Utilizando uma metodologia de pesquisa-ação participativa, foram empregadas técnicas como oficinas de mapeamento social, análise coletiva do Valor Territorial Endógeno e do Índice de Potencial de Desenvolvimento, e a construção de matrizes de alinhamento estratégico. Os resultados validaram a utilidade desse ciclo para transformar o capital simbólico-cultural em insumo para a Estratégia Municipal de Desenvolvimento. Contudo, também foram identificadas limitações estruturais, principalmente a persistência de uma mentalidade econômica que filtra a identificação de bens culturais e uma desconexão entre o conhecimento comunitário e o conhecimento técnico-gerencial que dificulta a integração programática final. Concluiu-se que o ciclo de Identificação-Valorização-Utilização é um modelo viável, mas seu sucesso duradouro depende da transformação das estruturas cognitivas e institucionais para fortalecer a capacidade de mediação dos atores locais.

Palavras-chave: atores; cultura; desenvolvimento local; capacidade de mediação; estratégia municipal.

INTRODUCTION

Local development is configured as a scenario resulting from the interaction between social, historical, cultural, and environmental elements, according to a group of authors from the Center for Community Studies at the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas (2016). This interaction generates a network of actors who possess a collective identity (values and norms) and a system of relationships oriented toward a common project. The absence or weakness of these actors' agency limits the capacity of local development to achieve common welfare objectives.

In Cuba, local development (LD) has been consolidated as a central axis of the public agenda since the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030. Decree 33/2021 (Consejo de Ministros, 2021) defines it as an endogenous, participatory, innovative process aimed at aligning

interests among actors, territories, and scales across its economic, environmental, sociocultural, and institutional dimensions. To be transformative and sustainable, local development must recognize and enhance the specific reality of each territory its beliefs, aspirations, knowledge, and ways of life which relates to the cultural dimension of development.

The first World Conference on Cultural Policies established the foundation for understanding culture as a cross-cutting axis in all development processes. More than four decades later, the recognition of the cultural dimension as the context of values, subjectivities, and aptitudes within which development processes take place remains valid (Unesco, 2022). However, an economic hegemony persists, reducing actors to passive recipients and limiting their participation. In response, it is necessary to adapt models, programs, and projects to the natural and cultural environment, as well as to the needs and aspirations of the populations. And, in practical terms, it is essential to recognize that the cultural dimension represents the axiological and cognitive foundation upon which local development strategies are built and acquire meaning.

Its contribution in these areas is instrumental, constructive, and dynamic. In accordance with this line of thought, the cultural dimension is conceived as the set of mediations (Centro de Estudios Comunitarios de la Universidad Central «Marta Abreu» de Las Villas, 2016) that, in tune with the diverse ways of being, doing, having, and existing in a community, allows it to ensure its food self-sufficiency, manage its habitat, relate amicably with its natural environment, face climate change, sustainably utilize its endogenous resources, or adopt new technologies and innovate.

From this perspective, the contribution of the cultural dimension to local development is defined as the process of articulating the potential inherent in mediation with the practical components of the Municipal Development Strategy (MDS) (Guzón Camporredondo, 2023). This cannot be achieved if local actors governments, businesses, community leaders lack the tools to exercise cultural mediation. Discussing local development today requires thinking from, within, among, and for the context. Although the regulatory framework for local development in Cuba offers possibilities for deploying the cultural dimension within the MDS, its theoretical and methodological treatment is insufficient.

The approach to the cultural dimension as a social fact in itself, its contribution to the process, and the utilization of the potential of culture, is still scattered (Olazabal Arrabal et al., 2022). There are no references that demonstrate the treatment of the role of actors in the management of endogenous

potential from the enabling of their managerial agency (Giddens, 1985) to identify, value, and strategically use the symbolic-cultural capital of the territory.

