Cultural Collectives: A Commitment to Participation and Social Change from the Ecuadorian Communities

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Abstract: Facing the problem of the absence of an effective cultural management in the Azogues canton, province of Azuay, Ecuador, new forms of collective management have emerged. Thus, the so-called Cultural Collectives seek to enhance the singularities and the symbolic resources of the region, aiming to involve a whole plurality of agents, expressions and significances that support the identity of the community, the local and the regional singular aspects of it. ¿How to reach that goal? Only by generating new forms of cultural management and by thinking of strategic communication guidelines in order to achieve the active participation of all citizens.
Keywords: Cultural Collectives, Cultural Management, Strategic Communication, Identity, Participation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Relations between communication and culture are inherent to the sociality itself; as old as the matrices of civilizing meaning like the most ancestral and primitive traces and codes that could be evoked. And it turns out that man is first and foremost a subject of culture, and so, in order to fully cover this role, it is vital its active enrollment in all fronts in which plays, from the modern times, its condition as a social actor, of intellectual and civic commitment, as well as his hierarchy as a species.

Culture is also an extremely complex field that crosses, mediates and gives operational meaning to the symbolic universes (language, religion, art, aesthetics), through which man in society responds for the development that distinguishes him in each socio-historical period, therefore, culture is a canon and a frame of reference.

Culture is thus a foundational epistemic notion, and even from a more strategic sight, the basis from which individual, collective, group, local and national identities are affirmed in their constitutive complexity; it is a decisive experiential piece for the history and historiography, while memory is an active process of making culture; hence, any object of study that is defined in direct link with the cultural field, is legitimate and peremptory.

According to French critical sociology of the last decades of the past century, and properly from the cultural fields theoryset by Pierre Bourdieu, the social analysis acquires punctual value if proper emphasis is given to the relations of power underpinning the functioning and the ideological and social reproduction, thus it is crucial understanding the cultural field also as a field of forces, its actors as agents struggling for a specific power, the symbolic one, and the intellectual capital as the per excellence strategic resource which is managed in this social field.

Although many cultural agendas have been instituted in recent decades as fields of study of full interest for sciences studying society and its processes and phenomena, universities and postgraduate studies; the area of dialogue that this research aims to, becomes particularly important in countries seeking to strengthen the processes of management and cultural institutionalism, while aware of the complexity, adversities, and multiple mediations that such pathsare facing.

This preamble as a way of generalization, will make it possible to understand and legitimize the urgency and pertinence of questioning, from the standpoint of scientific research, of a theoretical-applied nature, certain linkages that do or do not occur within the cultural field, in this case between institutions endorsed in the Ecuador's cultural policies; assuming communication as a driving force, not from an instrumental dimension but from its strategic aspect, which is, a communication for social change, for the empowerment of actors, for participation in favor of the most humanistic and democratic rights, and the proper inclusion of citizens as a collective and cultural subjects.

Thus, the critical-interpretative review of the articulations between a new type of strategical communication and cultural management in public service institutions, such as theHouses of Culture in Ecuador, provides meaning to this analysis, not to be understood as a mere diffusionist process, but to be seen as a strategic scenario also, from which the participation of citizens and the community is actively encouraged through the uses, consumption, interactions, creation of meanings and significance towards the preservation of the endogenous cultural/patrimonial values that make it unique, and always seen as part of their daily life experiences.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study of qualitative type, privileged the analysis-synthesis method, the ethnographic observation as well as the inductive method. The study was carried out in a specific community, the territory of Azogues, province of Azuay, Ecuador, and the diverse typologies of cultural agents/actors, which are articulated from House of Culture, forming part of it, or even in a parallel scenario, as part of an insufficiently recognized and endorsed cultural management, from the figure of the Cultural Collectives.

