

## CULTURAL POLICIES, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION: OR WHY WE NEED AN AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE

**JORDI PASCUAL**

COORDINATOR, UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' COMMITTEE ON CULTURE

[jordipascual@bcn.cat](mailto:jordipascual@bcn.cat)

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*Culture, Arts, Heritage, Community, Regenerate, Cultural Actors, Capacity, Capablity, Development, Sustainability, Globalisation*

### ABSTRACT

*Let's share a trite image: a fluttering butterfly in the jungles of Java unleashing a tropical tempest in the Caribbean Sea. The ecological connection between local and global is obvious to the average world citizen. If we changed "fluttering butterfly" to "dying language" or "grassroots creativity", this average citizen would not be moved by the same affection; (s)he would not even understand why a (dying!) language is something valuable or why grassroots creativity is something related to the sustainable development of the community in which (s)he lives. Let's face it: cultural diversity is not yet as "important" as biodiversity. Eppur si muove. The debates on the relation between cultural globalisation and local communities are gaining ground in the global agenda. This article attempts to connect some threads on culture and sustainable development, and wishes to explain why an Agenda 21 for culture, developed by cities and local governments, is needed.*

## 1. CULTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

*“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.*

This is Article 27 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). But... what does “cultural life” mean? And what is “participation”? Which “community” is the Declaration referring to? How are the nation-states implementing this fundamental right? Is it a fundamental right, by the way? And how are cities implementing this right? Are there obstacles for its implementation? These questions, sadly, are not raised very often and, therefore, neither are they answered.

The concept “**culture**” is extremely complex to define and its semantic field of meaning is so broad, that it inevitably leads to misinterpretations or misunderstandings. It could mean:

- a number of activities related to the arts and the heritage
- the way of life of a community
- a dynamic process of cultivation

The contemporary definitions of culture, such as those made by UNESCO (in 2001 and 2005) or by *Agenda 21 for culture* (in 2004) illustrate that the understanding of “culture” may be heading, or perhaps should I better say, “returning” to its original meaning of a “dynamic process that creates freedom for individuals and communities”; a process of cultivation. We are living in an age in which cultivation is not popular. It is quite the opposite. Our age sees a rising fundamentalism and relativism that often neglects freedoms and infringes upon the respect for human dignity. “Our culture”, someone can say, does not allow contact with women. “Our culture” does not allow freedom of speech. “Our culture” permits torture.

This is why culture, today, needs to emphasise its association with **human rights**. It is the only way to prevent anyone from using culture, or cultural diversity, to justify oppression or exclusion, or commit outrages to human dignity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the International Covenants, on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (also 1966) form the foundation of the relationship between culture and human rights. But it has been more recently that UNESCO, in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), has offered the clearest link between culture and human rights, as far its capacity for implementation is concerned. Article 2.1 of the 2005 Convention says:

*“Cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, information and communication, as well as the ability of individuals to choose cultural expressions, are guaranteed. No one may invoke the provisions of this Convention in order to infringe human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or guaranteed by international law, or to limit the scope thereof”.*

But it is not only fundamentalism and relativism that put cultural freedom in danger. In Western countries, the “passage” from Fordism to Post-Fordism, from modernity to post-modernity, has been accompanied by a new

role for culture, as a “last resource” or a “regulatory element” in society. Culture is expected to create jobs, to improve the image of the city, to regenerate neighbourhoods... Many people, many artists and cultural actors, fear that culture and cultural actors might lose its autonomy. They fear, we fear, culture might become just a commodity, and the critical content that constitutes its very essence blurs or melts. There are worldwide fears that culture is just used just to *amuse ourselves to death* (Neil Postman), in an overwhelming *société du spectacle* (Guy Debord).

My opinion is that the perspective of human rights gives a strength and a legitimacy to the reflections on cultural policies that is not obtained if culture is justified solely as a resource or an instrument at the service of other ends (economic, social or environmental). But the relation between culture and human rights is rarely considered in the elaboration of a cultural policy.

## 2. CULTURE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize for Economics, partly for his work in conceptualising human development, and in linking human development to freedom. For Amartya Sen human development means ‘enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy in other words, ‘expanding the freedoms we have reason to value’. The aim is that our lives are ‘richer and more unfettered’ and that we will be able to become ‘fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions, that is the capacities for deliberate choice, and interacting with –and influencing– the world in which we live’.