To support this concept, we draw on Bourdieu's (1990) theory of capital, which distinguishes between economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Symbolic-cultural capital is understood here as the combination of objectified cultural capital (goods, practices, knowledge) and symbolic capital (prestige, recognition, identity), both rooted in the territory and capable of being mobilized for development. In the context of the Guáimaro municipality, this type of capital manifests itself in:

- the important history of heroic struggle, spirit of sacrifice and sense of belonging, sedimented in the local collective memory
- the set of cultural assets linked to livestock activity (agricultural fair, rodeo, leatherwork, Cascorro milk cream, to mention some of its expressions) and to the rural landscape

The research conducted is framed within this territory, whose cultural resources, as mediating factors, can be integrated into the MDS through the Identification-Valuation-Utilization (IPVU) cycle. This cycle constitutes the dialectical process upon which the contribution of the cultural dimension to local development is based. The objective of this article is to present the theoretical and methodological foundations that support this cycle, and the results of its application in the aforementioned municipality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The overall methodological strategy was based on Participatory Action Research (Rocha Torres, 2016), which allowed for the analysis, facilitation, and on-site observation of the dialectical process of cultural mediation by promoting the co-production of knowledge between researchers and local stakeholders. Data collection was organized into three sequential phases, corresponding to each stage of the IPVU cycle. Triangulation of techniques was used to ensure the validity and depth of the data.

1. Identification Phase: The objective was to facilitate outsourcing (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The techniques employed were:

- Collective Social Mapping Workshop: A diverse group of 25 local stakeholders (municipal government officials, cultural managers, business owners, historians, and tradition bearers) were convened. Through participatory activities and the use of

physical maps of the municipality, they collaboratively identified, located, and characterized assets, practices, knowledge, and symbols of identity.

- Documentary analysis: there were reviewed normative documents (Decree 33/2021 (Consejo de Ministros, 2021), Resolution 29/2021 (Ministerio de Economía y Planificación, 2021)), the MDS of Guáimaro, local chroniclers and publications on the history of the municipality
2. Value Enhancement Phase: The objective was to operationalize the objectification and social legitimization of cultural assets, evaluating their potential for development. The Participatory Analysis Workshop on Endogenous Territorial Value (ETV) and the Development Potential Index (DPI) was used, with a subgroup of 18 participants from the initial workshop (including technicians and knowledge bearers), two assets selected as emblematic cases were analyzed: the Cascorro "Milk Cream" and the "Guáimaro Agricultural Fair". Table 1 (presented in the results section) was used as a guide for group discussion and the qualitative evaluation of each dimension.
 3. Utilization Phase: The objective was to facilitate the institutionalizing internalization process, that is, the translation of the valued assets into inputs for the MDS. The techniques employed were:
 - Workshop on building strategic-cultural alignment matrices: With a technical-political working group (12 people: government planners, local business managers, delegates, and tradition bearers), matrices were developed to connect the analyzed cultural assets with the axes and objectives of the MDS. This allowed for the definition of "concrete contribution pathways".
 - Key actor mapping: In a participatory manner, institutional, economic and community-based actors linked to the management of each asset were identified and classified (according to degree of influence: High, Medium, Low), revealing the existing governance structure.
 - Participatory design of technical-projective sheets: based on the identified contribution routes, collaborative work was done on the sketching of sheets that outline specific projects, delineating possible actions, responsible actors and necessary resources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The IPVU cycle is a sequential and dialectical process through which cultural mediation evolves from an abstract potential to an operational input for MDS. It is broken down into three interdependent stages: i) Identification: this involves the diagnosis and mapping of cultural assets; ii) Value Enhancement: this entails the situational analysis of the cultural object through its Territorial Value (ETV) and its Development Index (DPI); iii) Utilization: this involves linking it to local priorities and integrating it into MDS. The theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin each stage are presented below, resulting from a review and analysis of specialized literature on the sociology of culture and development, as well as territorial development management.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) foundational work approaches the processes of constructing reality by starting from the basis of everyday life knowledge to address the interpretation of society in its dual objective and subjective dimensions. From the framework proposed by the authors, social reality is configured through a dialectical process of externalization, objectification, and internalization. This perspective provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the scenario of the IPVU operational triad.

