

## SYNOPSIS

### CHILE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2002 “WE, THE CHILEANS: A CULTURAL CHALLENGE”

#### CHILE'S CULTURAL CHALLENGE

Over the past two decades, change has transformed the face of Chile. New highways, increased air traffic, and the spread of telephone lines, television broadcasts, cellular phone networks and Internet links, have created interconnections among places and people which have never been connected before. Chile no longer resembles the schoolbook images of the past. For the first time in their history, Chileans enjoy an infrastructure that allows them to feel united and close to each other, with the vast extension of their territory no longer an obstacle. Chile has lost the isolated feeling prevalent only a few decades ago.

Even more profound and impressive than these external changes have been the changes within Chileans themselves. Since these are not obvious, they are not easily recognized, nor is it easy to name or describe these personal experiences. Nevertheless, the changes are real. Daily life, the physical environment and the ways in which people interact are different now, and have become ambiguous and confusing. Understandably, many people have reacted with disorientation and, at times, a feeling of powerlessness. Even a certain irritation in social relations is not surprising. Chileans are bewildered because in spite of their increasing closeness to each other, they feel like strangers.

President Ricardo Lagos remarked in reference to the Bicentennial: “It offers a good opportunity to dedicate the decade from 2000 to 2010 to reflecting together about Chile’s path through history and to imagining its future.” It is indeed time to reconsider some fundamental questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? The upcoming celebration of Chile’s Independence Bicentennial is an excellent occasion for this. At the time of its independence, Chile decided, on its own volition and at its own risk, what kind of country it wished to become. The time is now ripe to reflect once more upon “We, the Chileans.” This challenge is not a matter reserved solely for intellectuals. In today’s Chile, it is the broad majority who are asking themselves this question and searching for an answer. When more than half of the 3,600 people surveyed by the UNDP in mid-2001 expressed doubts about the existence of a “Chilean” identity, it became clear that the time was near to stand in front of the mirror and ask ourselves: do we feel part of a common “We”?

**Question: There are different ways of defining or understanding what is “Chilean.” In light of this, do you think that...**

What is “Chilean” lies in our customs, values and history	42%
It is hard to say today what is “Chilean”	28%
It is impossible to say what is “Chilean”	30%
Don’t know / No response	0%
Total	100%

Source: National UNDP Survey, 2001.

Every society needs a self-image, and Chile is no exception. In many ways, Chile's image has shaped its fears and desires, its successes and failures. It has shown what the country has been and what it can be. Since the time of the writing of *La Araucana*<sup>1</sup>, Chile has been transformed, replicated and re-imagined, time and again. This ongoing "invention of Chile," these ideals and values that have shaped our coexistence, have paved the way for various national identities in a permanent state of change. This is how the collective self-image has been formed, in which Chileans see themselves as members of a community, heirs to a history and co-authors of a common destiny. However, as change has encroached on continuity, Chileans' inherited self-image has blurred. Reflecting upon how much the country has changed, and how different their daily lives have become, people have become skeptical toward the idea of a "Chilean" identity and have ceased to identify with it.

Everyday life is full of paradoxes. In twelve years of democracy, Chileans have enjoyed a remarkable improvement in their living standards and the quality of daily life. The face of the country has been undeniably transformed, thanks to efforts to promote and reconcile democracy, economic growth and social equity. But while the people appreciate their new opportunities, they also sometimes perceive changes in their way of life as alien processes, removed from human influence. The confusion about who we are as Chileans demonstrates how fragile the idea of a collective will able to steer the development of society has become. It appears that most Chileans lack a strong image of themselves as a collective stakeholder, or "We." This is Chile's cultural challenge.

