

Culture as Social Capital for Development and Integration in Latin America

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Resumen

Este artículo discute y propone teóricamente los conceptos de cultura e identidad relacionados con el capital social para que puedan convertirse en instrumentos para un mejor desarrollo y proyecto de integración en América Latina. El concepto de cultura es muy polémico porque existen numerosos significados para la misma palabra pero aquí se propone también, junto con las características comunes que distinguen a una comunidad o población determinada, la posibilidad de convertir la cultura latinoamericana en una corriente ideológica a favor del sueño Bolivariano de una gran patria americana, recordando las palabras de Edgar Morin en el sentido de que cultura es todo aquello que nos ayuda a contextualizar, globalizar y anticipar mundos posibles en el futuro cercano.

Palabras clave: cultura, identidad, desarrollo, integración.

Abstract

This article discusses and proposes theoretically the concepts of culture and identity related to social capital so that they can become instruments for better development and integration projects in Latin America. The concept of culture is very controversial because there are multiple meanings for the same word but here is also proposed, along with the common features that distinguish one community or population, the possibility of converting the Latin American culture in an ideological current for the Bolivar's dream about a great American homeland, recalling also the words of Edgar Morin in the sense that culture is everything that helps us to contextualize, globalize and anticipate possible worlds in the near future.

Key words: culture, identity, development, integration

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Introduction

We will discuss the concepts of culture, identity and social capital applied to Latin America and we will propose that they are strongly related with the new development and integration process in the region. This part of the American continent is recognized in a situation of underdevelopment and divided in many nationalities. Is it possible to aspire to a strong development with better levels of social justice? Can we define development not only by the economic indicators but also by culture characteristic? Could culture

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and social capital be key codes for development and integration process in Latin America? These are some of the questions we will try to study in this paper, but we will propose as Dosenrode (2008) does saying that “The working hypothesis is that shared core and manifest cultures are important for the success of regional integration project, especially if they aim at constructing state-like entities” (Dosenrode, 2008: 1).

1. Understanding culture and identity

Asked about his belief on Latin American identity at the beginning of the century, Gilberto Giménez said in Puebla city, Mexico, on October 7, 2003, that such identity does not exist; he thinks that such a concept was so diluted that what mattered at the moment is rather to seek the strength of regional identities in all their rich diversity. On the other hand, Nestor Garcia Canclini in his book entitled *Latinoamericanos buscando lugar en este siglo* (Garcia C., 2002) begins by stating that “when exploring the possible common traits in these countries, what stand are the differences” (ibid: 11). And he reaffirms in other parts of the same book: “even if ones and others are in the same plane, the curtains are more robust than the affinities” (Idem: 24), concluding that “this multi-diversity, more complex, demands us to speak in other ways about what can bind us together” (idem: 25).

Both authors are right when they draw attention to the false pretense of homogeneity in Latin American identity and when we experience that the strength of our culture has not been able to produce an acceptable level of development for the majority of the population. However, we think that in the diversity of what Latin America is we can find something that we can call social capital existing in our region and that can be considered at the present moment, as Bernardo Kliksberg says, one of the forgotten keys for development.

Certainly we have to rescue that both Gimenez and Garcia Canclini remain deeply concerned with passionate look at what that common geographical space means where so many diversities coalesce; they wonder about a project in the future where it is not the negative (wrapped in poverty, debt, migration, etc.) what defines us but the wish of a better model that today we can only anticipate in our imagination. However, their positions are certainly different from, for example, the extremist thought of Guillermo Cabrera Infante, for whom the name of Latin America represents an extraordinary ridiculous because he thinks there is nothing in common between Cubans and Mexicans, Venezuelans and Chileans, etc. (Cabrera, in Marras 1992: 69); Juan Carlos Onetti could fit on the same position, because he says that the name of

Latin America is nothing more than a simple matter of geography but do not reflect any kind of identity. We are far away from this positions.