Therefore, the general methodology followed was addressed through:

- The analysis of the cultural management in the canton of Azogues and the emergence of cultural collectives in the year of 2017, right after the promulgation of the Communication and Culture Laws of in Ecuador, among formal groups ascribed to the Ministry of Culture who operate informally through social networks.
- The examination of the exercise of the cultural rights granted by the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, the Culture Act and the Communication Act, seen in interpretative coordination by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, journalists, educators, community groups, actors and cultural managers in general (semi-structured interviews).
- The analysis of the messages disseminated on social media platforms such as Facebook, used by the cultural collectives providing information about the quality and relevance of the cultural contents and social, cultural and communicational effects they might produce.
- In-depth documented interviews on the direct experiences of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, educators.
- Analysis of the results/debates of the "First National Meeting of Cultural Management 2018", "The National Social Dialog for Culture", and the "International Meeting of Cultural Rights and Cities 2018: analysis of the Culture Plan towards 2030 ".

III. BODY

The Ecuadorian culture from a contemporary approach

The South American nation has a strong regulatory framework in the field of culture, as well as structures holding a systemic approach at a national level, although this is not enough, since this is only the platform on which cultural management must be articulated and projected, at a decentralized level, and in observance of the particularities, complexities and demands of each province/territory.

In this context two decisive concepts stand out: strategic communication and cultural management.

The notion of **strategic communication** has emerged with great force in the last five years, claimed by a large group of Latin American authors among which Argenti (1996), Massoni (2008) and Uranga (2007) stand out and from where special value is given to the communicative process understood as a collective interaction for the symbolic construction of new and effective cultural meanings in the task of agreeing on lines of action and organizational synergies. That is why it is postulated as an organizational episteme, as a set of processes of institutional or corporate nature from which the group involved has an ethical framework, a set of principles and an integrated system of solutions for the approach, management and communicative direction of a given organization; also enunciated as a territory of links between theory and action, the simplicity and the complexity, the individual with the collective and the general with the particular.

Regarding **cultural management**, from a holistic approach, research prescribes it as the set of processes and actions of institutional nature, focused on the promotion, participation and cultural initiatives of citizens, based on the full exercise of cultural rights for the responsible consumption of goods and services. It includes the management of symbolic/intangible and tangible resources thatcontribute to the full enjoyment of the Ecuadorian culture in all its diversity of expressions, under principles of recognition of interculturality and multi ethnicity appreciation, in the frameworkof public cultural policies in Ecuador.

It should be remarked that authors such as Arroyo, Barbero, Banus in Cañola, García, Guevara, Malo, Ulloa, Manrique (2016) and Jaron Rowan have theorized that culturalmanagement is the professional (and institutional) work of those who bring culture into contact with society in terms of the feeling of living in a region that has a great diversity and cultural wealth, despite the lack of cultural heritage management for economic, communicational and human development.

It is then, that from the conceptual rationalities described above, the present research defines:

The Strategic Communication for cultural management is thus conceived as a set of processes of an institutional or corporate nature that predefine an ethical framework for action, a set of principles and an integrated system of solutions for the approach and communication-cultural management, as a tool for intervention in institutions whose social and public goal is to make, promote and foster artistic, aesthetics and heritage culture, for the strengthening of the Ecuadorian identity.

This communication is therefore committed to the dialogueof social, regional and local culture with the actors that the organization should benefit from, through the recognition and the exercise of cultural rights, interacting with public authorities, through the different entities and organizations in order topoint out their faculties and obligations regarding to culture in all its expressions and thus in those of an artistic, patrimonial or identity nature, admitting with transversal interest the realities of multiculturalism and interculturality.

Cultural collectives: an institutional commitment to participatory culture

Facing the issue of the absence of effective cultural management in the Azogues canton, a territory with a long history of interculturality, which is systemic and reticular, with a truly democratizing scope of culture, are estimated then new forms of collective management.

Today, more than ever, as a response to these institutional issues, Cultural Collectives appear as an alternative of freedom and cultural management, which in this case are groups of young people, professionals and members of civil society, "who share (…) values necessarily linked to the best of the human being: the ability to serve and the commitment to facilitate their communities to exercise their cultural rights (…)" (Mac Gregor, 2013: 30).