*"We have placed culture at the core of our concerns; and this is not a rhetorical phrase — it arises from a deep conviction that a focus on culture is a basic prerequisite for the construction of a different, more respectful country, with more freedom, more regard for diversity, and more and broader opportunities for all forms of citizen expression."*

President Ricardo Lagos  
May 2000

## WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT IN CHILE?

This Report focuses on the changes and challenges of culture in Chile. In doing so, it utilizes a broad concept of culture. Culture includes the arts, literature, and other traditional forms, but it also extends to the variety of other expressions through which a society shapes and reflects upon its internal life. UNESCO defines culture, in general terms, as ways of living together. Thus, it includes both the concrete ways in which people organize their lives together, and the ideas and images used to represent a society's vision of itself and how it would like to be. Culture is thus both the practice and reflection of social coexistence.

Culture is also important because it is a fundamental building block of human development. Human development is the process by which a person becomes an agent and beneficiary of ongoing change. According to the UNDP World Report, this means that people are able to fully achieve their potentials and live productively and creatively

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<sup>1</sup> Epic poem on the Conquest of Chile written in the 16th Century.

according to their needs and interests” (UNDP 2001). More precisely, human development opens up opportunities; it does not specify a particular “development model,” but rather a way of approaching life in society.

These reflections about culture in Chile build upon the results of previous Reports: human development is not possible without a culture that strengthens individual and collective capacities to act. This was already suggested in the conclusions of Chile’s 1998 Report. Individuals can only help shape their own living conditions if society as a whole generates a favorable environment for doing so. Therefore, an effective human development strategy must strengthen society’s ability to broaden people’s choices and opportunities. At the same time, the subjective views of the people are just as important as structural transformations for the creation of this favorable social environment. The country’s potential to advance in human development must be reflected in people’s subjective impressions.

The 2000 Report addresses this issue when it states that social capital can be strengthened only if people share “something” in common. They establish ties of trust and cooperation based on their feeling that they form part of a “We.” Thus, the existence of a “We” — both in practice and as an image — should be considered a crucial element of human development in Chile. The importance of a collective identity for human development forms the starting point of this Report.

*“Social development necessarily involves a concern for culture — the way in which people decide to live together — because the feeling of social cohesion based on culture, shared values and beliefs is what shapes individual human development. If people live well together, if they cooperate in such a way that they enrich each other, they enlarge their individual choices. Thus, human development is concerned not only with people as individuals, but also with their interaction and cooperation in communities.”*

UNDP, 1996

This Report reinforces the importance placed by the Chilean authorities on culture. The democratic administrations have undertaken enormous efforts to strengthen cultural policies, in both institutional and financial terms. In particular, President Lagos has declared culture to be one of his administration’s key issues. This has led to an institutional reorganization, as well as large funding increases for the country’s various cultural projects and programs. Chile’s Cultural Map, shown in Part 4, illustrates this remarkable contribution to the country’s creative diversity. Yet the significance of culture is not reflected only in cultural policies. As the President stressed in the speech announcing his political program, cultural dimensions must also be considered in public policymaking. That is, the (negative or positive) impact of policies on Chileans’ daily coexistence must be considered, and thus their effect on the creation of a common “We.”

*The country’s human development, in its broadest sense, is linked to the development of a cultural policy that is inclusive, broad, generous, free and open to criticism.*

President Ricardo Lagos  
May 2000

The importance of culture is confirmed when one contemplates the magnitude of changes experienced by the country. Examples of recent cultural changes in Chile include increases in individual freedom, the new dominance of television and the innovative reforms to the country's educational system. These changes alter not only the social fabric, but the daily lives of each citizen. In sum, culture matters because it deals with people's subjective experiences. They encounter new phenomena in their daily lives and must make sense of them. People may not be consciously aware of this search. Perhaps they will not be able to formulate the questions they ask themselves, but they will perceive the divide opening up between their subjective experiences and their difficulties in putting them into words and assigning them a meaning that can be shared with others.

