

## ECONOMICS

UDC 327

### CULTURAL RELATIONS, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: IN THE CONTEXT OF AZERBAIJAN AND BELARUS

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*Today, the terms of 'culture', 'heritage' and 'diversity' are one of the major factors of modern social development. Hereby culture is focused on identification of social development based on tolerance, creativity and knowledge. This research aims to provide an overview of the culture, cultural heritage and cultural diversity in Belarus and Azerbaijan and to identify the most important areas of social and economic development, taking into account the interests of local actors and latest European approaches. To the various international approaches and experiences, culture is main part of economic development in our life. According to my research analyzes, I will try to find how heritage and diversity should primarily be used to develop the social, economic and cultural domains, improve the quality of life in the context of Azerbaijan and Belarus. The article consists of explanations about the understanding of culture, cultural heritage and diversity, the analysis of how culture, cultural heritage and diversity affect the economic development, what role they play in economic development of Azerbaijan and Belarus. The article can stand in as a useful resource for different international researchers, scientists and experts who conduct research related to this topic.*

**Introduction.** Today we often meet the term “cultural relations” in our daily life. We use cultural relations between states or bilateral/multilateral cultural relations among states. In this research we will try to explain the value of cultural relations in the context of 2 different countries. The research aims to build a better understanding of the impact and value of cultural relations in terms of their ability to make varieties, relevant to supporting prosperity and stability in societies that are going through substantial changes.

As we know, today's workplace is diverse. Hereby, one of the main purposes of this research is to provide a researcher, experts and other concerned parties with understanding and skills for effective communication with people from other cultures. Effective communication with different people within one culture or more cultures requires similar skills and knowledge. In general, cultural diversity is also expressed in the increasing internationalization of business. To move forward in the modern workplace, you must be able to effectively treat people from various cultural groups within and outside her or his country.

On the other hand, the research focused to clarify the cultural heritage sector in the context of Azerbaijan and Belarus and to identify the most important areas of their social development. Heritage is what communities themselves agree to regard as such. In this regard, we will try to identify a shift in heritage-related issues from discussing them purely from the perspective of cultural studies, historical and artistic themes to tackling pragmatics of sustainable development, and raise the issue of setting up a new research about the impact of heritage on society. However, the review does not include the analysis of the technical support for heritage protection, or the work of educational institutions that train personnel in this field, or methods used to preserve, rehabilitate and promote heritage.

#### **1. Understanding of cultural relations, cultural diversity and cultural heritage**

Today's cultural relations take place in a context of weakness and risks that further control any nation-state more and more and make cooperation in international relations more necessary than ever. Instead of using simplex approaches, but through cultural relations – trust and mutual understanding can be built that will help to solve these problems. There is no general agreement on what cultural relations are. Various national organizations of cultural relations understand cultural relations through different lenses.

Moreover, culture can participate as a part of foreign policy of the country: the organization and function of cultural policy is an assignment, which is given to the foreign policy winding up [1, p. 215; 2, p. 409], is also understood as the cultural diplomacy between different nations [3, ch. 1.].

The term «cultural relations» refers to interventions in foreign cultural arenas with the aim of increasing intercultural dialogue and bringing about mutual benefits connected to stability, prosperity and security. Just as

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there is no common definition of cultural relations, there is no one correct approach to good cultural relations, or simple method of evaluating cultural relations.

Practitioners face very different cultural and geopolitical contexts. Good cultural relations necessarily involve flexibly adapting programs in ways that resonate with these contexts. Assessing the value of cultural relations in different countries and for different actors requires a range of methodologies that consider diverse perspectives.

Cultural relations are understood as reciprocal transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing a range of activities conducted by state and/or non-state actors within the space of culture and civil society. The overall outcomes of cultural relations are greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion.

Attempts to assess the value of cultural relations from the perspectives of the countries that practise them can be instrumentalist and reductive. Such attempts can miss the richness of the ways cultural relations work in practice. They are also of limited use at evaluating which forms of cultural relations work best in which contexts, and at predicting the likely outcomes of different interventions, or at suggesting ways how these interventions can be improved.

To evaluate diversity, each person must go beyond treating and tolerating people fairly from various racial and ethnic groups. The true meaning of diversity is to venerate and enjoy a wide range of individual and cultural varieties. To be diverse means to be various in some measurable way even if the varieties are not clear on the surface. The diversity umbrella is presumed to include everybody in an organization. The value of diversity lies in the evaluation of individual varieties among people. The goal of a diverse organization is for people of all cultural backgrounds to obtain their full potential, not measured by group identities such as nationality, sex, or race.

