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Agenda 21 for culture: state of affairs and perspectives

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Agenda 21 for culture: state of affairs and perspectives

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1. Introduction

The Agenda 21 for culture is celebrating its fifth anniversary. This report aims to give evidence of some of the cities that have been active in the promotion or the implementation of this declaration, as well as to collect and organise some of the ideas that could articulate the next five years.

The report is made up of 20 articles. 12 articles have been written by prominent officials and officers developing their activity in cities, local governments and associations that are closely related to Agenda 21 for culture. 7 articles have been written by researchers, activists and distinguished personalities from the civil society. This introduction completes the list up to the number of 20.

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2. The beginning

The first idea to write “a document that could become a declaration to be used by cities as a framework for local policy making” was conceived as early as September 2002, at a meeting in the city of Porto Alegre, attended by Mayors, Councillors for culture and directors of cultural affairs of some major cities. Between January 2003 and May 2004, five drafts of the document were discussed by municipal networks such as Interlocal, Eurocities, les Rencontres and Sigma, mainly held in Iberoamerican and European cities. The most difficult discussions focused on the length of the document: the 67 articles were a synthesis between those who wished a larger document and those who claimed for a brief declaration. The name of the document was also a nice element for discussion, as several proposals were considered: “Agenda 21 for culture”, “Declaration of cities for cultural diversity” or “An agenda for local cultural development of cities”, amongst others.

With this name, Agenda 21 for culture was approved on 8 May 2004 by the 4th Forum of Local Authorities, gathered in Barcelona as part of the Universal Forum of Cultures - Barcelona 2004. The united organisation of cities had been born, as Elisabeth Gateau explains in her presentation to this report, exactly the same week, 3 days earlier, in Paris. **United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG** had been strategically involved in the later stages of the drafting of Agenda 21 for culture. Most of cities that had drafted Agenda 21 for culture did not wish that “the declaration was put away in drawer or on shelves”. Thus, the first Executive Bureau of UCLG (held in Sao Paulo in October 2004), adopted Agenda 21 for culture as a reference document for its programmes on culture and assumed the role of coordinating the processes subsequent to its approval.

3. The activities of the Working Group on culture (2005-2007)

On 9-10 June 2005, in Beijing, UCLG constituted the Working Group on culture. The main aim of the WG for 2005-2007 was: “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 Working Group on Culture achieved the following results.

A. An agreement was reached within the WG, on the vision of culture within UCLG.

“Local policies for development are usually based on the virtuous triangle of sustainability: economic growth, social inclusion, environmental balance. Today, this triangle is not sufficient. Culture is becoming, partly thanks to the impact of Agenda 21 for culture, in the fourth pillar of sustainable development at a local level. Local cultural policies, based on the intrinsic values of culture (creativity, critical knowledge, diversity, memory, rituality...) are becoming more important for democracy and citizenship”.

B. The WG 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” in October 2006.

C. The document “Advice on local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture” offered cities wishing to create a long-term vision of culture as a basic pillar in its development to use four specific tools:

- Local cultural strategy
- Charter of cultural rights and responsibilities
- Culture council
- Cultural impact assessment

D. The translation of Agenda 21 for culture in 9 languages: English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Galician, German, Italian, Portuguese and Turkish.

E. The WG created a new specific multilingual website: <http://www.agenda21culture.net> and approved a corporate identity, to be freely used.

F. Strategic relations were established with UNESCO’s Culture Sector, the European Union (Commission) and the Direction for Culture of the Council of Europe.

G. The report “Local policies for cultural diversity” was commissioned by UNESCO and delivered in September 2006. This report was edited in PDF and uploaded as the first issue of our collection of reports. The report concluded as follows:

“Diversity is constitutive of culture. It challenges many of the official discourses on culture and cultural policies, especially those that were based on homogeneity and/or have democratic deficits. Diversity provides a new set of conceptual lenses to describe current local policies; and it will probably articulate a new generation of cultural policies.”

H. The Agenda 21 for culture was presented by members of the WG in more than 50 international congresses, seminars and meetings.

I. In June 2007, the number of cities, local governments and organizations from all over the world that were linked to Agenda 21 for culture reached the figure of 225.

J. The Working Group held two official meetings, in October 2006 (Barcelona) and in September 2007 (Lille).

Logo of Agenda 21 for culture
in several languages



4. The activities of the Committee on culture (2008 –present)

Building on the positive achievements of the Working Group in 2005-2007, the proposal to constitute a Committee on culture was suggested by 15 UCLG members. On 31 October 2007, at the World Congress of Jeju, UCLG constituted its Committee on culture, with the following main aim for 2008-2010: “To promote the role of culture as a central dimension of local policies, fostering the relation between culture and sustainable development and the processes of intercultural dialogue, through the international dissemination and local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture.”