In contrast, we should mention a large number of thinkers for whom the very name reflects a deep historical tradition, an expression of common features and the possibility of a common project. For example, Mario Vargas Llosa speaks about Latin America as a name that “responds to a reality of a historical nature, cultural, geographical, a very complex reality, very diverse, with a mosaic in which diversity it is as important as the common denominator” (Vargas Llosa, in Marras, 1992: 99). Octavio Paz also said something similar: Latin America is “a society of societies in a huge territory surrounded by other communities, all in motion. A society is a culture: a set of individuals, things, institutions, ideas, traditions and images. A reality sui generis, because it is not wholly material or ideal. Latin America is a culture” (Paz, en Marras, 1992: 467-8).

We have then a series of very complex conceptual problems when we want to think about the culture and identity of Latin America, and much more when we want to relate them with development and integration processes in history coming since the nineteenth century, going throughout the last century of the second millennium and that have grown considerably in the transition to the twenty-first century.

Can culture and identity be considered alternatives in order to face the challenges of human development in our Latin American region? Having an affirmative answer to this question is the assumption of this work, understanding, first, that culture and identity can bring fundamental elements to our own integration projects, especially considering the concept of “social capital” which is already used and accepted by international organizations like the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) itself.

In many sources like Teixeira Coelho (2000), we have clearly several ways to look at culture. First and attending to the original sense that gave the Roman thinker Cicero to this concept, there is a tendency to conceive culture as a process of cultivation of the mind or of the spirit, where culture can be defined as the search of spiritual development of human being. For Cicero, the culture meant the act to incorporate “a treasure of knowledge transmitted by education... The man obtains a higher form of social and individual identity” (Thorn, 1976: 77). This is the first meaning: accumulation of know-how about the history of society that give us an identity to human beings in the community through education; many citizens could have not this kind of knowledge. This

first conception relates to the content of the term “proposed by Kant, for whom the last purpose of the mankind, therefore, the purpose of nature, is culture: the setting of supreme wisdom” (Texeira Coelho, 2000: 122): the man knows where he comes from and where he must go.

But also, we are able to track a second concept of culture, during the Illustration time in Europe in the 18th century, when a group of enlightened men –as the ones that participated in the Encyclopedia project with Diderot and D’Alambert- wanted to imagine culture as a liberating force, with the ideas of the new liberalism versus the alienating power of religion and against the absolutist thought. Then, we can think of culture as an opportunity of changes in the future in front of the present situation we want to modify. The individual culture can be related to the wisdom of the social environment. “The cultural process can not be separated from the social context in which it takes place ... The discussion coming at the beginning of the Enlightenment on the possibilities of the human being understood as active and autonomous, and therefore capable of becoming an actor, dominated the further development of the concept of culture” (Thorn, 1976: 78). The phenomenon of Enlightenment took the concept of culture into other areas, as described by Johan Christoph Adeling in 1782 as follows: “Culture spans the ennoblement or refinement of all the vital forces of a human being or of an entire people, so that this word encompasses both the illustration, the ennoblement of understanding by releasing prejudice, as the polish, ennoblement and refinement of manners” (Adeling, quoted by Thorn, 1976: 82). In fact, the concept of the Enlightenment acquired the trait of a political project by emphasizing the culture of citizens against absolutist states, especially in the sense that the culture could not be simply ordered by authorities. We should say that “culture is turned into a concept-goal, with emancipatory political accent, which does not yet prevail, although it persists virtually!” (Thorn, 1976: 82).

Kant said that culture could have a normative ethical trait, because it was an ideal; we have to aspire for it; we have to fight for it, anticipating that collective imagination of a community, in contrast to the empirical reality of the present; but that imagination becomes a transforming force of reality itself. The culture then also becomes an ideal to which we aspire through human actions. This was also the proposal of Friedrich Schiller (in his text *On the aesthetic education of man*) because the social situation is always an antagonism of forces where there are unsatisfactory cultural approaches to the proposed ideal. “Culture ... is then faced with the task of reconciling in the man himself these mutually hostile powers, blinding and solvents” (Thorn, 1976: 84).

People are conditioned by contradictory social forces, but the intellect (reason and sense) can have autonomy with a self-determining force to move humans from one situation to another; culture can then become a political project and, in our case, a Latin American alternative development and integration project.