Human development is a project which is individual to each person.

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this project is incomplete without contributions from the field of culture, without individual conscience of creativity, memories, rituality or critical knowledge. In its dynamic diversity, culture broadens the possibilities of choice and allows each individual greater freedom. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is clear in this purpose:

*“Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone (...) as a means of access to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence”.*

Amartya Sen influenced the work of the United Nations Development Programme and the calculations of the Human Development Index. Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP administrator for several years, has recently said: “Human development is first and foremost about allowing people to lead the kind of life they choose - and providing them with the tools and opportunities to make those choices” (UNDP, 2004).

There is an individual responsibility. Conquering the spaces of freedom is an individual aim. But, as Amartya Sen explains, there are bridges to overcome between “raw capacity”, “capability” and “activity”. Public **policies** are needed to fill the space between “raw capacity” and “capability”, as well as between “capability” and “activity”. This is why, today, **cultural policies** have become important for human development.

### 3. FROM RIGHTS TO POLICIES

More than ever, contemporary phenomena require a personal analysis that can only be provided by access to, and practice with, cultural activities. If freedom and human development involve culture, therefore, the public institutions need to find the laws and the policies, and later on the programmes and the projects, to guarantee that all citizens / inhabitants can attain, with and through culture, his or her full human development.

Cultural policies create the opportunities that no other public sphere provides. Cultural policies are built on the so-called intrinsic values of culture, which include concepts such as memory, creativity, critical knowledge, rituality, excellence, beauty, diversity (and maybe others).

Another way to express the need for cultural policies based on rights and associated with human development. It has been set out by John Holden, British researcher of the think-tank *Demos*: “Throughout the twentieth century we – the public – were defined by two things: our nationality and our work. (...) In the twenty-first century all that has changed. Our nation states are far from homogenous; every individual citizen is now part of a minority; and we no longer define ourselves by our work – most of us will have different jobs, take career breaks, get re-educated, adjust our roles when children come along, and so on. In these circumstances we, the public, *need* culture more and more to make sense of our lives, and to construct our individual and collective identities.”

Let me add a complement. Culture and human rights, even though they both have the individual as their central subject, also show the importance of the social sphere, the community, or the communities.

It is interesting to quote now Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is all too often forgotten:

*“Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible”.*

This article has been controversial, among other issues, because of the usage and reach, of the concept “community”. If this article was to be agreed today, writers may wish to consider turning the singular “**community**” into the plural “**communities**”, reflecting the reality of contemporary cultures, especially plural in our cities, but also the reality of cultural history, always shaped by plural societies, even when many national narratives have pretended to mask or neglect this fact.

### 4. CULTURE, THE FOURTH PILLAR OF SUSTAINABILITY

We need cultural policies. But how do we advocate for culture in public policy making, if policies are just built on three pillars, and none of them is culture?

The development of societies rests on three pillars: the economic pillar has to do with creating wealth (XIX century); the social pillar redistributes this wealth (XXth century), whilst the third pillar, the ecological (second half of XXth century), watches over responsibility for the environment. They make the “virtuous triangle” of

sustainable development. It was developed in the second half of the 1980s, and the report written by Gro Harlem Brundtland is its key document. It was successfully consolidated in the 1990s and is used today in local, national and global strategies as a pattern for analysis and public action. A few examples to illustrate the use of this triangle: at a global level, this triangle is the foundation of UNDP's work in developing countries; at a regional level, in Europe, the Lisbon strategy (the foundation of the European Union for its policies until 2010), is based on this virtuous triangle; at a local level, it is difficult not to find a long-term planning initiative not relying on this virtuous triangle.

The Australian researcher Jon Hawkes has formulated the need to structure a new "pillar" for sustainability. His document *The fourth pillar of sustainability – Culture's essential role in public planning* is recognised as a masterpiece for local policy making in many European cities.

We, the cultural actors and agents, know better than anybody that the circle of development cannot be squared without the **fourth pillar**: culture. The framework proposed by Jon Hawkes is extremely powerful. Cultural actors and agents, we, need strong metaphors and images to raise awareness on the cultural dimension of human development, and to secure a solid role for culture in public action.

