



# **culture 21**

Agenda 21 for culture

Agenda 21 de la culture

Agenda 21 de la cultura

---

## **The missing dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals: culture and local governments**

Inge Ruigrok

Article published in the 2nd report of Agenda 21 for culture:  
**Culture, local governments and Millennium Development Goals**



**Ajuntament de Barcelona**  
**Barcelona Cultura**



**United Cities and Local Governments**  
**Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis**  
**Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos**

---

# The missing dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals: culture and local governments

Inge Ruigrok<sup>1</sup>

Expert on governance, and culture & development. Currently works as an independent consultant. Editor and policy-expert for the Power of Culture

## Abstract

As they are anchored in the human development paradigm, the Millennium Development Goals provide a holistic framework for improving the quality of human life and promoting development. They also represent the most promising framework for world action as the largest number of world leaders ever were signatory to the Millennium Declaration, while practically all development organizations including the World Bank and the United Nations agencies take the Millennium Development Goals into consideration as they plan their interventions. But two crucial aspects are largely missing in the international benchmark for development: the great potential of culture in contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the role of local authorities, who are particularly well-positioned to translate the global objectives into local level meaning and action. The Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments detected these missing aspects, included its analysis in its programme for 2008-2010, and decided to publish this report, with specific articles of Amareswar Galla, José Antonio González Mancebo and Nil Sismanyazici-Navaie, and also commissioning this article to Inge Ruigrok.

This last contribution introduces the crucial link between culture, development strategies and local governments on which this report centers. Firstly, it looks at the momentum the Millennium Development Goals have created for solving pressing global concerns, and provides a genealogy of international policy development in which culture increasingly plays a central role. New approaches to development and international relations acknowledge not only the need for cultural diversity in a globalizing world, but also seek to achieve a better understanding of specific local dynamics to make development aid more effective in culturally diverse environments.

The article argues that despite the difficulty to measure such an abstract concept as culture, the Millennium Development Goals can be localized in meaningful ways through creative policy approaches. As examples from several parts of the world have shown, local cultural policy is a tool to counter exclusion. Culture is also a resource, as antique buildings and other cultural heritage bring value to local economies through tourism and give people a sense of pride of their history. In particular cultural industries, which often are small-scale enterprises, have the potential to strengthen local economies and directly contribute to livelihoods. Such industries are equally central in promoting cultural diversity and ensuring access to culture locally.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Elisenda Belda, Francisco d'Almeida, Kim Dunphy, Nancy Duxbury, Eva Garcia Chueca, Oriol Freixa, Máté Kovacs, Jordi Pascual, Hector Pose and Peter Woods for their useful comments and efforts to read previous versions of this article.

---

# Introduction

“We must put people at the centre of everything we do”, former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan said in April 2000 when he offered his 21st Century action plan, the report that set the agenda for the United Nations Millennium Summit. “No calling is more noble, and no responsibly greater, than that of enabling men, women and children, in cities and villages around the world, to make their lives better. Only when that begins to happen will we know that globalization is indeed becoming inclusive, allowing everyone to share its opportunities.”

For the United Nations, the year 2000 constituted a symbolic moment for a recommitment to its founding Charter and spur new political momentum for international cooperation and solidarity. Looking back on the more than half a century since its foundation, and to a future that is increasingly determined by interconnectiveness and the geographical mobility of goods, people and capital, Kofi Annan contends that the benefits of such process of globalization remain highly concentrated among a relatively small number of countries, and are spread unevenly within them. “There are still billions of people whose lives are not free of fear or want, despite the enormous progress made in the past fifty years.”

It was for these reasons that the United Nations General Assembly decided in December 1998 through resolutions 53/202, 53/239 and 54/254 to convene a high-profile summit on the eve of the first General Assembly of the new millennium at its headquarters in New York. This historical meeting – the Millennium Summit – took place from 6 to 8 September 2000 and brought 170 world leaders together in plenary meetings and round-table sessions. Participating in the summit were also representatives of intergovernmental organizations, parliaments and civil society that have observer status in the General Assembly, such as the European Commission and League of Arab States.

The most important result of the conference was the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, through which member-states reconfirm their commitment to provide multilateral solutions to problems in the areas of development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, and the strengthening of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> This document contains a large chapter on commitments to promote development and eradicate poverty world-wide, from which eight goals were distilled, embodying what are perceived as the most pressing global development concerns. These goals became known as the Millennium Development Goals, which serve today as the international benchmark for development-policy making.<sup>3</sup>

The eight Millennium Development Goals have been articulated into 16 sub-objectives and more than 60 technical indicators to measure progress,<sup>4</sup> while they all share the target date of 2015. The first (1) goal is to halve extreme poverty and hunger, secondly (2), to achieve universal primary education for children everywhere, and thirdly (3), and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The fourth (4) goal is to reduce under-five child mortality, and the fifth (5), to improve maternal health. The sixth (6) goal has the objective to reverse the spread of diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS and malaria, while through goal seven (7), member states commit themselves to integrating the principles of sustainable development into their national policies, and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade, debt relief and access of information, is the eighth (8) goal.