Heritage is not a thing but a process. It means a constant choice between values that must be made at all times. Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including places, customs, objects, practices, values, and artistic expressions.

Previously, cultural heritage was seen as a source of income. Recognizing culture as a dynamic and transformative force, they seek to explore culture as an indicator and facilitator of social development. Today, its role as an active agent of social transformation has been increasingly recognized [13].

In general, the point of view is that, nevertheless, cultural relations, cultural diversity and cultural heritage can help in establishing and facilitating working contacts between countries, it depends heavily on the complex points of laws and bilateral negotiations, agreements, military capabilities and multilateral structures.

### **2. Cultural diversity and cultural heritage of Belarus**

In Belarus 130 ethnic and confessional groups carry out activities relating to preservation, popularization and development of their own cultural heritage.

Belarus is a country with a clearly defined ethnic majority – Belarusians and numerous ethnic minorities such as Ukrainians, Poles, gypsies, the Azerbaijani and others. The proportion of ethnic Belarusians is 84 percent; the largest minority – Russians – constitute about 8 percent according to the 2009 Census. There are about 200 ethnicity-based NGOs countrywide, and ethnic diversity is present in public institutions. Belarus is legally bilingual; however, one of the two state languages – Russian – dominates the public and even private spheres to the detriment of Belarusian. There are occasional manifestations of hate speech and xenophobia against migrants and foreign students; there has been tension and controversy around certain minority organizations, primarily of the Polish minority. To wrap up, formally and substantively, basic features of ethno-politics in Belarus are comparable with those of the neighboring countries. The dominance of the Russian language in public life in general or some of its segments is still a feature of several post-Soviet countries, and Belarus is not unique in this regard.

The historical and cultural heritage of Belarus includes 5,553 historical and cultural assets, including 5,352 tangible immovable assets, of which 1,820 are sites of architecture and urban planning, 2,263 archaeology, 62 art, 1,203 history, and 89 tangible movable assets, and 112 intangible historical and cultural assets. Belarus is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List through the Mir and Nesvizh castles, Białowieża Forest and the Struve Geodetic Arc. The intangible heritage is represented in UNESCO by the rite of the Kolyady (Christmas) Tsars. The tentative list submitted by the authorities includes several sites including Praspiekt Niezaliežnasci (Independence avenue) in Minsk, the Augustow Canal (19th c.), the Tower of Kamenets (1271–1288), and the St. Sophia Cathedral in Polatsk (1030– 1060) [12].

Cultural heritage like many other sectors in Belarus can be described as rather impervious to external influence especially with regard to cultural trends that do not originate in the Russian-speaking world. New important texts on heritage theory have not been translated and contact with key European intellectual centres has been lost. There is an urgent need to create an association of Belarusian experts which would be integrated into the international context. Many important concepts are absent from national legislation such as “cultural landscape”, “heritage community” and “historical city”. There is no separate legal framework for intangible heritage.

Five main problems and challenges for the sector:

1. There is no institutionalized agents in Belarus that can think about using the social, economic and cultural potentials of heritage. There is a need for both critical re-thinking of existing trends and developments and decision-making with regard to heritage management based on research rather than on ideology or even values.

2. There is a high degree of conflict between actors over heritage: between grassroots initiatives and executive power bodies; grassroots initiatives and business; and grassroots initiatives and restorers. It is necessary therefore to develop models for sustainable cooperation and exchange between NGOs and state institutions for a joint resolution of problems relating to the sector's development.

3. Work with heritage is still perceived as “charitable” or a social and cultural obligation. Heritage is not recognized as a driver of the development of territories, with great potential for inter-sectoral cooperation. It is necessary to make ways of including heritage in economic relations more sophisticated and diversify them and to enrich rehabilitation/museum projects with goals aiming for economic and social development.

4. There is evidence of the remnants of paternalistic Soviet models of heritage protection. It is necessary to continue development of civil society and state partnerships, to build the capacity of regional civil society organizations and government institutions to a level that would allow the generation of qualitative heritage-related projects relevant to development goals, to work with specific heritage communities and take into account their opinions, to depart from the edifying nature of most activities relating to the discussion of the cultural heritage issue, to promote social inclusion.