The Identification phase corresponds to the moment of externalization. Here, the actors, through language, interactions, and local management practices, make the territory's cultural assets visible and explicit. With their knowledge, memories, and values, they are the central subjects who dialogue, negotiate, and agree on which elements of their material and immaterial environment carry cultural value and, therefore, constitute a potential for development (Chávez Plazas et al., 2021). That is, a set of dynamic resources that can be mobilized according to economic and non-economic objectives (Olazabal Arrabal et al., 2022).

Translating these assumptions into a concrete methodology involves deploying techniques that materialize the participatory construction of cultural assets. For example, collective mapping consists of the collaborative selection, classification, and characterization of goods, practices, and knowledge. This includes monuments and historical sites, cultural landscapes, artisanal techniques, oral narratives, festivals, performing arts, social uses, knowledge and uses related to nature, etc. (Unesco, 2022). The process of mapping and inventorying mediations is an act of collective recognition and valuation.

The aim is to identify not only formal cultural institutions, but also bearers of traditional knowledge, informal solidarity networks, and guardians of the historical memory of the neighborhood or municipality. Furthermore, it involves documenting shared identity symbols (e.g., the history of the town, a traditional crop, a historical figure), prevailing value systems (cooperation vs. individualism, relationship with nature), and key spaces for socialization.

Collaborative interpretation and synthesis, as a tool for analyzing collected information, is a space for dialogue among different forms of knowledge (Marín González & Carrera, 2023). Expert knowledge (for example, in the management of cultural itineraries and routes) and local knowledge come together to co-produce a shared vision of territorial heritage, which will serve as the basis for the next phase. In short, the Identification stage is a process through which a community recognizes itself in its diversity and complexity, building the symbolic and material foundation upon which to project its development.

The Value Enhancement constitutes a critical process of social legitimization and strategic translation of the identified cultural assets. It is not limited to simple cataloging, but rather transforms these objects into legitimate and strategic components for local development. This phase corresponds to objectification within the stated constructivist perspective. That is to say, the goods, practices, and knowledge become shared objects within the community; in this way, they acquire their own facticity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The objectified assets undergo a process of legitimization, through which a shared social consensus is built around their value and meaning, leading to their subsequent integration into the territory's institutional and strategic framework. As a result of this step, a primary internalization occurs, where the legitimized assets are incorporated into the social consciousness of the actors. This is not a linear but a dialectical process; the subjective reality of the community (internalization) and the objective reality of the institutions (objectification) constantly feed back into each other, reconstructing local cultural value.

To operationalize the Value Enhancement process, a methodology is proposed that focuses on the situational analysis of the asset, based on two key concepts: Endogenous Territorial Value¹ (ETV)

¹ The ETV integrates the unique importance of a resource that can manifest as an asset, a practice, or knowledge rooted in a specific territory, derived from its historical, cultural, and ecological relationship with the community that sustains it. Its relevance is measured through three interconnected components: genetic conditioning,

and the Development Potential Index² (DPI). This analysis can be structured through a participatory workshop that brings together technicians, local authorities, community leaders, and other key stakeholders. Its objective is to collectively assess the cultural asset based on components and criteria defined by established dimensions for each one. The following table outlines the core analysis.

Table 1. ETV and DPI analysis scheme

Concept of analysis	Key Dimensions for Participatory Analysis	Guiding questions for the Working Group
Endogenous Territorial Value	Symbolic-identity (Component: genetic conditioning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rooted in local memory and identity 	To what extent does this asset represent us as a community? Is it linked to our founding stories?
	Socio-relational (Component: community appropriation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to strengthen the social fabric and community cohesion 	Does this asset unite us? Does it foster collaboration and a sense of belonging?
	Cognitive (Component: transversality) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content of traditional knowledge and local skills 	What ancestral or unique knowledge does this asset contain? Who are its bearers?

community appropriation, and transversality. This concept is inspired by Unesco's Outstanding Universal Value. While the EUV prioritizes global relevance and standardized conservation, the ETV emphasizes the local relationship between community, territory, and resource, recognizing its dynamism and adaptability.