The World Congress reinforced the position of culture within the activities of the organisation, as it was selected as one its strategic priorities:

Culture is one of the crucial aspects of globalization, especially with regard to cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and creativity. The Agenda 21 for culture, reference document of UCLG for activities related to cultural issues since 2004, has become the main contribution of cities to global cultural governance both because of its innovative character and its relevance in multilateral cooperation mechanisms. With its renewed commitment to the Agenda 21 of culture, UCLG will enhance in 2007-2010 its leadership in this area and develop its capacity as a forum for exchange, action and excellence on local cultural development

Although the mandate of the Committee on culture has not yet expired, these are some of the results of its activities.

A. The Committee presented four reports in 2009.

- “Culture, local governments and Millennium Development Goals”, with articles by Inge Ruigrok, Amareswar Galla, José-Antonio González Mancebo and Nil Sismanyazici-Navaie.
- “The Agenda 21 for culture in France - State of affairs and outlook”, by Christelle Blouët, in cooperation with of the French *Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles*.
- “Culture and sustainable development: examples of institutional innovation and proposal of a new cultural policy profile”, written for the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue of UNESCO in the framework of the process “Towards a new cultural policy profile”.
- “Cities, cultures and developments. A report that marks the fifth anniversary of Agenda 21 for culture”, the report you are currently reading.

B. The translation of Agenda 21 for culture reached the number of 17 languages: Arabic, Bulgarian, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Serbian (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian), Swedish and Ukrainian were added to previously existing: English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Galician, German, Italian, Portuguese and Turkish. All these translations were undertaken by local partners.

C. A deeper relation with Unesco. UCLG has been officially accepted as an observer to the Organs of the Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of Unesco. Moreover, the Committee on culture (through the City of Stockholm) is assessing the programme "Network of Creative Cities". Last, but not least, the Committee has been involved in the process "Towards a new framework for cultural policies", convened by the Division on Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue.

D. The Committee has cooperated with (i) the Intercultural Cities programme (Council of Europe) and supported the organisation of two seminars in Liverpool, in May 2008, and in Barcelona in October 2008, (ii) the Platform for an Intercultural Europe, in the elaboration of the Rainbow Paper, and (iii) the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

E. Four meetings were co-organised by the Committee in 2008-2009:

- The regional seminar "Urban policies and cultural development: planning as a strategy", organized in Quito (Ecuador) in April 2008, in partnership with Quito Metropolitan Council, Interlocal Network of Iberoamerican Cities for culture and AECID – Spanish Agency for International Cooperation.
- The regional "Culture and strategies for local development", organized in Dakar (Senegal) in July 2008, in partnership with the Commission of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa – UEMOA, the City of Dakar, the Ministry for Culture of Senegal and AECID – Spanish Agency for International Cooperation.
- The workshop on "African cities and local cultural cooperation", which took place at the Euro-African Campus for cultural cooperation, in Maputo, in June 2009, in cooperation with OCPA – Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa and Interarts Foundation.
- The seminar on "Culture, sustainable development and local governments", in June 2009, in Barcelona, in cooperation with the French Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles and Unesco, order to mark the 5th anniversary of Agenda 21 for culture

F. The logistic and economic support to the cities of Buenos Aires, Medellín and Quito in the elaboration of a local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, with the support of AECID – Spanish Agency for International Cooperation.

G. The Committee negotiated the launching of a call for proposals on the local governance of culture with a strong involvement of AECID – Spanish Agency for International Cooperation. This call for proposals will grant economic support to cities and local governments (members of UCLG in Africa, Iberoamerica or the Mediterranean) aiming to develop Agenda 21 for culture locally.

H. A new website was created, based on open source, allowing uploading and downloading documents.

I. In April 2009, the number of cities, local governments and organizations from all over the world that were linked to Agenda 21 for culture reached the figure of 350 (see annex 1 of this report). An "imaginary city map" was produced as an illustration (see annex 2 of this report).

J. The Committee held an official meeting, in October 2008 in Istanbul, and is preparing the meeting to be held in Guangzhou in November 2009.

5. The local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture

When cities and local governments take notice or discover the existence of Agenda 21 for culture, this set of questions is often asked. Is it worth it? Will we obtain any economic benefit? How do we relate our current cultural policies with Agenda 21 for culture? How can such a long declaration be implemented locally? Will we need to create new processes or new programmes? Does Agenda 21 for culture entail a new cultural strategy for the city? Are there indicators to monitor our progress? To whom will we have to explain our progress?