Nevertheless, subsequently the concept of culture was expanded to other dimension; Thorn said that a community has its particular ways of living, which can make this one different from other societies (Thorn; 1976: 77). Culture can be understood as the way of being that characterizes people living in one community in its total dimension (Texeira Coelho, 2000: 120). Then, according to these authors, we are saying that communities, societies and groups go responding in different forms to their own needs or symbolic desires, and because of it there is a network of meanings expressed in the arts (literature, painting, etc.), in the way of dressing, behavior, holidays, consumption, contact, etc. We can understand culture, thus, “in the sense of a system of meanings related to the symbolic representation of the conditions of existence in every community” (Texeira Coelho 2000: 121). Perhaps this way to understand culture is the one that has been best-known due to the preference among the anthropologists since the 19th century, seeking the common characteristic in economic, political and social level, that would be able to define the community life in every case. Each nation has its own culture; besides, there can be even local and regional cultures.

Trying to include some elements from several authors and specially quoting Geert Hofstede, “Culture could be defined as the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to its environment. Culture determines the identity of a human group in the same way as personality determines the identity of an individual” (Hofstede, quoted in Dosenrode, 2008: 2). We include then the sense of *Cultura Animi* from Cicero, the transforming force of present reality through a collective imaginary and the ways of living in some particular communities by an identity in their historical context.

2. Discussing social capital

We want to give attention to the sense Carlos Fuentes has formulated when saying that “culture is the answer to the challenges of existence” in his book *The Buried Mirror*, published on the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America. In this book, he wanted to present all the cultural richness of Latin Americans who have a kind of collective capital we can use to face the main economic and political problems

we suffer. And this meaning is directly related to the theoretical concept of “social capital”, which has been discussed in the social sciences in recent decades, linking it directly with the issue of development.

It is said that the first to use this concept of social capital was a supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, L. J. Hanifan, in 1916, who sought the active participation of the community in order to have successful schools. Hanifan concept was referring to the goodwill, friendship, sympathy, the social relationship between individuals and families that make a community; the individual alone can not do much, but if it comes into contact with neighboring groups makes an accumulation of capital, which would satisfy their social needs but that also has a potential burden to improve the living conditions of the entire community; this benefits from the cooperation of all its parts while the individual takes the advantages of the social relationship of its neighbors. However, no one took up the concept at that time and disappeared to be resumed in the second half of the twentieth century.

The current concept has its roots in the anthropological work of Raymond Firth (1961), George Foster (1961), Marcel Mauss (1966), Larissa Lomnitz (1975), Lourdes Arispe (1979), and also in the urbanist Jane Jacobs and the economist Glenn Loury ... who pointed forms of survival of social groups through networks of reciprocity and exchange of assistance, particular forms of local organization taking place in many areas of social life, and that operate based on trust and solidarity of social groups. But using the concept of social capital was deepened and expanded significantly in the last two decades of the twentieth century, where we find Pierre Bourdieu as one of the main creators of its content. It is a resource based on certain social relations of a group, commonly accepted through an implicit acknowledgment that produce a facilitating network of more or less permanent actions in the functioning of the community. This cultural network becomes productive element; without it, the survival of the group could be hard because they can not get certain economic and political purposes. This capital may be personal in the sense that an individual has the know-how to cope and gain many resources in the specific environment of a community, or it may be collective insofar that certain groups are organized to achieve their goals through such networks of solidarity and reciprocity. With this capital -which is not learned in formal education but is the result of a particular context of an individual or group- can enhance the private effectiveness but also constitutes a collective good.

Bourdieu, with the publication of his article *The Forms of Capital* in 1983, identified more accurately

three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social, giving great importance to the last two because in the society not everything can be measured immediately by empirical money. Bourdieu defines social capital as “the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual recognition” (Bourdieu 1986: 248), and this may be related to an individual, to a family or to an interconnected group. Social capital, then, can be embedded in the individual (and becomes habitus), may be embodied in cultural goods group (books, texts, paintings, tools .. .), and can also become institutionalized academic credentials recognized by the community. With Bourdieu, then, the notion of capital expands, from the economic (the traditional perspective of Marx) to the non-economic (political, cultural, social) in the exchange of intangible assets, also using the term symbolic capital. The three levels are subject to multiple exchanges, although in the latter two we can not make always meticulously recorded transactions.

