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Zur *kulturellen* Dimension nachhaltiger Entwicklung -
Eine metatheoretische und diskursanalytische
Bestandsaufnahme

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Abstract

This article focuses on the significance of “culture” for the concept of sustainable development. Two observations may justify this research interest. Firstly, in the Brundtland-Report of 1987 – the key-document for the international discourse on sustainability – “culture” is not treated as a relevant conceptual or analytical category. Secondly, for a few years now representatives of the German-speaking sustainability-discourse strive for implementing “culture” as a fourth dimension in the concept of sustainable development. Up to now, such attempts have been characterized by contradictory or inaccurate definitions of what culture means and includes. Both circumstances lead to the following considerations: to define the cultural dimension of sustainability it is necessary to launch a full debate on the three key-terms – development, culture and sustainability. A reconstruction of the appearance of culture in the international development discourse would provide an analytical basis for the effort to integrate culture as an analytical category of its own into the concept of sustainability.

Following up the idea of reconstructing the role of culture in the development discourse, this study is divided into three analytical parts: It starts by critically reconstructing past usages of “culture” in light of the historically important development paradigms, i.e. modernization theory, dependency theory and world system theory (early 1950s to late 1970s). In the mid-nineties the debate on culture and (sustainable) development culminated in the report of the UN-World-Commission on Culture and Development “Our Creative Diversity”. The analysis of the definitions of both terms in this document defines the research interest in the second part of the analysis. Thirdly, the study examines the potential and the shortcomings of the German-speaking discourse on sustainability, and its efforts to integrate culture into models of sustainable development. The article concludes with perspectives and potential junctures for a critical, self-reflexive and elaborated culture-*and*-sustainable-development discourse.