² The DPI is a multi-criteria instrument for evaluating the capacity of a cultural resource to contribute to the comprehensive development of a territory. It integrates principles of endogenous and community development (use of local assets within frameworks of participation and cooperation), territorial competitiveness (synergies between human, social, and productive capital), and local talent (deep-rooted skills and knowledge).

Development Potential Index	Economic (Criterion: functional complementarity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for generating livelihoods, products, or services 	Can it create jobs or income? Is there a market for products or expertise linked to it?
	Socio-environmental (Criterion: vulnerability) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to environmental sustainability and risk of resource depletion 	Does its promotion protect the environment? Does it improve our well-being? What risks of disappearance or modification does the resource face?
	Political-institutional (Criterion: community sustainability) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of involvement of the subjects linked to the resource Recognition and support from local authorities and organizations 	Do local policies and institutions support the development of this asset?

Source: Own elaboration

Based on group discussion and qualitative evaluation of these dimensions, the cultural asset can be positioned on a continuum of transformative potential DPI ranging from Latent Potential (high ETV but low current articulation) to Strategic Engine (high ETV and high viability for triggering development processes). This classification will directly inform project design, prioritizing intervention on those assets with the greatest transformative potential.

Participatory Action Research, as a central epistemological approach, fosters the "social construction of knowledge aimed at transformation" (Rocha Torres, 2016, p. 34) by working with diverse groups, associations, and institutional representatives. Techniques such as social mapping, thematic workshops, and multi-stakeholder working groups are particularly suitable here. These facilitate the analysis of the ETV and the DPI by enabling the spatial and symbolic representation of the asset,

making its location and relationship with other tangible elements visible, as well as associated values and emotions (Bonfá Neto & Suzuki, 2023).

These are ideal spaces for the strategic translation of the asset, allowing for in-depth debate on the different dimensions, and converging towards a shared vision of the asset's potential. (Álvarez Larrain et al., 2022), as well as the actions necessary for its enhancement (Piñeiro Alonso et al., 2023). By bringing together knowledge bearers, technicians, and local officials, a dialogue is produced that leads to the generation of culturally significant and administratively viable project ideas. However, the articulation of cultural mediations with local development requires a bridging language that is built from training (Costamagna & Larrea Aranguren, 2017).

The Utilization phase represents the moment of institutionalizing the internalization of the cultural asset. After its identificationprimary externalizationand valorizationobjectificationthis process culminates when the asset is strategically incorporated into the formal structures and dynamics of planning, implementation, and evaluation of local development. More than an end, it is the beginning of a new cycle of social reproduction and transformation mediated by the cultural dimension. Institutionalization arises from the reciprocal typification of habitualized actions which, upon being objectified, acquire their own facticity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

In the municipal context, this materializes in two interconnected actions:

1. Linking with local priorities.

- The valued cultural asset is "translated" into the language of strategic planning. Explicit connections are established between its potential and the objectives of municipal development (economic, productive, social, environmental), demonstrating its capacity to contribute to goals already legitimized socially and institutionally (Pérez Hernández, 2023).

2. The integration into the practical components (Guzón Camporredondo, 2023) of the MDS.

- This is the crystallization of internalization; the asset ceases to be a discursive element and becomes an operational component of public policies, programs, and specific projects. This integration ensures its financing, continuous management, and evaluation, transforming it from a potential resource into an effective tool for change (Olazabal Arrabal, 2025).

The operationalization of this phase presupposes two methodological stages based on technical-political workshops with the diversity of local resident actors.

Stage 1. Strategic linkage: establish explicit and measurable connections between the cultural asset and the fundamental components of the MDS (Table 2).