Another author who tried to explicitly define this concept was the sociologist James S. Coleman (1990), who spoke thus about the cultural resources of an individual or group; without them, the survival or the attainment of certain objectives are not achieved; it is the social integration of an individual or group, that, through social contacts, generates behaviors that are recognized in order to perform certain actions which then also require reciprocity. For the group capital, keep in mind that common interests and social values are shared in some degree. For “Coleman, social capital is presented both individually and collectively. The first has to do with the degree of social integration of an individual and with his network of social contacts; involves relationships, expectations of reciprocity, reliable behaviors. Private effectiveness improves, but it is also a collective good. For example, if everyone in a neighborhood guard unspoken rules as caring for others or non-aggression, children will walk to school safely, and the social capital will be producing public order” (Kliksberg, 2000: 9).

“Both Bourdieu and Coleman refer to social capital as an attribute of social groups, institutions and communities, taking into account that the role of social institutions in its creation is important. Therefore, it can be said that both authors are expressing for the first time- and relatively detailed and complete- the concept of social capital; because the anthropological works that preceded them, although contributed with elements for building the concept, they did not introduce it in the currently known terms” (Mota Diaz, 2002: 42)

However, it is also necessary to recognize the important contribution of Robert Putnam in this discussion, particularly when the issue of capital is linked with development issues. He offers the following definition: the “features of social organization such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit ... Working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial outlay of social capital” (Putnam, 1993: 67). In this definition it exists some degree of trust between social groups, moving from the local to the national level, where networks between citizens allow the achievement of several goals through constant participation. With much concern, Putnam, analyzing the American society, observed a collapse in the share capital of this country (breakdown of family networks, friends, neighbors and democratic structures), which is very worrying for the future. In fact, his book *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000) wants to present in fact a decisive struggle in the cultural sphere as indeed offers the option of reviving such capital as one option for avoiding collapse of American civilization; the key alternative for society should be in the civil, political and religious participation of citizens, in the network of formal and informal at the workplace, on altruism, philanthropy, connections on reciprocity, honesty and trust among community members. The main emphasis is on the assertion that social ties in the community are the most important for a human development indicator.

This also leads to the thesis of Bernardo Kliksberg, for whom social capital and culture are the forgotten keys when we think about the development; he moves away from the traditional economic thinking where the main indicator was the economic growth of a nation and the material resources available available for individuals. In culture, we find a series of values, customs, ideas, ... which form the identity of social groups, which becomes the decisive factor of social capital. We need to see how “various non-visible components of the everyday functioning of a society, which have to do with the situation of their basic social fabric silently affect the possibilities of growth and development” (Kliksberg, 2000: 6). Such components may be cooperation, confidence, ethnicity, identity, friendship, etc. within various social groups, which become not only additional elements to consider in the development model but become crucial with respect to the final goals.

The social capital and culture have become a key factor in the development debate. “Individuals, families, groups are social capital and culture essentially. They carry cooperative attitudes, values, traditions, visions of reality, which are their identity. If this is ignored, misunderstood or deteriorated, there will be barred important

capabilities applicable to development, and unleash powerful resistances. If, on the contrary, it is recognized, explored, valued and enhanced, its contribution can be very significant and can encourage some virtuous circles in other dimensions of development” (Kliksberg, 2000: 8).

In fact, the World Bank has explicitly incorporated the concept when speaking about the recognized forms of capital: first there is the natural capital, which refers to the material resources of a specific country; there is also the built capital, which is generated or built by humans in order to produce infrastructure and trade; there is also the human capital, which is determined by the levels of nutrition, health and education of a specific population; and there is also the social capital conceived as the ways of associativity and behavior characteristic in one community. On the latter, it has been admitted its potential both to avoid potential conflicts and also for the attainment of objectives linked to regional development. Meanwhile, Adela Cortina¹ resumed the same rating of four categories of capital, emphasizing the key role of social capital in the contemporary world when we speak about the confidence level, the civic behavior, the associational networks, values, etc. in order to build “a counterfactual anticipation” of the project we want for the world.