### **THESIS ON CULTURAL CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN CHILE**

1. Chile is undergoing a profound cultural change. The globalization of society, the atomization of individuals, and the centrality of the market and modern technology all play central roles in this process. Cultural changes create opportunities, but also challenges for everyday life in society.
2. The traditional image of what it means to be "Chilean" has become blurred and has lost credibility among most people. The sense of belonging to Chile has also weakened. Today, Chilean society seems to lack an image of itself as an active agent. Its polarized views of the past and weak concept of the future both contribute to this.
3. Today, social experiences and the construction of meaning are affected by new forces, issues and dynamics. Among these are the mercantilization and massification of cultural goods; the transformation in the meaning of work; the consumption boom; the dominance of images; diversification in language and meaning; and the weakened significance of politics.
4. Personal life in Chile today is characterized by the rise of individualism. Increasingly, people must define their own values, plans and objectives. This process has not been accompanied by an equal development of the social resources needed to support it. This causes anxiety and social withdrawal among the population.
5. People's ways of living have diversified in Chile, but in many cases this is a fragmented diversity. The lack of effective links among the various ways of living blocks communication and hinders the development of creative diversity.
6. Chile still suffers from a cultural deficit. In spite of the emphasis placed on cultural policies in recent years, less attention has been paid to cultural processes that would help increase society's ability to act as a collective agent.
7. The challenge of culture, in the perspective of the Bicentennial, would consist in developing and implementing a vision for the country [*proyecto país*]. This would involve two tasks. The first is to generate a vision in which all Chileans recognize themselves as full members of a community of citizens and effective protagonists of their country's development. The second is to enable people to deepen their sense

of “living together” in society, while at the same time increasing their individual freedom.

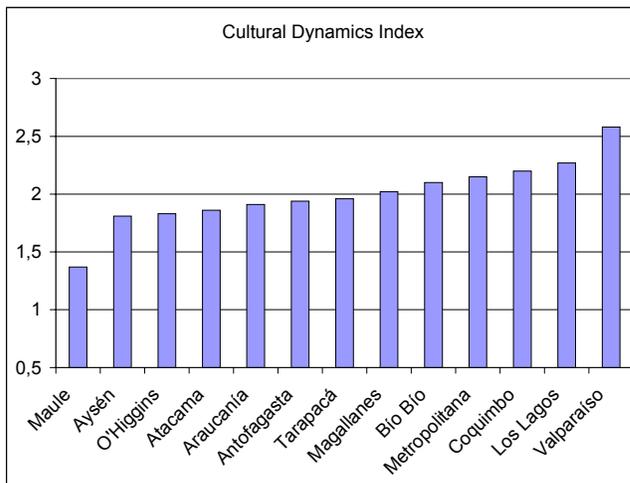
## CULTURAL CHANGES TRANSFORM EVERYDAY LIFE

Both change and continuity affect Chilean culture. Among the changes, the redefinition of the State and the rise of the free market have been particularly significant. From the nation's early days, Chilean identity has been tied to the national constitution and later to the emergence of a social state. The cultural dimension of government is particularly evident in the educational system, democratic mechanisms and public policies. Nevertheless, it is also present in less-visible areas: the creation of the public schools and the National Health Service are still milestones in the memories of many citizens. Thus, the weakening of the "statist" image may well have affected the idea of what is "Chilean."

The new centrality of the market has thoroughly changed the ways in which Chileans live together. The scope of cultural changes is illustrated in Part 3 of this Report. Mercantilization and the rise of a "consumption culture"; the preeminence of an "image culture" and the resulting aesthetization of daily life; "cultural consumption" and the massification of goods and symbols produced by the cultural industry; and the rise of the information society through new information and communication technologies are all examples of the presence of the market in everyday life. These changes have been intertwined with transformations in the cultural sphere. An overview of culture in this more narrow sense can help illuminate the intensity of message and symbol production and circulation in society.

One essential contribution of this Report is Chile's Map of the Cultural Sphere, presented in Part 4. This map covers a wide range of cultural dynamics, infrastructure and protagonists, as well as public institutions and the providers of cultural goods. It also addresses cultural programs and funding, as well as the normative principles of cultural policies. The data elements were compiled into a matrix consisting of 53 national indicators and 159 indicators distributed by region. In addition, the Cultural Dynamic Index and the Cultural Resource Index highlight the differences among regions and possible discrepancies between cultural dynamics and available resources. This effort was complemented by a preliminary estimation of the economic weight of cultural activity.