Table 2. Tool: Strategic-Cultural Alignment Matrix

Procedure	1. In a matrix, the valued cultural assets are listed in the left column (e.g., traditional leatherworking technique; patron saint festival)
	2. In the top row, the strategic axes and objectives of the municipality are listed (e.g.: Economic-productive: Revitalize livestock activity)
	3. In a participatory manner, the stakeholders analyze and reach a consensus on how each asset can contribute to each objective. This defines a concrete contribution path (e.g., the leatherworking technique contributes to revitalizing the local economy through the creation of a territorial brand and entrepreneurship workshops for young people)

Source: Own elaboration

Stage 2. Programmatic integration: incorporating the cultural asset and its "contribution path" into development management instruments (Table 3).

Table 3. Tool: Technical-projective data sheet of the cultural asset

Procedure	1. Starting from the alignment matrix, the contributions with the greatest potential are selected
	2. For each one, an opportunity sheet is collectively prepared
	3. These fact sheets are formally integrated into the government's annual operating plans ³

³ For Cuba, this translates into strategic analysis prior to the development of the strategy or its annual update. It can be incorporated into economic and state budget plans.

Source: Own elaboration

The application of the IPVU cycle with local actors in Guáimaro revealed both structuring potential and structural limitations for the development of a managerial habitus oriented towards cultural mediation. The Identification phase emerged as a foundational moment, where the community recognized itself as the subject of its own development. Its main potential lies in its ability to function as a mechanism for empowering agency. Facilitating the collective externalization of cultural elements such as *Cascorro's cream*, *the Conga La Victoria*, and *milking knowledge* activated the actors' capacity for reflection on their own Cultural System (Archer, 1996).

This process led to the conversion of embodied cultural capital tacit and experiential into objectified cultural capital, and therefore susceptible to discussion, negotiation, and eventual institutionalization. Another significant potential is the deconstruction of folkloric hegemony. The fact that the actors recognized production systems (livestock farming), habitat management practices (vernacular architecture), and technical knowledge (milking) as cultural cores reveals a positive crack in the sectoral view of culture. This suggests the construction of a habitus capable of perceiving culture as a matrix of relationships and not as a self-contained sector; this fosters a more complex and strategic understanding of its link to local development.

Limitations rooted in pre-existing cognitive and institutional structures were revealed. The most telling is the persistence of an economic habitus that acts as a filter in externalization. While assets with high symbolic density were identified, the discussion revealed a difficulty in externalizing, with the same forcefulness, the intangible cultural mediations that structure collective action: systems of trust, community leadership styles, or informal conflict resolution protocols. This indicates an incomplete and biased externalization toward the material and the festive, which reproduces, in the very act of identification, the instrumental perspective that the study seeks to overcome.

The Identification phase, on its own, lacks the capacity to generate a methodological synthesis between experiential and technical-managerial knowledge. This is evident in the fragmentation of the knowledge exchange: while those who possess tradition detail practical knowledge (the steam process that gives *Cascorro's cream its unique flavor*), expert management knowledge does not intervene to systematize this information into a technical data sheet or viable project. The dialogue remains anecdotal, without any strategic translation emerging. This is where the importance of the subsequent phases Value Addition and Utilization lies.

To enhance and utilize the cultural assets of the *Guáimaro Agricultural Fair* and *Cascorro Milk Cream*, three tools were used:

1. Analysis of Endogenous Territorial Value and Development Potential Index
2. Mapping of key actors linked to the cultural resource
3. Correlation matrix of the cultural resource with components of the MDS

The first step allowed for recording the social narrative surrounding the cultural resource and assessing its social relevance. In the case of the *Cascorro Milk Cream cultural resource*, its ETV was rated as HIGH, as was its DPI. This demonstrates its capacity to contribute to local development, even without receiving mobilization actions or economic-financial incentives. In contrast, the Endogenous Territorial Value of the *Agricultural Fair*, the Community Appropriation component was rated High, while the Community Appropriation component was rated Medium. This reflects the deterioration and modifications that the tradition has undergone, as well as the low level of involvement of the participants. This is consistent with an DPI rating of Low.