It is difficult for anyone to advocate for culture without creating bridges with the other spheres of governance. The fourth pillar allows us to advocate for culture to be at the same level of significance for the development of a society as the economy, the social and the environmental. It neglects neither a certain degree of overlap nor the complementarity with each one of the other pillars. The fourth pillar offers a strong metaphor and creates solid bridges.

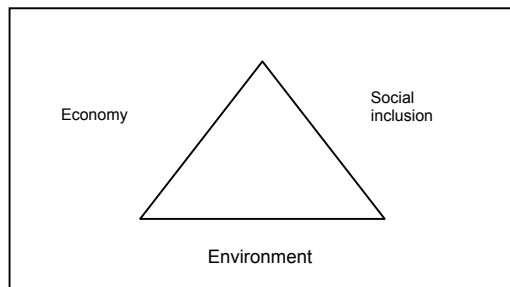


Figure 1. The old triangle of sustainable development

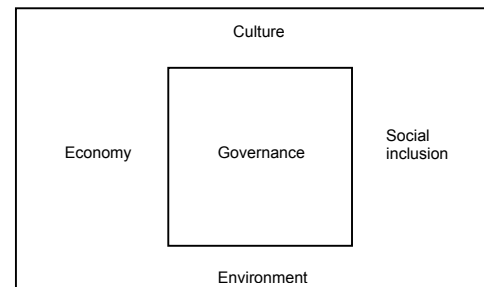


Figure 2. The new square of sustainable development

In a society with a growing diversity (not only ethnical diversity), that needs to value knowledge and life-long learning, that is connected (at least potentially) to all the societies of the world... I, you, he, she, we... need to build a **cultural pillar** that helps us understand the world, by discovering that our roots, our traditions, our cultures, are not self-evident, by building on our human development through the access to, and practice with, cultural activities.

## 5. GLOBALISATION AND CULTURAL POLICIES

Culture has assumed a very crucial role in the recent **globalisation** process.

- Some people say there is a clash of civilisations, some others say we need an Alliance of Civilisations, but we know that population movements push the challenges of dialogue between cultures or civilisations to be dealt at a local level every single day.
- The technological revolution demands reconsidering the mechanisms of production and access to cultural goods and services
- The processes of economic integration provoke a debate on the role that culture plays in world trade, and the need to protect the diversity, and especially the expression of traditional cultures.

The crucial role of culture in the globalisation process concerns us all, public and private sectors, and civil society, and leads us to reconsider our ideas, both on a worldwide and local scale.

Since the mid nineties various initiatives have been debated to provide world governance with a more solid public cultural competence. The member states of the International Network of Cultural Policies, and, at the same time, cultural society civil, grouped in two associations, the International Network for Cultural Diversity and the Coalition for Cultural Diversity, have urged the organisation of United Nations for Culture, (and Education, and Science), that is, **UNESCO**, to become the centre of these debates and to take over this emerging space.

The approval of UNESCO's Declaration (2001) and Convention (2005) on Cultural Diversity created the current **cultural diversity momentum**. In November 2001, the 31st General Conference of UNESCO unanimously adopted the "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity", a text without legislative value but with an enormous symbolic force for promoting and deepening these debates. In 2005, by an absolute majority of 148 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 4 abstentions, the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO adopted the "Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions", a cornerstone in the process. The Convention explicitly connects the relationship between human rights and cultural diversity, an absolute necessity to avoid the risk of fundamentalists using diversity as a subterfuge for oppression. The Convention defines the long claimed double nature of cultural goods and services (economic but also cultural, "as vehicles of identity, values and meaning"). This double nature enables securing the right of states (and regions, and cities) to establish cultural policies understood as public policies. The Convention is a text with legal value that recognises its complementarity with other international legal instruments such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation or the World Trade Organisation. The Convention embraces solidarity, and establishes an International Fund for Cultural Diversity, which could potentially be a formidable impulse to international cooperation in culture. The Convention entered into power on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007, three months after it had been ratified by 30 member states of UNESCO. The number is about to reach now 60. Never before has a Convention had been ratified so rapidly, and this speed illustrates the hunger for international processes on culture and development.