---

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/55/2 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. New York: United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> A/56/326. Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Report of the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations.

<sup>4</sup> See the United Nations website for the MDG Indicators: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx>.

---

## A culture of peace and dialogue

Their anchoring in the human development paradigm makes the Millennium Development Goals a holistic framework for improving the quality of human life and promoting development. The goals also represent the most promising framework for world action as not only the largest number of world leaders ever were signatory to the Millennium Declaration, but also because practically all development organizations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations agencies take the Millennium Development Goals into consideration as they plan their interventions.

**Their anchoring in the human development paradigm makes the Millennium Development Goals a holistic framework for improving the quality of human life and promoting development.**

Remarkable, though, is that the internationally agreed framework broadly covers the conventional development areas such as health, education and poverty, while it neglects 'soft' development issues that have become increasingly important such as culture, even in the pursuit of the goals. Culture is only mentioned once in the Millennium Declaration that lays at the basis of the Millennium Development Goals. Culture, here, is linked to tolerance as one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. The declaration states that "human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted."<sup>5</sup>

**Culture is only mentioned once in the Millennium Declaration.**

Yet, globalization has brought culture to the forefront all over the world, even to such an extent that culture now represents one of the "most urgent issues" affecting international stability and human development in the 21st century.<sup>6</sup> As ideological struggles in the bipolar world faded with the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, the slogan 'right to roots' is suddenly heard in all corners of the world. Peruvian pan-pipe players in European shopping malls, Brazilian Amazon Indians who join the anti-globalization movement, Masaï who blow new life into traditional dances in 'cultural villages' for western tourists, African village chiefs who demand constitutional recognition to their States, and indigenous sites on the world-wide web: they all show how culture has become a means to claim authenticity.

---

<sup>5</sup> A/RES/55/2 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, paragraph 6. New York: United Nations.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP (2004). Human Development Report. New York: UNDP.

---

Increasingly, it almost became a moral obligation to celebrate cultural differences and to stand up for those who are resisting westernization (Kuper 2000: 219). This trend is a consequence of the spread of democracy as the dominant political system all over world, and the phenomena that are attached to it, namely the rise of a 'global civil society' and the universalization of ideas of human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of expression. Another effect of globalization joins in, namely the possibilities that electronic media and web forums offer to imagine "creative forms of social life that are localized transit points for mobile global forms of civic and civil life" (Appadurai 2001: 7).

**Yet, globalization has brought culture to the forefront all over the world, even to such an extent that culture now represents one of the "most urgent issues" affecting international stability and human development in the 21st century.**

As Jeremy Rifkin, a prominent critic of globalization, writes: "The powers that be have long believed that the world is divided into two spheres of influence: commerce and government. Now organizations representing the cultural sphere – the environment, species preservation, rural life, health, food and cuisine, religion, human rights, the family, women's issues, ethnic heritage, the arts and other quality-of-life issues – are pounding on the doors at world economic and political forums a demanding a place at the table. They represent the birth of a new "civil-society politics" and an antidote to the forces pushing for globalization" (Rifkin 2004).

## Culture conflicts and tensions

Now culture means the affirmation of a specific identity, rather than the transcendence of it, it has also become part of the lexicon of political conflict (Eagleton 2000; Clifford 1988). Although many European states have long struggled with a variety of cultural identities within their borders, such as the Basques in Spain and the Scottish in the United Kingdom, demands for greater autonomy are more than before stated in cultural terms, thus adding legitimacy to what were essentially political claims. Political boundaries through an exclusive national identity also reappeared as the descendents of the colonial subjects European states created joint them as immigrants, jeopardizing the cultural unity that had made empire once possible. Anti-Islamic sentiments following the terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, London, and Madrid in recent years, and the subsequent American-led invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan, enforced the anti-immigration mood and led to calls for a symbolic 'reinvention' of the nation-state.

In the South, particularly in Africa where countries have long struggled with the fragile state frameworks inherited from colonialism, and where colonial hierarchies and classifications continue to inform social relations, the entwining of increased corporate exploitation of valuable resources and the neo-liberal logic of the world economy have only exacerbated insecurities and anxieties among ordinary people across regions, engineering a complex set of cultural conflicts (Nyamnjoh 2007). One stark consequence there, too, is the building or reassertion of boundaries and differences through xenophobia and other exclusionary ideas of citizenships, which serve to distinguish 'locals' from 'foreigners' and 'autochtones' from 'insiders'. Outsiders are increasingly unwelcome, and even violently singled out, as the recent xenophobic violence against fellow-Africans showed in South Africa.