The process of Value Enhancement allowed the stakeholders to transform subjective perceptions into shared objective realities regarding the value of their cultural assets. The social narratives developed constitute the empirical evidence that allows us to observe the dialectical process of objectification described by Berger and Luckmann (1966). In the case of *Cascorro's Milk Cream*, its historical origin ("1970s"), its material base ("milk and sugar"), its link to the productive structure ("fundamental livestock activity"), and its mechanism of reproduction ("it is passed down from generation to generation") are all articulated. This shared discursive construction grants the resource its own factuality as a cultural object.

The unanimous recognition of its "nutritious," "unique," and "identity-defining" character indicates a deep internalization within the collective habitus the participants not only describe the *cream*, but also embody its value. In contrast, the *Agricultural Fair* reveals a conflicted and incomplete objectification. Although its historical and symbolic value ("a landmark for the municipality") is acknowledged, the narratives highlight its "gradual decline," the "disinterest of the young population," and the "limited involvement" of the participants. While the Cultural System values the *Fair* as a tradition, the Sociocultural System demonstrates distance and conflict in current interactions.

The paradox of a high ETV with a low DPI expresses a tension: the community recognizes the asset's potential value but fails to build consensus on its viability in the current context. The temporal dimension emerges as a critical factor: while the *cream* shows adaptive evolution ("manufacturing methods have evolved") that guarantees its reproduction, the *Fair* reveals a loss of historical density its meaning is anchored in the past ("notable personalities," "traditional customs") without reconnecting with present-day practices and values. This difference explains the gap in their development potential: a cultural asset needs to be recognized not only as valuable but also as viable and meaningful for contemporary agency.

From a methodological standpoint, the ETV/DPI tool acts as a catalyst for the collective and multidimensional valuation of assets. The analytical distinction between endogenous value and development potential allowed for capturing the complexity of the legitimation process, avoiding economic reductionism. It also facilitated a reflective externalization of the conditions for reproducing the analyzed assets. Participants were able to articulate risks ("loss of meaning," "youth disinterest") and transmission mechanisms. This processual understanding of their culture allows stakeholders to visualize virtuous cycles of cultural-economic valorization that can be strengthened.

The main methodological limitation of the Valorization process lies in its inability to overcome certain fractures in sociocultural development. In the case of the *Fair*, the problem (low involvement, conflict) could be diagnosed, but no mechanisms were generated to rebuild the dialogue of knowledge necessary for its revitalization; specific approaches are required to address conflicts and resistance. There is a risk that technical objectification will supplant or distort authentic processes of social legitimation. Therefore, it is essential to construct culturally situated management models in which the technical aspects serve social meaning, not the other way around.

The methodology employed prioritizes the evaluation of the current state but offers few resources for projecting shared futures or for activating the capacity to creatively transform traditions, imbuing them with new meaning in changing contexts (what Margaret Archer would call cultural morphogenesis). Hence the relevance of the Utilization phase, so that cultural assets can move from being collectively recognized, valued, and legitimized resources to operational components within the MDS. As a first finding, it is verified that Strategic Linkage and Programmatic Integration require a translation between tacit and specialized knowledge in order to build the bridge between the contribution path and the opportunity sheet.

Experience shows that successful institutionalization requires "specialized knowledge that we lack" and that "certain aspects of the strategy and its management need to be studied" (transcript of the workshop, June 12, 2025). Aligning the "Guáimaro *Agricultural Fair* with strategic lines such as productive and financial revitalization" and "transforming *Cascorro's Milk Cream* from a local product into a catalyst for human development" (tool: correlation matrix between cultural resources and the component of the MDS) demands participatory structures. These function as spaces for social collaboration (Alonso Freyre & Díaz Hurtado, 2022) where diverse actors participate in creating each contribution pathway.

The mapping of key actors linked to the *milk cream* resource and *Fair* revealed a complex ecosystem of power that has a determining role in the strategic linking of the cultural asset (Table 4).