In a chronological perspective, the social capital can be reduced, destroyed, strengthened or expanded; it is necessary to propose strategies for caring it and making evolve. Somehow, Putnam fundamental questions about the social capital in North America are very disturbing because they refer to a process of decline and decay: why is social capital declining? Why in the last two or three decades, you may notice a decrease in solidarity behavior of Americans and their sense of a connectedness group? Why Americans have fallen socializing with their neighbors? Thus, if we apply the concept to any other country and region, we should make an analysis of the historical context of a community identity that is rooted in its own history, that has been changing over time (positive or negative), and on which one can raise a collective imaginary for the future in an ideological-cultural struggle.

Conceptually we have to admit that social capital, understood in the way Putnam does (individual or group qualities which are expressed in social networks and norms of reciprocity and trust), can not always be regarded positively, because its use can be exploited not

1 Adela Cortina is a Spanish philosopher who has oriented her wisdom into ethics. Her words quoted here are from her conference in Puebla, Mexico, on October 8, 2003.

only for the community development but also for the private interests of individuals and groups. In real life, there are social networks of trust and reciprocity that are used also by groups dedicated to crime, corruption or drug trafficking activities which in turn undermine development trends. The activity of many mafias in several countries primarily rely on these types of networks, which are precisely their social capital giving them effectiveness in their actions. Then, like any form of capital, social may also have an anti-social and anti-communitarian use, which is precisely what Putnam refers when speaking about “the dark side of the social capital” (Putnam, 2000: chapter 22); this greatly has been occasion to criticize his optimism about the potential contribution to development since it also has its negative side and can also be an element of social control (cf. Putzel., 1997; Portes, 1996). Trying to have a more decisive approach to the vision we have on Latin America, we will try to think about the identity issue.

At the beginning we noted the still ongoing debate about Latin American identity in which Gilberto Gimenez and Nestor Garcia Canclini do not have trust because this region can be rather a geographical space where many identities coexist. But the fear about speaking of common identity that could homogenize a diverse world is exaggerated; just remember the work of Sergio Marras (1992), who made many qualitative interviews to famous writers as Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Adolfo Bioy Caseres, René Depestre, Arturo Uslar Pietri..., who largely recognized Latin America as a concept, despite being the word a French invention, because in the history of nineteenth and twentieth century in our region it has become a registered trademark. In the literature world, at least, we can start saying that there is empirically an internal and external recognition on the Latin American identity. If we turn to the world of politics and economy, it is also clear that we see a set of peoples recognized by that name; there are also among governments official delegates designated for and from this region; there are official meetings, for example, between Europe and Latin America; the UN have always economic indicators by ECLAC for the entire region. Specifically in the academic world there are numerous centers of Latin American studies both in America and in Europe; particularly within the United States there can be found associated with universities around 700 centers dedicated to analyzing the economic, political and cultural problems of Latin America. In this regard, we are certainly talking about a geographical area where many regional and local identities coexist, but it is recognized a common identity after the Spanish conquest, with the Spanish predominant language in most countries and cultural traits.

If we recognize the identity as the expression of a common culture, we have indisputably recognize that Latin America exists; this does not mean that culture is homogenous and that local and regional differences disappear, or that Latin America is reduced to the geographical space, because the concept already goes beyond the borders of our countries.

Gilberto Gimenez, although he recognizes the sensitivity of the concept of identity in social sciences and its dangerous use politically because of some fundamentalist nationalisms, he says that “despite everything, it remains an essential notion in the social sciences, not only because it has come to strengthen the theory of the actor, social action and particularly communicative action, but also because it can recover, a little in the back door, the notion of culture” (Gimenez, 2000: 28). With this clarification, he proposes a definition that we can share: “I understand here by identity the set of internalized cultural repertoires (representations, values, symbols...) through which the social actors (individual or collective) symbolically demarcate their borders and are distinguished from the other actors in a given situation, all this in historically specific and socially structured contexts” (Idem: 28). These cultural repertoires that can exist at local, regional, national or transnational level; all this do not necessarily mean homogenization or that differences can disappear. It is a sense of collective belonging to an imagined community where being Latin American does not prevent either being from Chile or Mexico; being mexican does not preclude being from Zacatecas or Jalisco; being from Jalisco does not prevent being tapatio or coastal, etc. In this perspective, they can perfectly coexist different identities, and in our particular case, the particular question is about the importance of the Latin American in the great diversity of countries, regions and localities.