Besides the Convention of UNESCO, there are other processes, at an international level, such as the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue (2008), or the Alliance of Civilisations (from 2006).

**Cities and local governments** cannot be absent from the debate on the role of culture in globalisation. Today, local policies are indirectly conditioned by international agreements on cultural goods and services. The vitality of the cultural offer in a city is partly conditioned by the possibility of implementing public cultural policies: without

international regulatory frameworks which legitimise public action (as does the recently approved Convention), public cultural facilities and programmes (an independent cinema production, a theatre venue or a cultural centre) could be challenged as unfair competition or distortion of the market. And, most importantly, cities and local governments cannot be absent from the international debates because citizens exercise their cultural rights at a local level. Today's cities are the spaces where globalisation becomes clearly and immediately obvious. Creative processes take place in local communities. New shared imaginaries are originated in local communities.

## 6. GLOBALISATION, CITIES AND CULTURE

Raj Isar, president of Culture Action Europe, the most important federation of European arts and heritage associations, recently argued the need to make the cultural diversity of each territory explicit, so that the policies foster knowledge of otherness with a critical explanation. He says: "Cultures overlap. Basic ideas may, and do, recur in several cultures because cultures have partly common roots, build on similar human experiences and have, in the course of history, often learned and borrowed a great deal from each other. In other words, cultures do not have sharply delineated boundaries. Nor do cultures speak with one voice on religious, ethical, social or political matters and other aspects of people's lives." The challenge, Raj Isar argues, is to understand 'our' culture, "in fluid and open, rather than in fixed and essentialised terms".

Cities feel comfortable with these arguments – states and nations somewhat less. The local sphere demands and requests a distance from the standardising or identitarian impulse that has characterised most modern states.

Let us hear another voice. Colin Mercer, a leading expert in cultural policies and cultural governance, a British researcher who has lived and worked in Australia, has written that it is crucial to acknowledge that "diversity is actively *constitutive* of culture, not an element of 'additionality' to it. In spite of the homogenising tendencies of national cultures in the modern period, especially since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe and elsewhere, it is clear from the historical evidence and reality, that all cultures are diverse and hybrid in their formation – if not in the ways in which they are *retrospectively* constructed and imagined by nation states and their citizens".

The task of deconstructing / **reconstructing collective identities** is not easier for local governments (but certainly it is more difficult for some nation states). Cities cannot defend teleological discourses on the "cultural identity" of their citizens. Cities have always been the point of destination of immigrants, who, after a few years, become inhabitants and citizens. The identity of cities is obviously dynamic: it has always balanced the expression of traditional cultures with the creation of new cultural forms.

The essential cartographies of cities look very much alike. Citizens request democracy at a local level, services delivered with efficiency, processes that are transparent, a local government that facilitates, a city as an open-ended system, a city that creates new meaning with its inhabitants.

The growing relevance of **cities and local governments** has a strong political consequence. At a national level, local governments are not always acknowledged as important agents in national governance. For example, cities are not always consulted in the drafting of new state or national legislation that directly concerns their competences. Nor are cities always provided with the resources that the implementation of new legislation often implies for their budgets. Or even worse, still today, in some countries there is no political decentralisation,

municipal councils do not exist and Mayors are not elected. Democracy is incomplete when all the political power is concentrated in the national capital.

Cities and local governments are becoming active agents of national governance, and the national associations of municipalities have a growing role to play. Until very recently, at an international level, local governments were assimilated to non-governmental organisations; and they are not NGOs, of course: they are active in peace and reconciliation initiatives (local diplomacy) where states often fail, they are active in international cooperation for development (also known as “decentralised cooperation”) because they have an expertise that no other tiers of government have, for example, housing, risk prevention, public transportation... or cultural development.

In recent years, there has been “a gradual acceptance of the legitimacy and right of the cities, especially their democratic governments, to act in international political, economic and cultural life. The acknowledgement of that right today is a factor for the democratisation of international relations and [it is] indispensable for agreements and programmes of the international organisations to have a real impact” (Borja and Castells, 1997, 72).

A number of recent **United Nations** reports have repeatedly revealed the need for states, international and inter-governmental bodies to listen to the voice of cities and to work with them on the implementation of their strategies. For example, the report on the relations between the United Nations and civil society, known as the Cardoso Report (2004), or the more recent report elaborated by Jeffrey Sachs (2005) on the Millennium Development Goals and the world struggle against poverty. These reports recognise that cities and local governments have a priority role as elements of democratisation and efficiency.