---

Renewed affirmations of roots and origins is equally evoked by democratization and multiparty politics as elections have meant again (or for the first time) triggering the fear of being outvoted by 'strangers', whatever their origins. In short, neo-liberal globalization is far from an equalizing process. Rather than creating a sense of common human purpose, it has reinforced the sense and significance of identity and difference, even hardened cultural contrasts and opposition, and at times leading to blunt violence. Such a growing obsession with creating clear boundaries is focused on demands for greater opportunities, economic entitlements, cultural recognition and political representation (Nyamnjoh 2007; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001; Geschiere and Meyer 2003; Friedman 1994; Featherstone 1990).

## The need for an intercultural dialogue

These claims for recognition and equality have challenged Eurocentric ideas that have long prevailed in international development policy-making, and that are to some extent still recited today. Inspired on the Enlightenment idea of a sure move towards a higher dimension as citizenship of the world, culture in this view mostly refers to less sophisticated people in far-out places. In the short run, culture is seen as a barrier to modernization (or industrialization and globalization), but with the 'right' policy tools and decisions, modern civilization would in the end trample over local, less efficient traditions. Culture is invoked when it becomes necessary to explain why people are clinging to irrational goals and self-destructive strategies. Similarly, cultural resistance, and not policy failures, is said to defeat development projects. Democratic systems modeled on western blueprints crumble because it is alien to the traditions of a nation.

The new tensions converged on culture increasingly put such a viewpoint on the backbench as the necessity of an 'intercultural dialogue' as the best guarantee to avoid a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996) was felt stronger. In the academia and in policy circles, the concept of multiculturalism was coined, which sees not the worker or the citizen as the main protagonist in the new world order, but the cultural actor. Politics are dictated by cultural identity, according to this viewpoint, and they are about the control of culture. People's identity, thus, is central to the notion of multiculturalism, which is an individual matter that must be lived out in the world, in dialogue with others (Taylor 1994, Turner 2006, Appiah 2001).

In the wake of 11 September 2001, UNESCO came with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which powerfully underlines the value of a culturally plurist world. The declaration underscores the concept of cultural rights, which should be applied among and within states, and emphasizes "the dynamic nature of all cultures as they draw strength from their own traditions yet only really flourish when they come into contact with others." This wide-ranging instrument, a first for the international community, considers cultural diversity "as necessary for human kind as biodiversity is for nature."<sup>7</sup>

---

7 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2 November 2001. Paris: UNESCO.

---

Also the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) brought culture in its policies, even insisting that the adoption of policies recognizing cultural differences “is the only sustainable approach to development in diverse societies.”<sup>8</sup> This view reflects how the objectives of development interventions have changed. There is an increasing focus on capacity building and on basing programs on resources that already exist in the program environment to ensure their continuity. The people involved are no longer passive target groups to be mobilized but active stakeholders with an interest as owners of the development process.

### United Nations Development Program (UNDP) brought culture in its policies, even insisting that the adoption of policies recognizing cultural differences “is the only sustainable approach to development in diverse societies.”

Although UNESCO started its attempts to put culture on the international policy-agenda in 1982, when it organized the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City, a major impulse came in 1996, when the World Commission on Culture and Development that UNESCO had created three years earlier published the report *Our Creative Diversity*.<sup>9</sup> An intergovernmental conference on Cultural Policies for Development followed two years later in Stockholm, during which a plan of action was adopted. The UNESCO-commission believed that the conventional policy model, by which authorities offer cultural activities and services to their citizens, had outdated. Not only had such a top-down approach become too costly, it also often overlooked the needs of minorities living within the boundaries of the member-states. The commission stated that development is not just something economical. A new approach was necessary: policies that do not restrict culture to the arts and cultural heritage, but also have eye for various worldviews, lifestyles and cultural habits.

Significant, too, was that the process accumulated nine years after the publication of the World Commission report, in 2005, into the signing of the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. The treaty is a sort of Kyoto-protocol for culture as it recognizes the negative, homogenizing effects of globalization. The trade agreements made by the World Trade Organization, including the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) are oriented towards liberalization of the global market. These agreements would also apply to the cultural sector, which would make it increasingly difficult for countries to support their own artists and cultural institutions with subsidies, as such measures go against the principle of free trade.

### UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is a sort of Kyoto-protocol for culture.

---

<sup>8</sup> UNDP (2004). *Human Development Report*. New York: UNDP.

<sup>9</sup> *Our Creative Diversity*. Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development. Paris: UNESCO.