3. Latin American culture and identity

Do we then still have a symbolic-cultural repertoire as social capital that can drive us to overcome underdevelopment situations we experience in our countries? Our answer is yes. Because we are talking about a common history that gives us a huge social capital to build our own historical project.

In the process of our societies, we can also say that “identities are unavoidable and concomitant to the very existence of the human being” (Valenzuela, 2000: 17), and are based on the practices of everyday life where the family, the dwelling place, the workplace, the historical conditions, the access to the media, etc. are mixed. Social groups in a city are delimited by their group identities

that help them in survival and in dealing with other social groups. But we must also emphasize that identities vary in the history of an individual or group; they are not monolithic; the time can lead to forget the old and familiar cultural repertoires and assimilate others to become another type of personalities. Therefore, it is possible to construct a range of possibilities in imaginary identities that can become symbolic pacts for groups and individuals through a social practice, where they can develop and articulate multiple cultural and political projects. “From the magic wide range of collective identities were born groups, ethnicities, nationalities, nation states, social movements, alternative cultures, etc.” (Valenzuela, 2000: 18). The collective imaginary, then, may be able to build a new society, because it produces a commitment to fight: “This idea takes to the level of foreshadowing and to the possibility of imagining alternative social projects. The commitment is a life project; It bets for the possibility of constructing an imagined future: a new reality” (François Dubet, quoted in Valenzuela, 2000: 19).

The Latin American culture has consolidated its identity during the XXth century, not only in the internal recognition of the population of many countries, looking now for the integration of this part of the American continent, but also by the vision from outside. Consulting again the work of Sergio Marras (1992) with the title *Latin America, a registered tradename mark*, we see how many Latin American writers speak on the culture of the region, mentioning how a historical identity has been acquired and recognized anywhere in the world.

Nevertheless, in many occasions, mainly inside of our nations, it can be also emphasized the diversity and even the confrontation among regional identities, setting up many obstacles to the contemporary processes of integration. In the Central American countries, for example, although a process of regional integration goes in march with the Central America Integration System (SICA), with historical roots during the time of the Central American common market in the 60s, nobody still does not forget the terrible differences, not only in the cultural scope, but also conflicts of territorial limits between Guatemala and Belize, between Honduras and El Salvador, between Guatemala and Honduras, between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, like either the common denominations (nicknames) that, at many moments, they are used in an odd way like “chapines”, “guanacos”, “catrachos”, “ticos”, etc. In other South American countries, also there are historical memories of confrontation as it happened with the Pacific war during the XIXth century between Peru, Chile and Bolivia.

Why many countries of the American Continent have taken the name of Latin America as a symbol of their identity? One reason is the process of our history: beginning certainly by the Spanish language (and including the Portuguese) and in spite of the enormous geographic distance, the people of this region was identified in a common understanding; we are melted in some sameness, unity, identity. A very particular phenomenon has been carried out also when millions of people have penetrated in the USA and they can communicate among themselves, although they are from different places: Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, etc. They tend to communicate easily and they tend to gather together geographically in common places in order to survive in front of the Anglo culture with a different language. The concept *Latin America* has become a loaded cultural concept of history even inside of the United States and other countries.

We are taking the concept of Latin American culture, following an anthropological vision where the culture is defined like everything what the men learn to do as members of their society, through the shared knowledge, abilities, sense of expectancy and common understandings with others of their group, in this case, of the assembly of countries in the American continent speaking Spanish and Portuguese. It is a social result, brought and maintained by the communication and the learning of several centuries and that began to have its development since the times of the colony in America under the Spaniards.