The research starts from important premises: to make cultural management supported by communication a pillar of action for the participation of the diverse cultural collectives for the integral development of the province. Secondly, it analyzes the constitutional regulations and laws on culture and communication in the exercise of cultural rights in Ecuador. Thirdly, it studies the processes of construction of the Cañari[1] identity and interculturality and the cultural heritage in order to understand the processes of formation of the cultural collectives from an anthropological point of view. Furthermore, it exteriorizes the situation of cultural and communicational isolation in the southern region with reflections for the social change. Finally, it considers communication and development as a transforming effect in cultural management through a proposal of clear cultural policies and processes of democratization from the transformation of civic behavior to conform a pedagogy of coexistence.

Cultural collectives: a starting point

Cultural management should be understood as the sum of the activities that, within the framework of public policies make possible the recognition and exercise of cultural rights and at the same time determine the obligation of the public authorities through the different entities and agencies mentoned, admitting with transversal interest the realities of multiculturalism and interculturality.

This is why Enrique Banús (2013, in Cañola, 2013), and in this same conceptual field, Manrique (2016) warned that cultural management is the professional work of those who put culture in contact with society in terms of the feeling of living in a region that has a great diversity and richness of culture. As well as Jaron Rowan, researcher and cultural promoter, said:

"In Ecuador cultural movements have coexisted for decades, (…), such as those that are now part of the Cultura Libre Comunitaria movement (…), the State does not consider forms of social organization without party mediation or recognizable structures in its norms, when nowadays thinking about the collective invites us to talk about less rigid, horizontal, unstable communities (Rowan, 2017, in Vega, Sunday, September 17th, 2017: 85).

It is clear that the cultural management in Ecuador (…), suffers from a precarious limit. This is due to the fact that the profession of "*cultural manager*", which is already relatively new and widespread throughout the world, it is not disconnected from the [labor] market, very [unstable] in the country, so that in Ecuador "(…) *There are no resources for the culture*" (Cabrero, 2013: 20).

The history of humanity is filled with examples that show us that (…), it has been the will, the ambition and the struggle (…) (Gabiña, 1999 in Uranga, 2007:20).

A transcending fact and example for newest generations is and has been the "cultural sacking of Latin America," with the well-known ethnocide and premeditated memorycide to mutilate the historical memory and attack the fundamental basis of the identity of their peoples"(Flower, 2006 in Baez, 2008: 324), where 60% of the tangible and intangible heritage of the region was lost, and yet the majority of their people thrived and recovered their

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[1] Cañari: a pre-hispanic culture settled down and thrived in the provinces of Cañar and Azuay, southern Ecuador.

heritage, identity and culture, as San Francisco de Peleusí de Azogues, capital of the Province of El Cañar and parish of the Azogues Canton did. This region has a historical memory of centuries and its roots are immemorial: starting back in the time when the famous cañaris –who formed an important "prehispanic nation"- inhabited this region.

Under that historical perspective of the canton, many cultural groups emerged in the 90sof the past centuries that today we call cultural collectives (…) (Uranga 2007: 20). It is possible to estimate then a concept of collective, which is understood "as the collective, the idea of individuals gathering together who become aware of the convenience of their understanding and assume it as a way to reach a purpose, which may be simple to survive" (Delgado, 2008, in Pereira and Cadavid, 2011, p. 315)

All this, immersed in the "globalization processes (that) remarks the modern interculturality when creating global markets of material goods (…) and appropriateforms of productive communicational hybridization, and in the styles of consumption than those set in the past " (Garcia, 2007: 23).

Currently, the collectives are precisely a counter proposal that allows people making their voice heard, to listen to others and to share activities in a dynamic way thus, the collectives are indispensable in the process of humanizing, because the local, the transcendent is what can be truly globalized. According to the Mexican conceptual artist Felipe Enrenberg, (2017), who used to believe in change, there are only a few selected groups strong enough to express "what they really are".