The documents approved by the Committee on culture in October 2006, namely, “Advice on local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture” and “Cultural indicators and Agenda 21 for culture” provided some answers to these questions, but they did not resolve the lack of resources to learn from cities that are implementing locally Agenda 21 for culture.

This chapter is structured in three sections. The first one focuses on the cities, and it intends to give a summary of the evidences of the diverse ways with which cities are locally implementing Agenda 21 for culture. The second explains a summary of the difficulties found by cities that are locally implementing the Agenda 21 for culture. The third gives the voice to civil society.

These sections should not at all refrain from the reading of the articles of this report, as they offer a wider and deeper picture.

A. A TIPOLOGY OF CITIES

Firstly, there are a number of cities that have (very deeply and very rapidly) internalised the Agenda 21 for culture in their cultural policies. The articles written by **Catherine Cullen** (Lille), **Jordi Martí** and **Carles Giner** (Barcelona), and **Jean-Robert Choquet** and **Marie-Eve Bonneau** (Montréal) express that Agenda 21 for culture appeared at a timely moment in local cultural policy-making, and that new policies, programmes and structures have been created explicitly related to this declaration. The new cultural strategies of Montréal and Lille, or the new Council for culture in Barcelona are good examples, but these can also be found in smaller cities as Aubagne, Sant Mateu or Chacao. In these cities, the local civil society (mainly, the professional associations in the various cultural sectors, but also the NGOs that connect culture to social change) is internationally connected with peer organizations, and is active in the local advocacy for cultural development. These cities have formally adopted Agenda 21 for culture in their municipal plenary councils, and are also nationally and internationally advocating for its wider dissemination. The balance between solid municipal leadership and strong local civil society seems to be a key element. In these cities, the new local cultural policies are explained to be a direct result of Agenda 21 for culture.

The situation of a wide number of cities that are using many elements of Agenda 21 for culture in their local cultural policies, especially in issues related to cultural governance and to cultural diversity / intercultural dialogue issues. The cities of Porto Alegre, Seville, Dortmund, Redland and Novi Sad, with the articles written by Sergius Gonzaga, Paz Sánchez Zapata, Kurt Eichler, Judy Spokes (with a contribution from Aunty Joan Hendriks), and Biljana Mickov illustrate this situation. Reading their very interesting articles is strongly recommended. Most of other member cities of the Committee on culture share this situation; a few good examples are Lyon, Maputo, Quito, Medellín, Belo Horizonte, Diyarbakir, Dublin, Geneva or Torino. One of the challenges for the Committee on culture for the next years will be to give more visibility to these processes.

Some cities state that Agenda 21 for culture perfectly covers the current cultural policies. They have formally adopted Agenda 21 for culture. Among many cities, this fact is illustrated by the cases of Essaouira (in an article written by Mayor **Asma Chaabi**) and Buenos Aires, whose minister **Hernán Lombardi** states “not only is there considerable overlap with current cultural policy in the city [and Agenda 21 for culture], but these commitments have also been essential components of cultural management in Buenos Aires since the city achieved its political autonomy in 1996”. Most of these cities declare an interest in using Agenda 21 for culture in the new generation of cultural policies.

The cities that have been fighting to include Agenda 21 for culture, and thus, a cultural dimension, in the main planning document for urban development deserve a specific mention. This is the case of the cities of Dortmund and Lille (see the articles of Kurt Eichler and Catherine Cullen in this report), or the cities of Geneva and Angers (see the case-studies reproduced in our report 4, on “Culture and sustainable development: examples of institutional innovation and proposal of a new cultural policy profile”, available on the website). The recent announcement by Quebec’s Ministry of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women explaining that it will draw up an Agenda 21 for culture for Quebec from now until 2013, and that it will make this action the focus of its plan of action for sustainable development, is a clear example in the same direction.

The articles of this report also show that Agenda 21 for culture is known, but not yet fully used in many cities. This would be the case of the local governments in New South Wales (Australia), whose case is illustrated by **Christopher Hudson** in his article: “Although Agenda 21 for culture is beginning to be referenced in local policy and planning, it remains largely remote from NSW Local Government. However, Agenda 21 for culture does provide significant conceptual support for those working in the arts in Local Government. (...) Although Australian councils do not feature as adoptees of Agenda 21 for culture, there is satisfaction and comfort for Local Government staff working in cultural development that Agenda 21 for culture exists, and its ‘worldwide mission’ has begun. Agenda 21 for culture is successful in elucidating, at an overarching level, the essential truth of the intrinsic value of cultural policy and arts practice.” This might also be the case of the city of Berlin, whose cultural policies are explained in the article written by **Bettina Heinrich**.