If we want to track the name of America we have no difficulty in finding its protagonist, the Italian Americo Vespuccio, few years after the discovery of a new land by Christopher Columbus in 1492; Columbus had discovered the land but believing that he has arrived to the distant East of China; otherwise, Vespuccio named the new continent as *Mundus Novus*². During the time of the colonial period since the discovery, the conquest of Mexico and Peru, all this earth conquered by the Iberians was called many times *New Spain*, like a symbol of possession. Nevertheless, with the independence movement, Simón Bolívar tried to make his dream real though a union of republics; it was the project of the great American mother country, the union of the Hispano-American nations, that had to face the new challenges:

2 The German cartographer monk Martin Walseemüller at the beginning of the XVI century tried to put a name to this *Mundus Novus* according to the man who thought it as a new land, Americo Vespuccio. In his map *Universalis Cosmographia* in 1507, we find for the first time the word America, bestowed in honor to Vespuccio.

in one side, his just gained independence in relation to Spain and Europe and; on the other side, the relation with North America and the dangers of the *Manifest Destiny*, that already had been processed in 1823 in the North American government with the Monroe doctrine. With Bolivar, it was the word *Hispanoamérica* that symbolized the new identity.

Certainly, the dream of Bolivar failed as it was expressed in the failure of the continental meeting of Panama in 1826, but the rising identity of the so called Hispano-American countries did not disappear with the dispersion in multiple republics. The concept began to have a multinational acceptance at the end of the XIXth century and also during the XXth century, because the word *Latin America* was indeed a concept used for the first time in France in 1839 and soon it was brought by the French when Maximilian von Habsburg tried to organize an empire in Mexico.

If we paid attention to the original sense, the word Latin does not agree perfectly with our history, because it specifically talks about the use of the Latin language; such language was used by the Roman empire that, mainly in the days of Julius Caesar, was extended today until the land of Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Minor Asia, Palestine, Egypt and many regions of North Africa. Such language was used in the territories conquered by the Romans, where certainly Spain was one of them. Even nowadays, many of the nations conquered by the old Roman empire are called Latin nations, in contrast to some languages of the so called Anglos in north-Europe. By initiative of the French in the XIXth century, all the inhabitants of the old colonies of Spain and Portugal began to be called Latin. Many writers in the new independent nations accepted also the concept but with two words: Latin America.

In second half of the XIXth century, a symbol of the cultural identity was indeed the name Latin America; in this concept, the population of the continent included all the regions undergone by the Spanish and Portuguese colonization, where the greatest mixture of races in the modern history had been made, a mixture among Indians, blacks and whites, opposed all to the English-speaking culture of North America, specially when the United States government, with president Monroe, raised the motto of the *Manifest Destiny* in 1823, whose doctrine was ratified in real life with president Polk, later in 1848, snatched big part of the Mexican territory.

Originally then, the concept of *Latin America* came from France, with the Maximilian imperial project in Mexico that lasted from 1862 to 1865; the unification of

Hispano-America was intended to be the ideological point of view against the North American government, having the influence from France. Nevertheless, the emperor Maximilian was defeated by Benito Juárez in Mexico and his political project failed; not therefore the cultural vision of Latin America, concept that prevailed and that had been invented by Michel Chevalier (1806-1879), adviser of Maximilian von Habsburg, to justify French expansionism. The name Latin America began to gain consensus in the academic market of literature in the continent; this word began to be considered like a symbol of the cultural identity of all the people speaking Spanish and Portuguese in the American continent; thus it began to be recognized so much in the diplomatic language among the countries as in the common language of the inhabitants.

The Latin American vision began to be expressed in books and magazines. The Colombian thinker Jose Maria Caicedo Torres repeatedly used this expression of Latin America in 1861, trying to create a union of Latin American countries; in Paris, for example, he published his book titled *Latin American Union*, where we found for the first time the concept applying to the identity of all these countries. Later, another writer, Eugenio Maria de Hostos (1839-1903), from Puerto Rico, published an article in 1874, also using the same concept: "despite the efforts delivered by some Latin American writers and by the author of this article, reinforced by the authority of the Geographic Society of New York, the collective name of Colombia still does not prevail whereupon they have wanted to distinguish the Latinos of the new continent from the Anglo people from America. As much it is managed to establish the difference definitively, it is good for adopting for the South Continent and Central America, Mexico and the Antilles, the collective name that we give here of neo-Latin... or the one of Latin American that I use for the inhabitants of the new world, which they come from the Latin race and the Iberian" (Hostos, quoted in UNAM, 1986: 53).

