

**Advice on local implementation of
the Agenda 21 for culture**

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Working Group on Culture of UCLG



culture 21
Agenda 21 for culture

1. Introduction

The Agenda 21 for culture was approved by cities and local governments worldwide on 8th May 2004, as a guiding document for public cultural policies and as a contribution to the cultural development of humanity.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) adopted the 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. UCLG's Working Group on Culture, constituted in Beijing on 9 June 2005, is the meeting point for cities, local governments and networks that place culture at the heart of their development processes.

A growing number of cities and local governments around the world have formally adopted Agenda 21 for culture. A standard adoption document is available on the websites www.agenda21culture.net and www.cities-localgovernments.org. Adopting Agenda 21 for culture holds great symbolic importance: it expresses a city's commitment to make culture a key part of urban policies and is a sign of solidarity and cooperation with cities and local governments worldwide.

Cities are using the Agenda 21 for culture, on the one hand, to advocate for the importance of culture in local development to national governments and international organizations, and, on the other hand, to reinforce local cultural policies.

In 2006, at the request of some cities, UCLG's Working Group on Culture has drawn up some general recommendations that may be useful as guidance for local implementation of the Agenda 21 for culture.

2. Culture as a pillar of sustainable development. Cultural planning

The relation between culture and sustainable development is being reinforced as a fundamental principle of local policies. Agenda 21 for culture, as a guiding document for public cultural policies, offers an opportunity for every city to create a long-term vision of culture as a pillar in their development.

Local implementation of the Agenda 21 for culture can be seen as an exercise of cultural planning. Planning is understood as the process that relates the agents, objectives, activities, resources and expected results of a project.

Cultural planning has become widespread over the last 10-15 years. It has been used to develop local cultural policies based on the values (memory, creativity, critical knowledge, diversity, rituality...) that culture brings to individuals and communities. It has also been used to underline the significance of culture in other local policies, such as employment and social inclusion, and to introduce cultural considerations into all public policies. Several key texts have supported the importance of cultural planning. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose Human Development Report 2004, «Cultural liberty in today's diverse world», emphasises the need to move towards an open culture as an essential element in all development strategies. Another example is the work of the Australian researcher Jon Hawkes, who proposes culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability, of the same order as the three classic pillars: economic, social and environmental.

Agenda 21 for culture offers an opportunity for every city to create a long-term vision of culture as a basic pillar in their development. According to the principles, commitments and recommendations of Agenda 21 for culture, and considering the local characteristics (history, population, size, type of government, vitality of civil society, identity and characteristics of cultural sectors...), each city or local government is encouraged to consider the value of the issues raised in the following paragraphs to their policymaking processes.

3. General considerations

The following paragraphs express general concepts and considerations on the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, derived from its principles, commitments and recommendations:

- a) Political leadership at the highest level of local government.
- b) The take up of the tools by the local government as a whole, not just by the services, areas and/or departments responsible for culture.
- 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.

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- f) Technical rigour and clear argumentation, utilising experts in the research and development of cultural policies and cultural management.
 - g) Recognition of different cultural needs and demands made by people and organizations in a territory, including both cultural agents and the rest of the citizenry.
 - h) The cultural resources of a territory include the “classic” sectors (heritage, arts, libraries), as well as those to be found within the creative industries, the media, education and sport.
 - i) The reinforcement of the cohesion of the cultural sector by means of objectives and actions that bring attention to the intrinsic values of culture.
 - j) The reinforcement of culture as a public sphere based on freedom of expression, critical knowledge, diversity, participation and creativity. This sphere is nourished by agents and professionals in culture as well as by the cultural expressions of citizenry.
 - 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...).
 - l) Cross-sectoral applicability, bringing a cultural perspective to the urban project as a whole, with objectives and actions that show how culture impacts on, and is impacted by, activities in areas such as education, health, urban planning and economy.
 - m) The establishment of programmes for innovation, laboratories or specific units for the development of key projects.
 - n) The establishment of application and monitoring procedures for the commitments agreed upon.
 - o) The establishment of a system of cultural indicators.
 - p) The consideration of the training needs in cultural policies/ management/ mediation, derived from the centrality of culture in society.
 - q) The relationship of the local cultural process with the regional, national and international public administrations, in order to contextualize the priorities and orientate the securing of new economic resources.
 - 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.

4. Tools

If it is wished that these general considerations are to have an impact on city life, it will be necessary to develop specific tools. These could include a document, a council and/or other initiatives. Each city or local government will find the formula that best suits its needs. The following four tools are suggested as examples.

4.1. 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 the local government, the cultural agents and the 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.

4.2. 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 be normally approved by the municipal plenary and implies the creation of a person or organization to guarantee the fulfilment of the Charter and to be the mediator in the often complex situations related to cultural rights and responsibilities.

4.3. 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.

4.4. CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Local development projects often have their economic, social and environmental impacts assessed and evaluated, but their cultural impacts are rarely analysed. The 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.

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