At the end of the twentieth century, cities had won a place on the international scene. The unification of world municipalism in **United Cities and Local Governments** (May 2004), has undoubtedly been a milestone. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) was founded in May 2004. The first congress, the founding congress, was held in Paris. UCLG acts as the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government. UCLG forms the largest association of local governments in the world and has a decentralized structure with regional sections in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Euro-Asia, Middle East – West Asia, Latin America and North America. The cities and their associated members are located in more than 120 UN Member States. Among the direct members of United Cities and Local Governments we find over a thousand municipalities and 112 national associations.

The international association of cities and local governments is very young (May 2004). In fact, there were two international associations of local governments: the International Union of Local Authorities (created after the First World War) and the World Federation of United Cities (created after the Second World War). They decided to merge in 1996, after the growing convergence of objectives and the repeated claims of UN agencies and programmes to have one single voice for cities and local governments.

United Cities and Local Governments adopted an *Agenda 21 for culture* as a reference document for its cultural programmes and assumed the role of coordinator of the process subsequent to its approval.



## 7. THE AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE

The presence of cities in debates on cultural policies and cultural diversity at a global level is needed. The challenges of our societies are expressed in very acute terms in the cities. Concerns of cities associated with coexistence, conviviality, image, creativity, rituality, knowledge... are intrinsically cultural. A large part of the future of democracy and welfare is dependent on the existence of public spaces and spheres to discuss and implement policies and programmes either “cultural” or with a strong “cultural dimension”.

Our society needs a cultural pillar because our challenges are cultural. Local governments have an essential role to play in the articulation of a new paradigm for cultural policies. Colin Mercer has expressed this assumption in these terms: “Any response both to the potential and the threat of the reality of globalisation (in economic, social and ethical terms) has to be firmly grounded not in negative gestures of dismay but in the development of indigenous and endogenous capacity to make places, to make (...) narratives, stories and images [:] which assert *this is where, who and what we are and how we distinguish and know ourselves* (...). Local Government and local policies are both the ‘engines’ and the drivers for effective participation in this field”.

Franco Bianchini, the author, with Jude Bloomfield, of “the intercultural city”, suggests moving towards a new notion of citizenship. This new notion should not have a communitarian approach, “which assumes that a preconstituted consensus exists”, but “an open-ended system (...) constructed through the self-organisation of autonomous actors in civil society with the city offering training, [facilitation and intermediation:] (...) actively soliciting projects and ideas in all areas of urban policy (...).”

One of the main challenges of our societies is to give visibility to and to legitimise the processes of construction and reconstruction of citizens’ *imageries*, or narratives, or tales: the way I find my place in the world and feel safe, the way I explain my relation with my fellow citizens, the way I explain my relation with the rest of the world, the way I feel comfortable with the landscape, the way I relate with nature, the resources and the seasons, the way I construct the past... These narratives are always invented. In the past, by the mighty – today, these narratives can be at least discussed, in a process that involves the origination of new cultural forms.

This is why cities are ready to act in the world today both with the universalistic formula “**think global, act local**”, and also with its diversalist complement “**think local, act global**”: assuming a range of universal values, promoting the *genius loci*, understanding that we are “others” and we need the other “others” to exist (Gómez-Peña, 1996).

The *Agenda 21 for culture* is a commitment of the local government with the citizenry to elaborate and implement cultural policies and programmes. It can also be considered as a declaration of cities for cultural rights. It is also an example of the political innovation needed to link culture to human development. The *Agenda 21 for culture* aims to reinforce the cultural pillar of our cities.

A group of cities and local governments that felt “committed to human rights, cultural diversity, sustainability, participatory democracy and creating conditions for peace” decided to write a guiding document for local cultural policies. From September 2002 until May 2004, preliminary drafts of this document were discussed in various meetings and conferences organised by international networks like Eurocities, Interlocal, Mercociudades or les Rencontres. The document was approved by the 4th Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion of Porto Alegre, held in Barcelona on 8 May 2004. The name given to this document was *Agenda 21 for culture*. After its

approval, the cities presented *Agenda 21 for culture* to United Nations – Habitat and UNESCO. In October 2004, the world association of cities, United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG, adopted *Agenda 21 for culture* as a reference document for its programmes on culture and assumed the role of coordinator of the process subsequent to its approval.