---

The UNESCO-convention serves as a legal basis for an exception to the international trade rules for the cultural sector within GATS. To counter-balance these negative effects, the treaty recognizes the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning. It also acknowledges the right of member-states to draft policies that encourage diversity of cultural expressions on their territories and equitable access to all forms of cultural expression from all over the world. Although the negotiations, which started in October 2003, were all but a smooth process, the convention entered into force as a binding international legal instrument relatively quickly, on 18 March 2007. The number of 30 signatory states had already been reached by December 2006. Today (April 2009), the 98 signatories out of 193 member-states also include a large number of developing countries, and represent more than half of the world population.

## Culture as a pillar of development

The Millennium +5 Summit in September 2005 in New York – the follow-up high-profile summit that the UN General Assembly convened through resolution 58/291 of 6 May 2004 to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and to inject new energy into the pursuit of the vision embodied in it – somewhat echoes the agreements made within UNESCO. In its resolution on the World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly states that “acknowledging the diversity of the world, we recognize that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. We acknowledge the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world. In order to promote international peace and security, we commit ourselves to advancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as to encourage tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples.”<sup>10</sup>

Still, culture is in itself not an integral part of any of the so widely referred to Millennium Development Goals, let alone that it forms a goal in itself. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, which took place in Johannesburg in 2002 and which was next to the conference on financing for development in Monterrey, Mexico, a major United Nations conference to reach global consensus on issues related to poverty, only officially recognized the ecological, social and economic dimensions of development, and not the cultural one. Only a few sentences in the outcome-report are dedicated to culture, and these merely refer to “protecting local traditions and cultures” in natural resource management or tourism projects.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which developing countries have to draw up to qualify for World Bank support, serve as the framework for coordinating and monitoring sectoral policies and programs to ensure coherence towards the attainment of the poverty reduction targets, but the cultural sector generally plays a marginal role in such an important national plan (Arterial 2006). Cultural issues are more often integrated as instruments to further the objectives of other development sectors, rather than as major pillars of the strategy. An exception forms the relative prominence of cultural industries: several African countries acknowledge the potential and value cultural industries have for wealth creation and employment opportunities for the poor.

---

10 A/RES/60/1 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, paragraph 14. New York: United Nations.

11 A/CONF.199/20. Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations.

---

The Netherlands-based Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos), which supports arts and culture projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, propagated during a conference it organized in 2005 under the much-telling theme *Beyond Diversity*, to include culture as the 9<sup>th</sup> MDG. The organization felt that such an essential element in social development processes, as culture should be equated to food certainty, health and education. The creative potential of local communities, and the potential of creative imagination as a pillar of economic and human development, should be recognized. Support to culture helps people to define their future and to go forward.

But the initiative did not get very far. The main problem is that attached to the MDG are specific targets, indicator frameworks, plans of action, and other mechanisms to calculate the outcome and impact of the support that has been put into it. International development cooperation has to be accounted for. Culture is abstract and hard to measure. It already starts with its definition. Perhaps today, there is a general consensus that culture is leant and not carried in our genes like race, and, moreover, that this common culture has advanced over time (Kuper 2000: 227). UNESCO defines culture as “the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value system, traditions and beliefs.”<sup>12</sup> There is, thus, a broad agreement about what culture involves: essentially, ideas and values, the cosmology, morality, and aesthetics, all which are expressed in symbols. But then, still, how to support such a symbolic system, and how to capture the measurable process, if at all? We are still far from reaching a consensus in this matter.

## Localizing the Millennium Development Goals

Besides the near-absence of culture in international development strategies, the role envisaged for local and regional governments in these strategies is still equally minimal. Particularly in the developing world, expertise in evaluation of cultural activity that aims at achieving particular goals is often lacking. Local government is often the weakest link in the state system as it has recently been set up, especially when there is a tradition of state centralism, a lack of governmental capacity or when a country recently emerged from warfare.

**Besides the near-absence of culture in international development strategies, the role envisaged for local and regional governments in these strategies is still equally minimal.**

As a meeting of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in New York observed in September 2008, the current aid effectiveness debate continues to be mainly focused on improving aid at the national level.<sup>13</sup> The same counts for the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), even as local government is crucial for efficient service delivery and the development of social and physical infrastructure.

---

<sup>12</sup> Mexico Declaration of Cultural Policies, 6 August 1982. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>13</sup> United Cities and Local Governments (2008). Local government inputs for the high level event on the Millennium Development Goals, New York September 2008. Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments.