Cultural Dynamics Index, by region



Source: UNDP, 2001.

## DOES A COMMON IDENTITY (“WE”) STILL EXIST?

Changes in everyday life have undermined Chileans’ image of themselves. In light of people’s new experiences and expectations, the inherited images of what is “Chilean” have lost credibility. Part 2 describes the weakening of national identity and the difficulty of regenerating an image of what it means to be “Chilean.”

### Attitudes toward “Chilean” identity

Proud Chilean	33%
Unsure Chilean	38%
Discontented Chilean	29%
Total	100%

Source: Prepared based on UNDP National Survey, 2001.

One-third of those surveyed expressed pride in Chile. However, two-thirds of the respondents distanced themselves from the country, viewing it “from the outside.”

*“And while I walked back I was saying, there is so much richness here to my right, a huge mineral deposit, and an immense, infinite sea on my other side, and it still isn’t enough... I say: why do Chileans, why do I as a Chilean, have to suffer hunger?”*

— Adult urban male, low socioeconomic level

Chileans do not feel undermined by globalization, but rather by their own subjective experiences. When people do not perceive the presence of society in their everyday lives, it is difficult for them to form an idea of nationhood.

## HOW CAN I BECOME MYSELF?

Major transformations affect not only large-scale phenomena but also the everyday lives of individuals. Perhaps it is here, at a more personal level, where cultural changes have the most impact. However, differences in people’s abilities to take advantage of these transformations are also more noticeable here. Part 5 of this Report inquires into various aspects of the personal sphere: the effects of change on the family, religion and sexuality, as well as friendship and conversation.

*“I am proud to be a survivor. I was brave when I made the choice, because this was an absolutely dangerous, non-established path. And my parents were even braver to accept it. I was able to create my own destiny, to take my life in my hands and direct it, which is not easy. Most people do not feel that inner freedom, and I felt it always; I did it, I made myself.”*

Gloria Münchmeyer, actress, 2002

The issue that stands out is individualization; that is, the process by which people break away from inherited traditions and assert the right to define their own identities, on their own terms and at their own risk. However, each person cannot take on this task alone, and thus it is a cultural phenomenon. In Chile today, the changes in society have increased people's choices, enabling them to develop their individuality more effectively. However, studies have shown that there is unequal access to the objects, symbols, links and values contributed by society to the individualization process. The variation in individual capacities for self-realization is one of the most relevant — and least-analyzed — social inequalities. Thus, for example, almost two-thirds of the surveyed individuals from low-income groups believe that they do not determine the course of their own lives.

**Looking at the course of your life, do you think it has mainly been the result of ...**

	Socioeconomic group				
	Upper	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Lower	Total
Your personal decisions	65%	54%	46%	35%	44%
The chance circumstances of life	33%	43%	53%	64%	55%
Don't know / No response	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: National UNDP Survey, 2001.

For various reasons, many Chileans develop their individual identities on the margins of society, or in opposition to it. This “asocial individualization” reflects a paradox. While society, on the one hand, increasingly encourages individuals to make their own plans for their lives, the everyday environment hinders their progress toward individual self-realization.

*“I gave up, but with the hope that maybe ... maybe for that reason ... that’s what happens... everything is tied together; I can’t get married and have children if I don’t have anything, you know? I can’t do it, then it’s all so hard... it’s like a circle that never ends.”*

You mean, there is no way out of this?

*“No, I think there is a way out, it’s a mental thing.”*

What would be your way out?

*“In the end, I think the way out is not to give a hoot about anybody else.”*

**— Adult urban man, middle socioeconomic level**

Using a psychosocial approach, the Report confirms that those who lack a collective reference to help them face change tend to experience society as an “overwhelming machine.” This explains the sensation of going against the flow. Under these conditions,

most Chileans fall back on their families and friends as alternative sources of comfort and meaning. As a result, family life tends to become overloaded with demands and expectations it cannot satisfy. In the end, the private sphere, deprived of external social connections, merely reinforces and increases the insecurity of the outside world.