The ***Agenda 21 for culture*** was not created in a vacuum. Without the experience of many cities in cultural planning during the last decade it could not have been written. Without the inspiration of many researchers in cultural policies, and organisations on cultural development, such as the Cultural Development Network of Victoria, it would not exist.

It was the first time that the local governments the world over worked together to agree upon a guiding document for local cultural policies. A Working Group on Culture was created within UCLG in June 2005 in order “To promote the role of culture as a central dimension of local policies through the dissemination and implementation of the Agenda 21 for culture”.

The World Congress of UCLG, the most important gathering of Mayors of the world, meets every three years, and the most recent meeting took place in Jeju (Korea) in October 2007. The World Congress decided to upgrade the cultural issues and created a Committee on culture because, “culture is one of the crucial aspects of globalization, especially with regard to cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and creativity”. UCLG decided to “act to promote all human rights and respect diversity in our cities and territories as a foundation for peace and development” and recognised that “cultural policies form part of the different dimensions of good local governance in the same way as economic and social development or environmental protection”. Hence, the World Congress of UCLG decided to renew its “commitment to the Agenda 21 of culture (...) reference document of UCLG for activities related to cultural issues since 2004, [and] the main contribution of cities to global cultural governance both because of its innovative character and its relevance in multilateral cooperation mechanisms”.

The *Agenda 21 for culture* has 67 articles, divided over three large sections: principles (16 articles), undertakings (29 articles) and recommendations (22 articles).

- The “principles” section describes the relationship between culture and human rights, diversity, sustainability, participative democracy and peace.
- The “undertakings” section focuses on the scope of local government responsibilities, and requests a solid centrality of cultural policies.
- The “recommendations” section advocates for the renewed importance of culture, and demands that this importance be recognised in the programmes, budgets and organisational charts of the various levels of government (local / regional / national) and by international organisations.

The Agenda 21 for culture is available at present in 13 languages: Arabic, Bulgarian, Catalan, English, French, Galician, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Serbian, Spanish and Turkish. All documents are available at the website <http://www.agenda21culture.net>.

The contents of Agenda 21 for culture can also be summarised thematically, as follows.

#### *Culture and human rights*

- Culture and human development. Cultural diversity as “a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.”

- Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights. “No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon the human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope.”
- Mechanisms, instruments and resources for guaranteeing freedom of speech
- Invitation to artists to commit themselves with the city, improving coexistence and quality of life, increasing the creative and critical capacity of all citizens

#### *Culture and governance*

- New central role of culture in society. Legitimacy of cultural policies
- Quality of local development depends on the interweaving of cultural policies and other public policies
- Local governance: a joint responsibility of citizens, civil society and governments
- Improvement of assessment mechanisms in culture. System of cultural indicators
- Participation of local governments in national cultural policies and programmes
- Importance of networks and international cooperation
- International recognition of local governments in policy-making in the cultural field

#### *Culture, sustainability and territory*

- Cultural diversity, as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature
- Diversity of cultural expressions brings wealth. Importance of a wide cultural ecosystem, with diversity of origins, actors and content
- Dialogue, coexistence and interculturality as basic principles for the dynamics of citizen relationships
- Public spaces as cultural spaces

#### *Culture and social inclusion*

- Access to culture at all stages of life
- Expressiveness as a basic dimension of human dignity and social inclusion without any prejudice to gender, origin, poverty or any other kind of discrimination.
- Building audiences and encouraging cultural participation as vital elements of citizenship

#### *Culture and economy*

- Recognition of the economic dimension of culture. Importance of culture as a factor in the creation of wealth and economic development
- Funding culture with various sources, such as subsidies, venture capital funds, micro-credits or tax incentives.
- Strategic role of the cultural industries and the local media for their contribution to local identity, creative continuity and job creation
- Relations between cultural facilities and the organisations of the knowledge economy
- Respect and guarantee rights of authors and artists and ensure their fair remuneration

On 31 December 2007, UCLG had registered that 265 cities, local governments and organisations from all over the world are linked to *Agenda 21 for culture* (there are probably many more, but it is impossible to trace ).