---

In an attempt to 'localize' these goals and to translate them into concrete actions to be achieved at the local level, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) requested a formal advisory role for local and regional governments at the United Nations. It felt that the efforts made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals have been based particularly on local development strategies, while the involvement of local governments was too narrow.<sup>14</sup> It also launched the Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign in 2005, which was joined by more than 1000 local authorities from all over the world who showed their commitment and advocated their involvement in achieving the targets.

These efforts were partially fruitful. When the United Nations General Assembly met five years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in September 2005, it explicitly recognized for the first time the role of local authorities in contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>15</sup> Also the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recognized the key role played by local authorities for a more efficient development aid during a meeting in July 2008. But until now, the status of local authorities within the United Nations remains inadequate as these have yet to be recognized as constituting a level of government and are as yet unable to collaborate directly with the General Assembly sharing their expertise and political contribution.

## Local cultural policies and development

Cities and local government are also not explicitly mentioned in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, even though the document does mention the local level, alongside the national and international levels, for instance in its goal "to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value."<sup>16</sup> A comprehensive guideline for placing culture at the centre of local government policies exists as Agenda 21 for Culture, which was adopted by the 4th Local Authorities Forum for Social Inclusion of Porto Alegre, held in Barcelona in May 2004 as part of the Universal Forum of Cultures. The Agenda 21 for Culture recommends to UNESCO to recognize cities as territories where the principles of cultural diversity are applied, especially those aspects related to coexistence, democracy and participation; and to establish the means for local governments to participate in its programs.<sup>17</sup>

**A comprehensive guideline for placing culture at the centre of local government policies exists as Agenda 21 for Culture**

---

14 UNESCO (2005). Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Paris: UNESCO.

15 A/RES/60/1 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, paragraph 174. New York: United Nations.

16 UNESCO (2005). Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Paris: UNESCO.

17 Agenda 21 for Culture, article 59.

---

While Agenda 21 for Culture offers local governments an opportunity to create a long-term vision of culture as a pillar in development, it also proposes concrete tools that could be developed.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, local authorities could develop a local cultural strategy, which is a document that describes the cultural priorities of a city, including an implementation timetable, follow-up and evaluation indicators and monitoring procedures.<sup>19</sup> In such a cultural policy-making process, all cultural agents in a territory along with the citizenry and the public administration should be engaged. In this way, the document establishes mutual responsibilities between these three interest groups, ensuring a more effective process. A second possibility is to formulate and adopt a charter of cultural rights and responsibilities, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Again, the effective development of such a charter relies on active participation of all groups with a stake in the process.

Thirdly, local governments could establish a culture council, a public body that addresses the most relevant cultural issues of a city. Such a council would normally reflect the diversity of cultural agents, while its role could either be strictly consultative or also include the capacity to take executive decisions. A fourth measure that local authorities could take, moreover, is the implementation of 'cultural impact' assessments in their policy processes. Such measures usually already exist for evaluating the economic, social and environmental impacts of local development projects. Yet public or private initiatives often also involve significant changes in the cultural life of cities, which could be evaluated through a cultural impact assessment, which is a document developed in consultation with the citizenry and cultural agents to be applied to all policy and program making within a territory.

### **An important initiative that attempts to draw local authorities and culture closer into the worldwide policy-framework is the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDGF) launched by the Spanish government and UNDP.**

Although the objectives of Agenda 21 for Culture are, of course, related to sustainable development and poverty relief, they are not as such explicitly connected to the Millennium Development Goals.

An important initiative that attempts to draw local authorities and culture closer into the worldwide policy-framework is the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDGF). As Jose Antonio González Mancebo explains in detail in his interesting contribution to this report, which we highly recommend to all readers, the Spanish government and the United Nations explicitly established the MDGF in 2006 to reinforce local development leadership. The fund not only incorporates culture and development as one of its thematic windows to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it also acknowledges the importance of culture in its seven other windows. Currently, there are 59 eligible countries, while the fund has awarded \$ 700 million to 129 Joint Programmes in 49 countries.

---

<sup>18</sup> Advice on local implementation of the Agenda 21 for Culture. Document adopted on 24 October 2006 in Barcelona, at the first meeting of the Working Group on Culture of UCLG.

<sup>19</sup> See: Cultural Indicators and Agenda 21 for Culture. Document adopted on 24 October 2006 in Barcelona, at the first meeting of the Working Group on Culture of UCLG.

---

As González Mancebo writes on the Culture and Development window, “the Fund committed to the vision of culture as an extremely effective practical instrument for achieving the Development Goals and opened up a specific Culture and Development window with \$95 million headed by UNESCO. This provided a wide range of work options in the field of the “capital gains” of culture referred to above and received 50 bids. 18 Joint Programmes were approved with a per programme allocation of between \$3 million and \$9 million over three years. These programmes were started up in 2007 and 2008 and will have annual results monitoring which conditions the financial flow for the following year. It should be noted that work is being done in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Arab countries, and this will afford exchanges of experiences and knowledge management opportunities which will be extremely useful when it comes to building a best practice database.”