5. Intangible cultural heritage in Belarus is predominantly mono-ethnic, traditional and rural. The heritage of other ethnic groups and the heritage of urban cultures are under-represented. It is essential to diversify heritage and to use it for the development of the interregional, intercultural, and international exchange.

Belarus has little experience in using heritage successfully as a tool for developing individual towns and regions. There are examples of successful business and productive intersectional cooperation in projects focusing on heritage use (primarily agro-tourism and ecotourism); there is an experience in attracting grant or sponsorship funds. The successful practice listed in this report is the evidence of the existence of a small group of experts and professionals with experience in solving new development-oriented problems. There are also several platforms for successful experience exchange in terms of implementing the economic potential of heritage.

Heritage is also a means of intercultural communication. This has been repeatedly stated at the governmental level. The International Traditional Culture Forum has been held in Mogilev since 2012. Specialists of traditional culture from over ten countries take part in the event: Belarus, Russia, Italy, Turkey, Estonia, and other states [13].

### **3. Cultural relations, cultural diversity and cultural heritage in economic development of Azerbaijan**

Cultural diversity and pluralism represent one of the most important factors of culture. Since ancient times Azerbaijan has been known as the homeland for diverse peoples and cultures. On the one hand, this land served as a kind of bridge between the Eastern culture and, on the other hand, with the world, European culture. For multinational, poly-confessional, multilingual Azerbaijan, this ideology is put forward by the historical reality itself.

In Azerbaijan throughout all periods of history with a diverse national and ethnic structure, there are real sources of this diversity. The relations of dozens of ethnic and religious communities living in Azerbaijan have caused the unity of a number of their cultures – their folklore, dialects, customs, life, the system of religion, etc.

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union, ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan began to create their own cultural centres to preserve their historical and cultural customs and traditions. As a result, today dozens of national cultural centres function in Azerbaijan. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Azerbaijan Republic takes active part in the programs to promote “cultural diversity” realized under the auspices of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and OSCE. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism realizes a project titled “Cultural Diversity of Azerbaijan” [17].

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The Azerbaijani people consist of the Azerbaijanis constituting the main part of the public of the country and 30 nations and ethnic groups, which are densely populated in various regions of the country. All these people, regardless of their number, language, or religion are equal citizens of Azerbaijan.

There are good cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Belarus. Thus, the two countries held a variety of bilateral and international cultural events (including international competitions of vocalists called Bulbul, International film festivals of The East and The West). Hence, several Belarusian cultural days were organized in Azerbaijan. Besides, different cooperation agreements were signed between the two countries. In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the Republic of Belarus has signed the Agreement on cooperation in the fight against the laundering of cultural wealth and their returning.

Present day, Baku organizes the main important international summits, events and conferences to discuss important tasks of the modern period and cooperation. Some of them are the Global Open Society Forum, the Davos Economic Forum, Baku Humanitarian Forum, Intercultural Dialogue Forum, the World Summit of Religious Leaders, Eurovision song contest, the World Youth Forum, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, Baku 2015 European Games, the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and other international important events.

The Azerbaijani government has taken measures, both on the international and national levels, which are aimed at promoting inter-cultural dialogue. These measures will contribute to the prestige of our country on the international arena, will strengthen the national solidarity of our people, and will represent our country in the international community as a space of mutual enrichment of national cultures. Today, Azerbaijan occupies one of the leading places among the world countries where there is no place for discrimination of anyone belonging to any ethnic minority or vice versa. To sum up, the national policy pursued by the Azerbaijani government shows that people can live in peace and friendship, and from this point of view, our country is a vivid example for the whole world.

**Conclusion.** Replying to the question of what makes increase happen, most economists describe these inequalities in detail, referring to a list of terms that must be fulfilled for the development of the economy.

There is a need to create an organization for the introduction of new thinking in connection with the use of the social, economic and cultural heritage potential by disseminating information on foreign and Belarusian best practices, cure the nature of programming and the synergy of implemented projects, ensure horizontal communication among sector participants, monitor conflicts, organize methodological seminars and research. Also adjust the performance indicators of state cultural institutions and the Ministry of Culture, include indicators related to public and public organizations / initiatives of organizations in their work, grant events, the establishment of interregional and international relations, etc. We need to develop models of sustainable cooperation between local non-governmental and governmental organizations in attracting grants for carrying out various work with heritage.

The research showed that explanation of cultural relations, cultural diversity and cultural heritage, the connection of them, helps to determine the influence of culture on economic development, their role in the economic development of Azerbaijan and Belarus.

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