Since then until the present moment, the word has prevailed in such a way that Carlos Fuentes, in the book *Buried Mirror*, published in Spanish in 1992, and talking about the 450 million people speaking Spanish and Portuguese living then in the continent, said that "there is not a single Latin American, from the Río Grande to the Cape Horn, who is not an heir to each and every aspect of our cultural heritage... Few cultures in the world possess a comparable richness and continuity" (Fuentes, 1999: 9-10).

According to this conception about this name as a collective imaginary, in the Latin American historical

process in the second half of the twentieth century, it revived also the concept of integration as a great opportunity to build a better development of the region. For many, this idea gathered the dreams of Francisco de Miranda about the “Gran Colombia” and Simon Bolivar’s “Gran Patria Americana (Great American homeland)” -a great republic or a union of republics-. This dream had failed miserably in the nineteenth century with the dispersion in many independent countries -and even faced ones against others. In fact, in the second half of the twentieth century and particularly in the 60s, the first integration agreements surged up with different interpretations: the Latin American Free Trade Alliance (ALALC), which later became the Latin American Integration Alliance (ALADI), and the Central American Common Market (MCC), which even had a period of stagnation and decline, have been reviewed and refocused in many perspectives (free trade agreements, customs unions, common market, economic union and even political integration: CARICOM, MERCOSUR, SICA, Andean Pact, etc.) to complete during the transition to the twenty-first century in two main directions: regional agreements between Latin American countries and the initiative of the Americas, which with a different name but the same perspective, produced a new sense of PanAmericanism led by the United States through the project of the Alliance for Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA/ALCA). But facing this projects also there have aroused other models coming from inside, without the presence of the United States: The common market of the South (MERCOSUR), The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and recently the Community of Latin American Nations and the Caribbean (CELAC); we will see in the futures if these efforts are able to build an autonomous integration.

Conclusion

Certainly, we must conclude, as Harrison and Huntigton (2000) does, that *Culture matters*. But we need to find a middle way between those who see the material infrastructure as the decisive factor determining society and those who considers culture as the primary one. We recognize that politics and economy are very important things, but in this text we tried to emphasize culture as the forgotten key to development and integration.

Watching the alternatives, when Nestor Garcia Canclini speaks about Latin Americans seeking a place in the XX century, he did not seem very optimistic: he notes that it “is not the best time of writing about Latin American integration. But exploring the potential of our joint

cultural practices can help us in order to imagine another way of globalizing” (Garcia, C., 2002: 106). However, he also added: “It’s not about believing that we can be saved by culture. You must write this word -the same as Latin American- with tiny modesty” (Idem, 2002: 107). García Canclini wants to be realistic when speaking about culture as one of several strategies that can strengthen our natural capital, increase the capital acquired, elevate our human capital and specially the social capital; but we think that we should fight to strengthen the latter in order to take out its full potential because we frequently forget that culture is a key word for development and integration. As Edgar Morin says: “Culture is, in short, what helps the spirit to contextualize, to globalize and to anticipate” (Morin, 1995: 47). It could be, in other words, the possibility of not accepting as fact the given reality of underdevelopment and the submission to the power of north American imperialism³, thinking that another development and integration model is possible out of the capitalism system.

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3 The situation is extremely complex because this continuous relation between Latin America and the United States is a permanent process of love and hate, as Carlos Rangel (1987) refers to us in his book *Latin Americans: Their love-hate relationship with the United States*. Hate comes from many historical facts, specially about military aggressions from diverse North American governments who have been inspired by the ideology of the *Manifest Destiny* of James Monroe or the *Big Stick* de Theodore Roosevelt; this type of political vision came to be the symbol of the abuse of power towards the Latin American countries, although at some moment Franklin Roosevelt has preferred a change in the relations through the politics with his motto *The Good Neighbor*. Nevertheless, also among the Latin Americans, it has been developed a relation of attraction and love towards North America and the standard of life of his population, towards the success of its economic growth contrasting the failure of the sub-development in the South; this is, for example, one of the main causes of the migration movements.

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