It is important to arrive at an analysisin which a comparison is made between two or more nations or groups of people, as we could do in view of the fact that there are no studies about cultural collectives, but rather in Mexico where there is extraordinary cultural activity, whose cultural collectives such the Network of Community Cultural Collectives of Tamaulipas, among them exist: The NODO Cultural Collectives of Saltillo, the Women's Collective, The Tepito Arte Acá Collective, with an ancestral cultural legacyproceeding from their originary/indigenous people (Red CCC Tamaulipas, 2014) and the appropriation of the media by the Youth Collectives of Medellin towards the construction of public policies that involve younger generations as citizens, promoting their modes of organization and cultural production as a manifestation of their own demands, desires and wishes (Uranga, 2014: 190), networks formed in cultural management, which in addition to being recognized in the CDMX[2]Constitution, have found a way to celebrate their multiethnic and multicultural diversity in the Festival of Indigenous Cultures, Peoples and Originary Tribes of Mexico City (FCIPBO-CDMX).

Another example that would make us rethink a new path towards the empowerment of cultural identity is Cuba, which in recent years has bet on education and culture, whose streets, cultural centers, museums and historical sites are the living manifestation of Cuban culture (M. Barbosa, personal communication, February 13th, 2018).

And in fact it becomes "necessary" to build a collective "we" in which the actors feel involved. We are not solving the problem or the problems of others, but our own problems even if we are not directly affected" (Uranga, 2007, p.20). The first task (…), is to empower the collectives in their communication and articulation skills, in order to allow them to be better located in the information systems network, a better performance in the intervention on the relatively closed social communication systems, like themselves (Galindo, May 23rd, 2016).

Constitutional regulations and laws on culture and communication in the exercise of cultural rights in Ecuador

In the Constitution of 2008, the State of Ecuador recognizes and guarantees the right of individuas to participate in the cultural life of the community.

The Article 377, Section Five, on culture states: "The national system of culture is intended to strengthen national identity, protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions" (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008: 7).

Without incurring in extensive interpretations, to tell a short fact on history in Ecuador, at the beginning of the year 2017, when took place the election process for the nomination of the new authorities of the House of Culture Benjamín Carrión[3], "Núcleo of Cañar" and to fulfill a proposal of the Ministry of Culture that worked in the execution of the Law of Culture (Organic Law of Culture, Art 10, 2016), was established that this regime aims to democratize access to quality artistic, cultural and patrimonial education, but that in practice, did not achieved such important goals, but rather became clear that even "the (cultural) institutions can maintain relations of power based on the domination they exercise over their subjects" (Castell, 2011: 33).

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[2] CDMX Constitution, the new Magnus Chartof Mexico City, the youngest in Latin America and the most progressive and innovative.
[3] House of Culture Benjamín Carrión "Núcleo from Cañar" a meeting point for the articulation of social and cultural processes in the province.

The issue of political culture in Ecuador has led to a debate and analysis on the validity of cultural rights that are restricted by ruling political groups, as noticed by Barbero 1999 in Ulloa 2007a: "[the] ambitions of economic power have turned culture into a means to achieve their goals" (p. 94).

On the other hand, in the canton of Azogues, province of El Cañar, unlike the province of Azuay[4], cultural activity has not managed to achieve broad citizen participation since the enactment of the Culture Law, where migration has allowed the leak of talents and cultural actors (Villareal, 2016).

In this canton, there is a long history of cultural clubs, but migration has disintegrated them (Parra, Cárdenas and Toledo, 2017), and later on there are others, whose cultural activities over time have remained inactive due to a lack of cultural policies.

On the other hand, cultural managers do not want to think beyond their own projects either, that is, they feel or are dissociated from public policies.

In Title I of the scope of the Organic Law of Culture and the Law of Communication also is determined the common responsibility in the development of its management (Organic Law of Communication 2013: 24), "since one of the ways to assume the communication as a fundamental part of the social being, implies the approach with the order, under an umbrella that implies the dialogue without limitations" (Ulloa, 2007b: 133).

From the experience in education, an important analysis of cultural policies is made "from the transformation of citizen behavior to conform a pedagogy of coexistence" (Torres, 2017: 22-23). It is therefore essential that educational institutions have teachers trained in different areas of culture, and not what happens in the current Ecuadorian education system, where the lack of planning, and resources, added to the lack of specialized teachers without knowing the importance of Artistic Education (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2017), "from the references offered by the environment and social relations that people maintain" (Martínez, 2008: 291), and consequently, the teachers who do not have a full hourly load are those designated to teach the subject.