Interesting is the way the MDGF seeks to overcome the problem of measuring such an abstract thing as culture’s impact on improving people’s quality of life. Assessment mechanisms are not perceived as a final act but rather as part of the program formulation and management cycle. “That way building in lessons learnt and the configuration of the knowledge management system based on evidence supplied by the programmes and coordination processes for the actors who take part in them is continuous”, González Mancebo explains. “Refurbishing a public square does not in itself impact on development. What matters to us, for instance, is knowing whether this new space articulates marginalised areas and enables more children and women to have safer access to public spaces, or whether a craft market opportunity has been generated which enhances access for producers or traders.”

## Cultural approaches to local development

Culture thus has the potential to directly play a part in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. José Antonio González Mancebo mentions four areas in which this is the case: economics, social cohesion, environmentally sustainable cultural tourism and building participatory citizenship. Economically, the significance of culture lays in its ability to generate income from creativity and cultural tourism, raising income levels, jobs, and greater opportunities for young people and women, and therewith contributing to achieving Millennium Development Goals 1, 3 and 8. “The added value culture brings to social cohesion through enhanced access and sustainable use of public spaces and cultural and natural heritage that results from urban regeneration schemes led by public institutions”, Mancebo writes. “The effect on town and country planning can be demonstrated as culture drives the adoption of measures which cut down on environmental impact or foster the development of basic services and projects for decent housing (MDG 7). The gender impact of these actions is obvious as they expand inclusive public spaces for women and help to reduce violence. Also far from negligible are the rise in economic activity and the consequent increase in income that is brought about by such regeneration schemes (MDG 1 and 8).” Furthermore, according to Mancebo, “the added value culture brings to building participatory citizenship that can exercise rights and benefit from basic social services through ramping up non-formal education and access to new technology via cultural centres and facilities or alternative media outlets such as local radio and television stations (MDG 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8).”

---

Localizing the Millennium Development Goals means setting in motion processes of translating the objectives into local level meaning, choosing local development priorities, and planning for their realization. It is about developing local shared visions about development and planning for their realization, complete with systems of accountability, monitoring and evaluation. Underpinning such a task are local ownership and inclusive decision-making. And practically synonymous to such an undertaking is decentralization. Devolving powers to local governments and communities is increasingly promoted today to bring government closer to people and to stimulate local development. As Manuel Castells (1998) has pointed out, the “era of globalization was also the era of localization of polity”.

**Culture thus has the potential to directly play a part in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. José Antonio González Mancebo mentions four areas in which this is the case: economics, social cohesion, environmentally sustainable cultural tourism and building participatory citizenship.**

As culture is located where people are, in their daily lives, it seems that cultural policies and local governments almost logically go together. For starters, because the new social movements that have sprung up to counter the negative impact of globalization such as *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* in Brazil and the Landless People Movement in South Africa that often focused on indigenous rights and the protection of the traditional soil, have increasingly pro-local and decentralized orientations. Additionally, the local environment also is the foremost stage for understanding potential cultural barriers or cultural factors that might contribute to development. As professor George Hagan, the Chairman of Ghana’s National Commission on Culture, recently told a seminar in Accra, “African countries had not made much progress towards achieving the MDG’s objectives even though it was half-way through the 2015 deadline because these countries were yet to examine the cultural practices that could either facilitate or impede on its attainment.”

**Localizing the Millennium Development Goals means setting in motion processes of translating the objectives into local level meaning, choosing local development priorities, and planning for their realization.**

The ways culture can be included in a positive way, and even given central stage, by local authorities in their development strategies are multiple, as the various authors in this report show, and demand a dose of creativity in policy-making itself. The arts, for instance, have proven to be a powerful vehicle to communicate and make development objectives known to a broad audience that might be difficult to reach through conventional communication tools. Theatre has played a key role in this respect as it is often successfully tried in HIV/AIDS public awareness campaigns on the African and Asian continents where the disease is often too much a cultural taboo subject to be tackled effectively by other means. Besides fostering engagement with social issues, the arts also has the power to stimulate dialogue, participation and understanding between communities that have a hostile past such as in Northern Ireland, but now try to find ways to reach out to each other.

---

In Brazil, the emphasis of national cultural policy is to counter exclusion. The focus is on local cultural projects and the poorest populations. Communities enjoy a considerable level of autonomy in designing and conducting projects: the goal of the cultural policy is to adapt to the specific arts practices, rather than vice versa. The approximately five hundred local projects that the Ministry of Culture supports via the government institution Funarte (*Fundação Nacional de Arte*) are considered to be *pontes de cultura* ('cultural bridges'). Together they form a network that is geared towards strengthening and distributing Brazil's multifaceted culture. Besides, art has the potential to serve as a mobilizing force that changes society. Former Culture Minister Gilberto Gil propagated once that every slum should have its own music studio, and community radio stations are needed in rural areas.