**Would you say the Chilean family is currently...**

Undergoing a crisis as an institution	31%
A source of tension and problems	28%
A shelter from problems	24%
A place of love	15%
Don't know / No response	2%
Total	100%

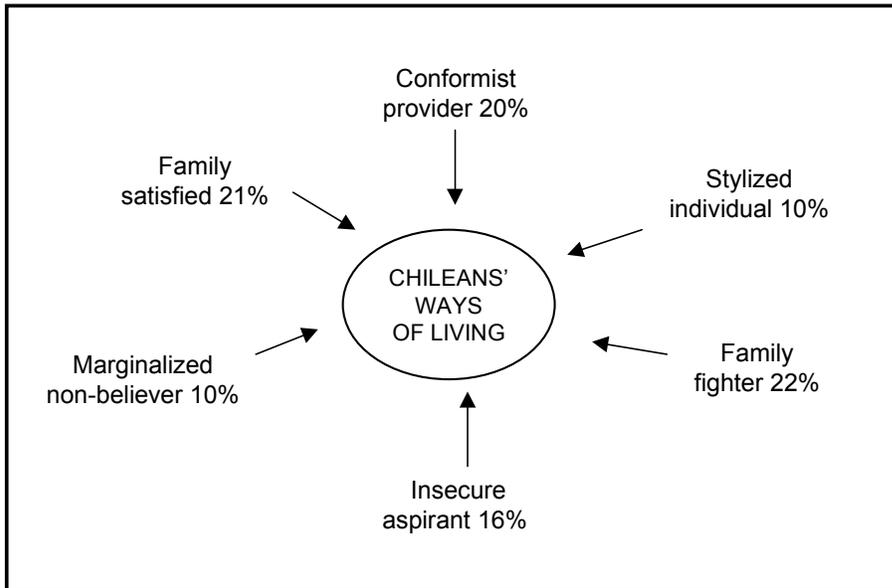
Source: UNDP National Survey, 2001.

**DO OUR WAYS OF LIVING HAVE ANYTHING IN COMMON?**

The changes in Chilean society have created diversity in people's ways of living. By "way of living" we refer to the set of practices carried out by each person and the meanings attributed to them, including aspects such as the family, consumption, leisure time, religion, friendship, television, cultural consumption, and personal identity. Taken together, these approaches make up a particular way of viewing and living life. Currently, we can identify six different basic "ways of living" in Chile.

Social diversity is an expression of people's plurality; each person has his or her own experiences and views of society. But not every kind of diversity favors human development. According to UNESCO, the full development of people's capacities requires creative diversity; that is, diversity that encourages the individual and collective expression of human creativity while promoting the construction of a common order. However, the diversity observed in Chile tends to be fragmented.

## Map of Chileans' ways of living \*



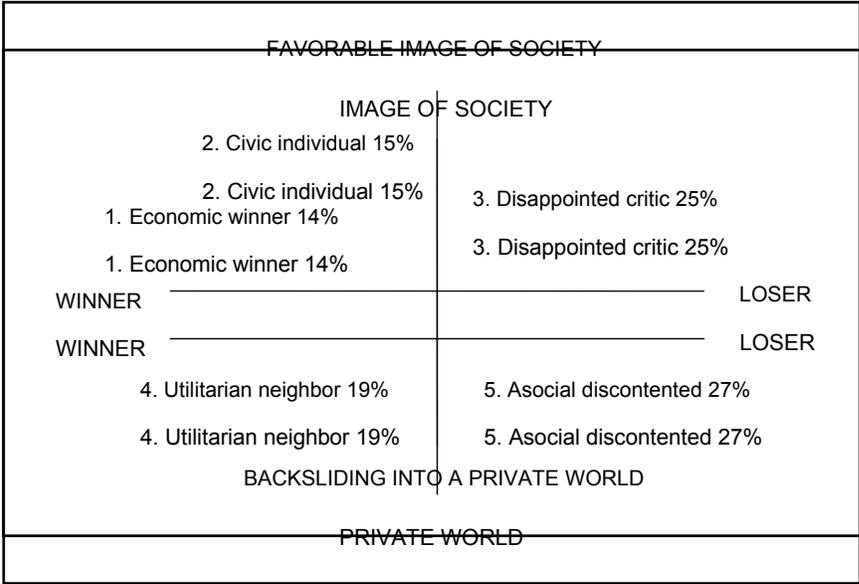
\* Clusters constructed on the basis of multi-variable analyses  
Source: Based on UNDP National Survey, 2001.