Another group of cities and local governments have formally adopted Agenda 21 for culture but have not provided any evidence of its local implementation. It is possible that some of these cities either have considered Agenda 21 for culture as a brand or a self-evident process that did not need further local action.

Finally, in the last year some cities were approached by the Committee in order to invite them to join the network of cities related to Agenda 21 for culture. Some of these cities stated that Agenda 21 for culture is not relevant in their current situation, as the creative industries are the main aim of their local policies for culture, and thus cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, the local governance of culture or the relation between culture and sustainable development are not seen as priorities (the “creative hype” is very often damaging long-term cultural governance processes). Some other cities (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world, but not only) find it very difficult to formally adopt a declaration or to refer to international documents, when there are no sources of funding that automatically accompany the process. Some other cities, mainly in the developing world, do not yet have a cultural policy, and, while recognizing the interest of the contents, find that there is a “missing piece” between the width of the declaration and the possibility of local implementation.

Some articles in this report also show very concrete methodologies adopted the locally disseminate Agenda 21 for culture. Catherine Cullen (Lille) explains that “since we adopted the declaration, the link between culture and sustainable development has been constantly questioned, raised, enriched, and many suggestions have been put forward. We organise regular meetings called ‘culture breakfasts’ for small groups, structures, cultural associations and independent artists from the city, which allow us to gather opinions and requests and to evaluate the impact of the decisions made”. This article also explains in detail the project “Dances at Fives” which implements Agenda 21 for culture in an artistic (very successful) neighbourhood-based project.

B. THE DIFFICULTIES

The cities that have decided to use Agenda 21 for culture in their local policies have found several difficulties. Catherine Cullen summarises this difficulties in her article, as follows:

“Firstly, the difficulty lies in thinking and acting with a cross-sector approach. Work with departments for education, solidarity, the elderly and campaigns against exclusion is carried out smoothly but we experience numerous difficulties with departments for economics, urban planning and finance.

» Secondly, we have observed that the actors of sustainable development often have little awareness of problems relating to culture. Moreover, the quantitative criteria of sustainable development often seem cold and technical compared to the criteria of art and artistic practice, which need to be more sensitive. Actors of culture and sustainable development have to fight against this prior absence of language and common methods for working together.

» It is also necessary to continually reinvent the educational content of the Agenda 21 for culture for officials, the press, cultural actors and inhabitants (often the first to understand). We need to implement practical actions immediately in order to show them examples.

» Lastly, we should mention the segregation of cultural actors from different artistic disciplines. As regular meetings of the city, its structures, artists and all cultural actors involved, 'culture breakfasts' are, I think, a good way of tackling different ways of working and envisioning creation. This 'desegregation' work will take time, but it is necessary."

Another difficulty in the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture is underlined by Teixeira Coelho (please read his brilliant and critical article) when he states "it was never a real agenda, a list of things to do within a given time frame". This weakness exists, and it should be addressed, sooner than later, in the next years. The Committee on culture of UCLG will have to seriously take this criticism on board, and probably suggest a set of targets for the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, at least for those cities whose municipal plenary council have formally adopted the document. The establishment of these targets was considered in the process of elaboration of Agenda 21 for culture (late 2003 and early 2004), but the cities that were leading the process at that time considered the field was not yet mature enough to introduce such a scheme. It seems it is the right time to hold this debate again.

Officials and officers that feel close to Agenda 21 for culture share a core set of understandings: cultural policies need to be more explicitly engaged in the protection and promotion of cultural diversity; sustainable development needs to have a cultural component; a better governance of culture at a local level is needed, and civil society is a key partner. They consider Agenda 21 for culture (despite the difficulties) as an opportunity, and as a process to care for. Many researchers and activists also share these understandings.

C. THE VOICE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The development of Agenda 21 for culture has relied on the crucial role of many organisations that belong to the civil society. During these five years, the process has received the support of foundations (such as the European Cultural Foundation) and universities (the Bilgi in Istanbul, Universitat Jaume I in Castelló, the Université de Lyon 2, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and others), as well as professional associations (the Cultural Development Network of Victoria, the Creative City Network of Canada or Banlieues d'Europe, among others), networks (such as ENCATC, Red Cultural del Mercosur or Culture Action Europe) and NGOs and grass-roots associations (such as Culture-Montréal, the Development Centre Democracy through Culture in Ukraine, Groupe 30 Afrique). These organisations are partners to Agenda 21 for culture and their involvement is extremely important. It was very important that a report "celebrating" the fifth anniversary of Agenda 21 for culture would commission articles to researchers, activists and distinguished personalities from the civil society. They have provided innovative ideas that will help the development of Agenda 21 for culture, and orientate the work of the Committee on culture of UCLG in the next few years.