**The ways culture can be included in a positive way, and even given central stage, by local authorities in their development strategies are multiple, as the various authors in this report show.**

Elsewhere, local authorities explicitly connected social and territorial development to culture. In West Africa, for instance, the charter of Ouagadougou, which was approved in April 1997, has been used in local planning in the cities of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Treichville (Ivory Coast), among others, to bring cultural content to marginal areas. Confronted with the problems of poverty, crime and degradation of the urban environment, the City of Johannesburg embarked on two ambitious programmes aimed at urban renovation in Newtown and Kliptown, two of its symbolic neighborhoods. Both became cultural districts through urban renovations, blowing new life into the local economy through activities linked to culture and tourism. In the Caribbean, moreover, music festivals and carnivals are central points for the development of cultural industries, and the promotion of the cultural heritage of a region.

**Amareswar Galla argues that the challenge for local governments is to develop ways of engaging with community cultural diversity through integrated local area planning.**

In this respect, as Amareswar Galla argues that the challenge for local governments is to develop ways of engaging with community cultural diversity through integrated local area planning. We would like to invite you to read his text fully in which he provides details of, and gives context to, the strong commitment that Vietnam demonstrated for the Stockholm Action Plan on Cultural Policies in Development and to Local Agenda 21. As Galla writes, "In 2000, the local and provincial governments in Quang Ninh Province, especially Ha Long Bay areas, came together to address the challenges of reconciling two non-negotiable principles in a country trying to address Millennium Development Goals. Conservation is non-negotiable. Community development is non-negotiable. The way forward had to be explored. The methodology that was developed bringing the two principles together is sustainable cultural development."

---

Especially Galla's explanation of the Ha Long Ecomuseum project is interesting, which brings people and their heritage together. It is an example of an innovative approach that could be adopted by local authorities. "While the external heritage model brings in a dichotomy between the natural and cultural, validating the natural for the recognition of World Heritage values, the local self-empowerment process through the Ecomuseum has been able to mainstream a local holistic approach to the total environment, challenging the imposition of an externality on local values." Galla continues by explaining that "the integrated systems concept or Ecomuseum views the entire Bay and its hinterland as a living museum and employs an 'interpretive' approach to its management. Interpretive management sees the components and processes of the Bay and its hinterland of Quang Ninh Province as continuously interacting with each other in a constantly changing equilibrium. By intensive research and monitoring, local heritage workers seek to 'interpret' what is happening to that equilibrium and to make carefully planned interventions to change the balance of the components when necessary. An important feature of this approach is that it views human activity, past and present, as fundamental components of the total environmental resource. The culture, history, traditions and activities of the human population on and around the Bay are as much a part of the heritage as the caves and plants on the islands and are in continuous interaction with it."

Culture is also a resource in other ways, as antique buildings and other cultural heritage bring value to local economies through tourism and give people a sense of pride of their history. An initiative in this area is the SIRCHAL program that the French Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs set up in 2001, aimed at the revitalization of historic city centers in Latin America and the Caribbean. It enables bilateral program to be carried out through the organization of international seminars on the revitalization of historic city centers in Pirenópolis (Brazil), Caracas (Venezuela), and Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), among other cities throughout the region. This way of working consolidates cooperation between government authorities, civil society and the private sector.

## **Nil S. Navaie shows how culture can actually strengthen local economies and directly contribute to livelihoods.**

As the contribution of Nil Sismanyazici-Navaie to this report evocatively shows, culture can actually strengthen local economies and directly contribute to livelihoods. Although we would like to invite you to read the text in full, we will here provide a brief overview of the concrete steps local authorities can according to the author take to provide an enabling environment for cultural industries to flourish and contribute to the achieving of the Millennium Development Goals at the local level. First, local governments should research the nature and impact of creative enterprises on their economies, and secondly, incorporate them in annual plans. Important, Sismanyazici-Navaie states, is not to forget rural areas as "the surfacing of a world food crisis has drawn attention to the need of developing the agricultural sector, attending to the necessities of the rural population as well as balancing the influx of populations from rural to urban." Local authorities should emphasize what the author calls "the cultural component of agri-culture", which means the cultural resources that can generate livelihoods.