Why are cities using *Agenda 21 for culture*? Today cities are using *Agenda 21 for culture*, on the one hand, to advocate for the importance of culture in local development to international organisations: UN-Habitat, UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, etc. The Working Group on Culture of UCLG coordinates the cities that wish to advocate for the importance of culture in local development. On the other hand, cities are using *Agenda 21 for culture* to reinforce local cultural policies. Adopting *Agenda 21 for culture* does not

guarantee more resources, but it holds great symbolic importance: it expresses a city's commitment to make culture a key part of urban policies, and a commitment of the local government to elaborate and implement cultural policies and programmes with the community. Last, but not least, it is also a sign of solidarity and cooperation with cities and local governments worldwide, a sign which is not a minor thing in our days.

*Agenda 21 for culture* provides an opportunity for every city to create a long-term vision of culture as a basic pillar in its development. In 2006 UCLG's Working Group on Culture adopted the document "Advice on local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture". This document draws up general concepts and considerations. Conditions to develop a cultural policy vary: history, geography, characteristics of the population and vitality of civil society, among other factors, differ from one city to another. Furthermore, cities have different levels of legal competencies, that is, national and/or regional juridical frameworks. The founding conception of the nation-state (unitary state, decentralised state, federal state), as well as the definition of national policies (laws and regulations that recognise, protect or promote cultural diversity, for example) is of paramount importance for local cultural policies to be elaborated and implemented.

On 24 October 2006, UCLG's Working Group on Culture approved two new specific documents (or "policy papers"), on "Advice on local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture" and "Cultural indicators and Agenda 21 for culture".

Let me briefly refer to the document "Advice on local implementation of the Agenda 21 for culture". This document mainly deals with the **governance of culture** at a local level. This document provides general recommendations that may be useful to any local government worldwide that wishes to develop the *Agenda 21 for culture*; it encourages each city or local government "to consider the value of the issues raised in the following paragraphs to their policymaking processes". To quote but a few:

- a) Political leadership at the highest level of local government.
- c) Local government as a catalyst of cultural processes: reinforcing civil society, fostering consensus and establishing mutual responsibilities.
- d) The encouragement and stimulation of the democratic participation of citizens in the formulation, exercise and evaluation of public policies on culture.
- e) The transparency of information, and the communication to citizens through various channels.
- k) The coordination between the process of cultural planning and the strategic plans of the city or any other integrated local planning process (such as Local Agenda 21, Local Area Agreement, Integrated Local Area Planning...).
- n) The establishment of application and monitoring procedures for the commitments agreed upon.
- r) The participation of the city in multilateral networks and associations dedicated to cultural cooperation, exchanging good practices and advocating the importance of culture in national and international programmes.

The document "Advice on local implementation of the Agenda 21 for culture" suggests four specific tools as examples:

1. Local cultural strategy
2. Charter of cultural rights and responsibilities
3. Culture council
4. Cultural impact assessment

Let me reproduce what this document says about each one of these tools.

### **1. *Local cultural strategy.***

The development of a local cultural strategy involves the debate, drawing up and approval of a document that describes the cultural priorities of a city. The most effective process would be one that engages all the cultural agents in a territory along with the citizenry and the public administration. The process usually begins with an audit and assessment of the cultural resources of a city and the economic, social and territorial trends. The local cultural strategy can then be formed into a document, debated and approved by the municipal plenary or by authorities such as councils or commissions with the participation of the citizenry. The document normally consists of a mission statement, various objectives and several actions. The document establishes mutual responsibilities between local government, cultural agents and civil society. A local cultural strategy normally includes an implementation timetable, follow-up and evaluation indicators for each objective and action, as well as monitoring procedures.

### **2. *Charter of cultural rights and responsibilities.***

A local charter of cultural rights is a document that specifically defines the cultural rights and responsibilities of the inhabitants of a territory. Such a document would be based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other recognised international texts that cover human rights and culture. The effective development of a local charter of cultural rights relies on active participation by the cultural agents of a territory, the citizenry, the administration and experts in human rights. The document would normally be approved by the municipal plenary and implies the creation of a person or organisation to guarantee the fulfilment of the Charter and to be the mediator in the often complex situations related to cultural rights and responsibilities.