Christine Merkel analyses the context in which Agenda 21 for culture appears (with Unesco's Convention on Cultural Diversity as Magna Charta) and provides bold suggestions for Agenda 21 for culture. **Jon Hawkes** soundly documents the role of cultural development "in reinvigorating democracy, in motivating a return to the agora" and critically explains the tendencies within government that inhibit local cultural development objectives. **Gottfried Wagner** and **Philipp Dietachmair** exchange their points of view on urban cultural development after the 'Creative Hype' and explain the solid programmes that ECF is implementing for cultural development in cities in the neighbourhood of the European Union. **Irena Guidikova** explains the successful European programme of Intercultural Cities and offers some advice on how a city could become a truly intercultural governance. In a parallel fashion, **Lupwishi Mbuyamba** documents how the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa used Agenda 21 for culture for a research on local cultural policies. **Simon Brault** celebrates the movement that Agenda 21 for culture has articulated and suggests four areas to be further developed: the expansion of its network of influence, the enrichment of its sources of expertise and a significant breakthrough in the mobilisation of citizens; he also asserts that "platforms of cultural governance based on informed, contributory and productive dialogue between civil society and political and administrative authorities" are locally needed for cities that have adopted Agenda 21 for culture. Last, but not least, **Teixeira Coelho** while endorsing the need for a document that recognizes the central role of cities in cultural production, claims for the revision of some conceptual mistakes of Agenda 21 for culture and suggests achievable targets to be set in order to implement the Agenda.

The voice of civil society is called to play a more important role in the development of Agenda 21 for culture during the next five years.

6. Some ideas for the next five years

UCLG is celebrating its next World Congress in México DF in autumn 2010; all evidence point to a stronger Committee on culture, and to a more strategic role of cultural policies within UCLG. These articles provide an invaluable collection of ideas that the Committee on culture will have to analyse during the next few months.

These are some of the ideas that could articulate the discussions.

- The conceptual debate on culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, and the wider dissemination of those governmental initiatives that progress towards this end.
- The feasibility of a set of targets for the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, and the research on cultural indicators of local development.
- The analysis of the difficulties faced by local actors of culture in implementing cross-cutting policies, in advocating for the place of culture in integrated local planning tools, and in existence of platforms of cultural governance based on the dialogue between civil society and governments.

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- The enrichment of the sources of expertise, with more voices coming from the civil society and from under-represented regions of the world.
 - The wider dissemination of the cultural policies of cities that have adopted Agenda 21 for culture, and are developing it at a local level.
 - The partnership with Unesco in several programmes, including the Organs of the Convention on Cultural Diversity, the process “Towards a new cultural policy profile” and the programme of Creative Cities, amongst others.
 - The possibility of being involved in “peer-review” mechanisms. This could be prepared in partnership with the Council of Europe in the framework of a new generation of its “Intercultural Cities” programme.
 - The strengthening of ties and exchanges with United Nations agencies and programmes (mainly UNDP, UNEP and UN-Habitat), with the European Commission, and with municipal networks as the Organization of World Heritage Cities, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives or Eurocities.
 - The partnership with the Spanish Development Cooperation Agency – AECID, and the establishment of a Fund that will offer the possibility of obtaining economic resources for the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture.
 - The commission of new researches on specific topics, such as: “Gender and cultural policies”, or the “state of the art” of the development of Agenda 21 for culture in countries such as Portugal (a pre-report written by Rui Matoso already exists), Canada, Brazil or Australia.
 - The organisation of training or capacity-building seminars on local cultural policy development, in close cooperation with municipal networks as Interlocal, Mercociudades or Eurocities.
 - The improvement of the website, and the publication of articles on issues related to Agenda 21 for culture.
 - The preparation of a new Agenda 21 for culture to be approved in 2014.

7. A provisional conclusion

We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to all those that have been involved in the preparation of this report, and to extend the jubilee to all partners of Agenda 21 for culture.

We wish to convey our will to continue the leadership of the Agenda 21 for culture process during the next few years.

- The article and the full report are available on-line at <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org> and <http://www.agenda21culture.net>. They can be reproduced for free as long as UCLG and Barcelona City Council are cited as sources.
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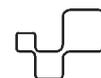
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