---

Cultural products and services such as music, crafts and design not only have economic value through their commercialization, cultural industries are also “central in promoting and maintaining cultural diversity and in ensuring democratic access to culture.”<sup>20</sup> A key role is, again, attained to local authorities. As the Creative Economy Report points out, “the role of governments is crucial for the formulation of public policies to nurture a solid, self-sustainable creative economy able to compete at the multilateral level. The main point is not whether governments should be leading or responding to calls from their creative industries but how to put in place a plan of action and effective mechanisms to articulate tailor-made policies to stimulate creativity and improve the competitiveness of creative products with the best competitive advantages in world markets while preserving cultural identity.

## Conclusions and recommendations

International frameworks and national policies have not yet recognised culture as a crucial component of development.

There has been progress in the last years. New approaches to development seek to achieve a better understanding of local cultural dynamics to make aid more effective. They also acknowledge the need to protect and promote cultural diversity in a globalizing world. There is a growing bibliography. The number of actors increases.

This report has provided evidences of programmes and policies that consider culture as a resource in the implementation of MDGs. We would like to say that the critical mass is near.

The following recommendations are written as a contribution to achieve this critical mass:

### TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- To acknowledge the importance of cities and local governments in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- To acknowledge arts and culture as crucial components of any development program aiming to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- To stimulate donors to create programs on “culture and development” within UNDP, and in cooperation with other UN agencies.

---

#### TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

- To bring a cultural perspective to national development plans 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.
- To recognise different cultural needs and demands made by people and organizations in a territory, including both cultural actors and the rest of the citizenry.
- To build capacity for local officials, so as to strengthen the relationships between the regional, national and international public administrations, in order to orientate the securing of new economic resources for culture at the local level.
- To establish mechanisms for consultation and agreement with local governments, directly or through their networks and federations, to make new legislation, rules and systems for funding in the cultural field.

#### TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- To map cultural resources, to approve a long-term cultural development plan based on citizen needs, and to establish a system of cultural indicators to monitor policies and programmes.
- To guarantee that the main development plan of the city includes a strong cultural component.
- To include culture as content for local programmes that aim to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

**There has been progress in the last years. There are evidences of policies and programmes. There is a growing bibliography. The number of actors increases. A critical mass is near. The recommendations that conclude this article are a contribution to achieve the critical mass.**

---

## References

- Agenda 21 for culture (2004). United Cities and Local Governments, [www.agenda21culture.net](http://www.agenda21culture.net).
- Appadurai, Arjun (2001) Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination. In *Globalization*, pp. 1-21; Durham and London: Duke University Press;
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony (2001). Ethnic identity as a political resource. In *Explorations in African Political Thought: Identity, Community, Ethics*, pp. 46-53. Edited by Teodros Kiros. New York: Routledge;
- Castells, Manuel (1998). *End of the Millenium*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers;
- Clifford, James (1988). *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature and art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press;
- Eagleton, Terry (2000). *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing;
- Geschiere, Peter and Francis Nyamnjoh (2001); *Capitalism and autochthony: the Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging*, In *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of neoliberalism*, pp. 159-190. Edited by J. and J. Comaroff. Durham and London: Duke University Press;
- Geschiere, Peter and Birgit Meyer (2003). *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers;
- Kuper (2000). *Culture: the anthropologists' account*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press;
- Nyamnjoh, Francis (2007). *Cultures, conflicts and globalization: Africa*. In *Conflicts and tensions*, pp. 121-132. Edited by Helmut Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar. London: Sage;
- Friedman, Jonathan (1994). *Cultural identity and Global process*. London: Sage;
- Featherstone, Mike (1990). *Global culture: nationalism, globalisation and modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Rifkin, Jeremy (2004). *The European Dream: how Europe's vision of the future is quietly eclipsing the American dream*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Taylor, Charles (1994). *The politics of recognition*. In *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*. Edited by Amy Gutmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press;
- Turner, Terence (2006). *Political innovation and inter-ethnic alliance: Kayapo resistance to the developmentist state*. *Anthropology Today* 22(5):3-10;

- 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.
- The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this text and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UCLG and do not commit the organisation
- The copyright of this report belongs to UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments
- ISBN of the full report: 978-84-692-5704-3

**United Cities and Local Governments  
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis  
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos**

carrer Avinyó, 15  
E-08002 Barcelona  
Spain

Tel: +34 93 342 87 50  
Fax: +34 93 342 87 60  
info@cities-localgovernments.org

**Ajuntament de Barcelona -  
Institut de Cultura**

Palau de la Virreina - la Rambla 99  
E-08002 Barcelona  
Spain

Tel: +34 933 161 000  
Fax: +34 933 161 020  
agenda21cultura@bcn.cat

[www.agenda21culture.net](http://www.agenda21culture.net)

With the support of



**United Cities and Local Governments  
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis  
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos**



**Ajuntament de Barcelona  
Institut de Cultura**