As we have seen, the historical context in which the gradual recognition of successive generations of rights in the international order has taken place (…) the adoption of the Universal declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the recognition of civil and political rights and, later on, of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), has imposed the need to proclaim and recognize, both in international treaties and in the most recent constitutional texts, the so-called third generation rights, also called solidarity or people´s rights (Escudero, 2008a).

The first legal standards in the international field come from the 1996 International Pact of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Conference on Human Rights, in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 1993, which reaffirmed that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated (National Human Rights Commission, 2012), whose main mission is to ensure the dissemination of culture as an expression of human dignity (Arroyo, 2006: 270).

It is therefore clear that the "right to the communication and citizen´s rights, in a democratic society, are generating mutual conditions. There are no democratic societies without democratic communication and vice versa" (Uranga, 2014: 191).

Memory, heritage, identity and interculturality of the Cañari

"Cultural, social and community psychology studies the processes of construction of a person´s identity in relation to a social group. Cultural heritage forms the identity of the human being" (Ramírez, 2010a: 10-11).

To understand the processes of identity, within a social group it is important to refer the elements of culture (…), (thus), the Ayllu[5] for instance is understood as the fundamental organization for the conformation of the cultural identity "in which converge elements like: cosmo, clothing, language, cultural heritage, historical backgrounds, ecophysical environment (Ramírez, 2010b: 10-11).

Ecuador is a country with a diverse and extraordinary cultural richness and identity, in which indigenous cultures coexist, qualified as vernaculars[6] as Claudio Malo (2012) characterized them, such as some of the region of the Sierra, Coast and Amazon of Ecuador like the Cañaris, Otavalos, Awás, Tsáchilas, Záparos, Shuaras and Huaoranis, among others, where there is usually greater purity in the formsof life of ancestral elements: religion, medication, ideas about health and illness, conception of the family, food, distribution of wealth, language, in short, bearers of identities (Malo, 2012).

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[4] Azuay, according to Fr. Julio Maria Matovelle means: liquor rain from heaven. It is a cañari term, which separalety is understood like this: Azu: chichi or liquor; and the suffix ay, which means the above, the sky.

[5] Ayllu, the nucleus of the communes, geographical spaces Where human beings, plants and natural elements interact.

[6] Vernacle, that is to say original of the place unlike the popular.

"An example is the trial of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of the Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku versus the State of Ecuador" (IACHR, June 27th of 2012 Trial, Series C, No. 245, paragraph 217), which considered that the right to cultural identity is a fundamental right of a collective nature of indigenous communities, which must be respected in a multicultural, pluralist and democratic society (International Court of Human Rights, 2012).

Cultural and Communicational Isolation in the Southern Region: Reflections for Change

In the Azogues Canton in the Southern Region, unlike other cities such as Cuenca, the traditional culture of the people does not allow it to advance and develop, due to the lack of cultural policies and communications strategies on the side of cultural and communication organizations.

For that reason, then, "it is tried, (…) to revalue culture to understand who we are, and from there to locate the development that we want (Ulloa, 2007c: 37).

Here we can make real comparisons with a city that is barely 30 km away, Cuenca[7], an intermediate city that has managed to position itself as a reference for development at a national, regional and international level (Delgado, 2013: 725).

Therefore, it is worth reiterating that is has been believed pertinent to insert the conception of local development to propose a communication initiative with a logic "glocalizing", to build a proposal from the local towards the world, without disconnecting or losing the interrelation with our neighbors (Ulloa, 2007d: 38).

"The communication itself, (…) proposes a field of study (…) absolutely new, that must be carried out (…) from a perspective of multipragmatic approach" (Massoni, 2008: 27). "Because the idea of [opting for strategic communication to achieve] social change, is located in a perspective whose goal is to promote the articulation of socio-cultural matrices (…), which allows the development of a new institutionality (Massoni, 2014: 45).

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that Cuenca is currently part of the "Pilot Cities", a program promoted by the Committee on Culture of the International Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), ("Cuenca Pilot City" 2107 work plan), in which it would also be important to involve our city due to the existing proximity.

