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WORKING PAPER SERIES

MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Material Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

This paper deals with culture and economic development. This connection only a few decades ago didn't much matter to the officials of national governments and international institutions. Culture was just a sign of civilization and the economic development was brought forth by planning investments in the industrial sector and enhancing regional institutional capacity (Lewis, 1954; Myrdal, 1957; Hirshman, 1958; Kuznets, 1966; Todaro and Smith, 2003). Nowadays culture is acknowledged as an asset to regional economies (World Bank, 1999; Throsby, 2000) and the road to the economic development goes also through localized industries made up of micro and small sized firms producing goods and services based on material culture and local traditions (Santagata, 2000). This new scenario of development is undoubtedly more respectful of the indigenous social values. As a matter of fact the geography of material culture shows a worldwide diffusion of great variety of regional handicraft products and defending material culture means consequently defending cultural diversity.

This paper will consider an old phenomenon through the lens of the economic discipline: it focuses on material culture. In the first part (section 2) some definitions of material cultural heritage are presented. In the second part (section 3) the main issues concerning the value chain of material cultural heritage will be discussed by comparing the experience of developing countries with two paradigmatic models, the first (HQM) is based on the production of art and design of high quality, the second (LCM) on the low cost production and counterfeiting of artisanal objects. In the third part (section 4) the two case studies of Pakistan and Ecuador will be discussed; this part will be aimed to analyze how can material cultural heritage be used as a strategic asset for sustainable economic development, especially for local communities.

2. Material, Tangible, and Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.1 The UNESCO definition

Inquiring into the relation between *material* culture and *endogenous* economic development is something new. It aims to show the economic value and the special economic organization for producing goods based on *material cultural heritage*, i.e. the special area bordering on *intangible-oral* and *tangible-natural cultural heritages*.