Table 4. Map of key actors linked to the cultural resource

Cultural resource	Degree of influence / local actors		
	High	Average	Low
<i>Cascorro Milk Cream</i>	Population; Cream Factory; Milk producers	Rectangle Agricultural Company	Municipal government
<i>Guáimaro Agricultural Fair</i>	Rectángulo Agricultural Company; Municipal Delegation of Ministry of Agriculture; "La Feria" Basic Business Unit; Rodeo Team; production bases ⁴	Culture Sector	Municipal government

Source: Own elaboration

For the *Cascorro cream*, an emerging bottom-up structure is evident, where strategic influence resides predominantly with grassroots actors (high influence box), while the municipal government appears to have low influence. This configuration suggests a parallel institutionalization process that, while reflecting strong community ownership, poses serious challenges for its integration into the formal structure of the MDS.

⁴ It refers to Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPC), Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPA) and Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCS).

Conversely, the *Agricultural Fair* exhibits a traditional top-down structure, with significant influence concentrated in institutional actors, which paradoxically coexists with its deterioration, documented in the Value Enhancement phase. This suggests an empty institutionalization, disconnected from community agency. The distribution of influence in both cases demonstrates that the potential of the Utilization phase emerges from the interaction among the mapped actors, where each can and should contribute with different knowledge and perspectives.

In the strategic linkage, a gap is identified between programmatic recognition and political integration. Both cultural resources show a high level of connection with strategic lines of human and productive development, proving that the actors successfully achieved the required "translation into the language of planning." However, the consistently "low" rating in their connection with local policies reveals a deficit in political mediation: the resources are recognized as valuable, but they fail to translate into specific regulatory frameworks, incentives, or budget allocations.

This dissociation expresses what Archer (1996) would identify as a failure in systemic elaboration: while the Cultural System values resources, the Sociocultural System does not generate the mechanisms for their effective incorporation. The identification of areas of articulation ("tourism," "gastronomy," "e-commerce") demonstrates an internalization of cross-cutting potentialities. However, these explicit links between potential and the municipality's development objectives are not reflected in the technical-projective plans, due to the absence of the aforementioned participatory structures of specialized knowledge (Table 5).

Table 5. Strategic links of cultural assets with development areas of the municipality

Cultural asset	Strategic Linkages	Areas of Development
<i>Cascorro Milk Cream</i>	Productive and financial revitalization of the local agri-food system; Foreign trade, foreign investment and import substitution	Tourism; Gastronomy; Cultural Management; Agriculture; E-commerce
<i>Guáimaro Agricultural Fair</i>	Productive and financial revitalization of the local agri-food system; Local Human Development	Agriculture; Cultural management; Tourism; Gastronomy; Rurality/urbanism; Education; E-commerce

Source: Own elaboration

The Utilization phase exhibits considerable diagnostic potential through its capacity to identify strategic links between cultural assets and development priorities. While the map of tensions and possibilities was successfully externalized for subsequent institutionalization through stakeholder mapping, this instrument fails to overcome the structural asymmetries in local development governance present in Guáimaro. Specific institutional mediation tools are needed to address the identified influence gaps, political disconnections, institutional inertia, and sectoral fragmentation.

The significance of the study lies in two fundamental contributions:

1. It provides a concrete procedural model that can be adapted and replicated in other municipalities, offering practical tools (social mapping, ETV/DPI analysis, alignment matrices) to overcome the limited and insufficient theoretical treatment of the cultural dimension in Municipal Development Strategies.
2. It demonstrates that the key to transformative local development lies not only in recognizing cultural resources, but also in building the managerial agency of stakeholders to exercise cultural mediation. This involves training facilitators who can navigate between the symbolic systems of the community and the administrative systems of planning.

The IPVU cycle emerges as a way to imbue development strategies with meaning and sustainability, provided its implementation is accompanied by a deliberate effort to transform the cognitive and institutional structures that still subordinate culture to an instrumental logic. Success will depend on the capacity to institutionalize not only cultural assets, but above all, the spaces and methods of social collaboration that allow for bridging the gap between community valuation and concerted political action.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Axel Polanco Noy: Conceptualization, data collection and processing, research, and writing. Original draft. Writing, revision, and editing.

Ginley Durán Castellón and María Teresa Caballero Rivacoba: Critical review of the content related to the contribution of the cultural dimension to local development and the proposed IPVU cycle.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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