Communication and Development: A transformative effect on culture

Development cannot be theorized today in Latin America as an exclusively responsibility of the States and, even less, of certain governments.

At the same time and facing the accelerated rhythm of globalization and the incursion of technology, more specifically the social media platforms, the mediatization: "other modes of network management are generated and promoted that are clearly associated to communication" (Uranga, 2007: 22-24), modes of management that will be part of the strategic model of communication to undertake for the cultural action in the Azogues Canton, with the development of communicational strategies as collective goals for the development, among them: strategies of communicational diversity, of alliances, of recognition and production of culture, of communicational production in cultural ambits.

One of the visible activities undertaken by one of the cultural collectives of the Azogues Canton is the project "Cuchara de Palo" (Wooden Spoon), whose main goal among the community is to merge technologies with culture –strategic communication, education and community, so that these new forms of production and creativity are the "favorite form" of community organization concerning to the production of communicative actions that motivate and strengthen particular experiences of local, urban and rural development" (Durán, 2012 in Pereira and Cadavil, 2011: 315).

IV. RESULTS

Among the results obtained in the research, stand out the absence of cultural and gender policies, the absence of cultural consumption, the lack of knowledge about culture, the inconsistency in cultural laws, the lack of strategic communication, an inadequate and insufficient valuation of the heritage and social memory, which are evidenced in the testimonies of the "National Social Dialogue for Culture[8]". This event took place in the Pumapungo auditorium of the Museum of the Central Bank of the City of Cuenca, on August 4th, 2017, where more than 1200 actors and cultural managers from all over the country and 150 from the Austro[9] region met (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2017), the "I National Meeting on Cultural Management 2018" in the

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[7] Cuenca, a city in the province of Azuay in the Southern Region of Ecuador.
[8] National Social Dialogue for Culture, a meeting of Ecuadorian culturalmanagers to gather points of view and socialize public policies.
[9] Austro, region of the Republic of Ecuador taking territories from the provinces Azuay, Cañar and Morona Santiago.

city of Azogues (with presence of 250 managers from the country), the "International Meeting of Cultural Rights and Cities 2018: analysis of the Culture Plan towards 2030" where it was shown the project Cuenca-Pilot City 2017, carried also in the city of Cuenca, in which the creation of integral cultural policies is proposed to meet the needs of the Canton as an alternative of freedom and cultural management through:

a)   The participation of Cultural Collectives with a new vision beyond a social enterprise and enabling the participation of cultural managers and living cultures with their communities (Mac Gregor, 2013: 30).

b)   The use of public spaces to strengthen social-heritage memory and ancestral knowledge of a cultural nature.

c)   Promote the orientation of institutional competencies, within the framework of more decentralized cultural policies.

d)   To generate spaces of encounter and dialogue of ancestral, intercultural and multiethnic knowledge.

e)   It is necessary to consider the idea of [opting for] strategic communication to achieve social change (Massoni, 2016) and the use of the new technologies of communication to promote the exercise of cultural rights, through "Network Management" modes associated with communication, which will be part of the strategiccommunication model to be undertaken in the cultural activities of the Canton of Azogues.

f)   Aiming to incorporate trained teacher in the cultural field into public and private educational institutions and proposing changes in the context of the student's curriculum at different levels.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural groups must be considered an effective tool for communication to make cultural management dynamic and to ensure the validity and potentiality of local and national values in organizations producing culture. They must characterize the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats that today distinguish institutional communication of a strategic nature carried out by institutions that advance hand to hand with their public in the face of cultural challenges of identity, region and local (from a multi-faceted vision): institutional agents of the National System of Culture, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, House of Culture, Prefecture, Department of Culture of the Municipality of Azogues and cultural centers of the GADMA[10] and the parishes, identifying the Good Practices of Cultural Management that prevail in this institutional context; remarking also the mediations (macro, meso, micro), that impact the operation of the holistic and contextualized cultural management of the Houses of Culture in Ecuador.

Although this is an analysis of cultural management in the province of Cañar, its reflections, considerations and conclusions must be assimilated into a general context at the national level because this national totality is necessarily reflected in the local dimensions.

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