These very diverse ways of living are the result of success or failure in the individualization process and the search for social integration. The “family satisfied” and “stylized individual” ways of living are the successful ones. The members of these categories can shape their own life experiences, resulting in a sense of satisfaction. This is expressed in their perception of themselves as “winners.”

The map of Chilean ways of living is more than just a neutral expression of cultural diversity. The subjective traits associated with each of the groups have concrete effects on society. This supports one of this Report’s basic conclusions: success or frustration experiences in personal life condition people’s images of society (trusting or distrusting). Conversely, a positive or negative image of society will affect the ways in which people conduct their personal lives. The social roots of democracy thus depend on the relationship between experience and identity.

**WHAT ARE OUR IMAGES OF SOCIETY?**

**Images of Society \***



\* Clusters constructed on the basis of multi-variable analyses  
 Source: Based on UNDP National Survey, 2001.

In Part 6, the Report examines the existing diversity of “country images.” As found in the analysis of the UNDP national survey, the views are so diverse that they could hardly be correlated. It is not easy to bridge the gap between winners and losers, or between people with an active image of society and those who have retreated into a private world. The positive country images of the “civic individuals” or “economic winners” are very far from the distressed views of the “asocial discontented.”

The chart shows isolated islands of experiences and social views with few communication bridges. This “dissociated diversity” reflects a deficit in cultural integration.

## **A CULTURAL DEFICIT PERSISTS IN CHILE**

Chile suffers from a cultural deficit that weakens its human development. The Report highlights specific trends that reduce Chilean society's ability to determine its own course and characteristics. The weakness of the "We" points to an urgent challenge for the country: How can a state of dissociated diversity, accompanied by a strong tendency toward privatism, be shaped into a pluralist order that can generate a sense of belonging and solidarity?

In order for Chileans to be able to converse and to reach agreements, they must refer to the subjective experiences underlying their differences, such as their views of society and labor relations, their memories of the past or their perspectives toward the future. The point of interchanging these experiences is not to homogenize them; individuality and diversity are unavoidable facts. When one is aware of these tendencies, however, it is obvious that something is missing: references to experiences shared by society. It is these experiences that make possible the delineation of a "common world," in which differences can be interpreted and negotiated. This is a task for society as a whole and for each individual Chilean. Above all, however, it is a task for the citizens of a democracy. In the end, creating a common home in the midst of diversity is democracy's most appropriate mission. Further, democracy will hardly become "ours" in the absence of a "we."

### **Which of the following sentences do you most agree with?**

Democracy is preferable to any other form of government	45%
In some circumstances an authoritarian government is better	18%
The type of government makes no difference for the people	32%
Don't know / No response	5%
Total	100%

Source: National UNDP Survey, 2001

Chile's cultural deficit has a long history. Its origin may perhaps be traced to the primordial fear of differences. In recent times, the military dictatorship repressed collective action, institutionalized a certain fragmentation and imposed significant restrictions upon society's self-determination. The transition to democracy included intense efforts to restore Chileans' right to decide for themselves where they want to go, and to give them the means to do so. Yet much still remains to be done. The main challenge has already been mentioned: integrating diversity into a vision for the country. "Creative diversity" will take root when democracy, public debate and citizen participation form part of both an ideal image of a "We" and the subjective experiences of Chileans.