### **3. *Culture council.***

A culture council is a public body that addresses the cultural issues of a city. Such a council would normally reflect the diversity of cultural agents: different sectors (heritage, arts libraries...), different dimensions (large agents to small initiatives), different structures (public, private, associative...) and other variables. Normally, the council would debate, and issue opinions on the most relevant cultural themes of the city. The authority of such councils is variable: there are strictly consultative councils, through to councils with the capacity to take executive decisions.

### **4. *Cultural impact assessment.***

Local development projects often have their economic, social and environmental impacts assessed and evaluated, but their cultural impacts are rarely analysed. *Agenda 21 for culture*, in article 25, promotes the implementation of forms of "cultural impact assessment" of initiatives "that involve significant changes in the cultural life of cities". A cultural impact assessment is a document developed in consultation with the citizenry and cultural agents that analyses the contributions (both positive and negative) that a local development project could generate in the cultural life of a city. Given the effect that all projects can have on cultural life, it is likely that "cultural impact assessment" could be considered as a process to be applied to all policy and programme making.

The number of cities that are developing a "local cultural strategy" and / or a "culture council" is growing; and many of them use the Agenda 21 for culture for inspiration. There is just such a city (Lille, in France) that is developing a local "charter of cultural rights and responsibilities", but none (or, at least, it is not documented) that

are developing a “cultural impact assessment” framework. But these are tools that cities might use in the upcoming years.

The Agenda 21 for culture provides an opportunity for every city to create a long-term vision of culture as a basic pillar in its development. It promotes culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. And it needs to be locally developed with new alliances between the cultural spheres and the citizenry. At the same time, the *Agenda 21 for culture* connects cities worldwide. It is a learning hub, a place to exchange information on the governance of culture, and a place for cities to advocate, together, for the role of culture in local development. Agenda 21 for culture is the main (original and multilateral) contribution of cities to global cultural governance.

Today, the Committee on Culture is chaired by Jordi Martí, Councillor for Culture of Barcelona, and has three vice-presidencies, in the cities of Stockholm, Buenos Aires and Lille. The Committee on Culture is made of cities such as Amman, Brazzaville, Córdoba, Diyarbakir, Essaouira, Kazan, Porto Alegre, Quito, Rio de Janeiro, Roma, Torino, Toronto and Venice, as well as several associations of municipalities.

The process, actually, just begins. The united voice of local governments is needed to place the relation between human rights, culture, sustainable development and democracy at the centre of our societies. The programme for the next years is busy. Advocacy activities need to be undertaken before the international organisations related to culture and development, mainly UNESCO and UNDP. More research needs to be commissioned in order to make the fourth pillar more solid. Policy papers on specific issues need to be elaborated and published. Evidence of good practice needs to be provided by those cities that have adopted Agenda 21 for culture: good practice needs to be analysed and exchanged. A communication campaign needs to be launched, perhaps coinciding with each 21<sup>st</sup> May, World Day of Cultural Diversity, and localised in partner cities and civil society organisations with specific programmes. A balance in the membership is required, the equal dignity of all cultures requires the voices of cities of all continents to be heard.

The cultural component of sustainable development will not be erected by nations, the vast majority of them are not yet ready to place the relation between human rights, culture, sustainable development and democracy at the centre of our societies, because they have neglected cultural diversity for ages. Today, a world citizen has understood the importance of our “fluttering butterfly”, metaphor of biodiversity and the ecological challenges of our times. It was thanks to an alliance of international organisations and civil society movements that began in the 1970s, nearly 40 years ago. Our average citizen has not yet the information on dying languages or grassroots creativity. It is difficult for him or her to be active in local-global processes aiming to protect and promote cultural diversity. But the number of those that believe that cultural diversity has the same importance as biodiversity is growing. It will take some time for the nations to understand the universal value of a dying language, or the importance of the others in one’s own culture. This is why the voices of cities and local governments are needed more than ever. New global alliances between international organisations, civil society movements and cities can be forged. We live in a very interesting momentum that needs time to consolidate, and a wide time perspective to be understood. The Agenda 21 for culture could be a successful piece in this process. *Eppur si muove*.

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