

CULTURAL POLICY IN ANGERS AND AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE IN THE ANJOU REGION



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Cross-sectorial Sustainability Cultural
Cultural diversity **Networking** exchanges
Individual expression Participation

1. Context

Situated in the heart of Europe, Angers boasts a prestigious history. As the historic capital of the Anjou territory, Angers has been shaped over two millennia from the end of the Roman era up until the conglomeration of Europe in the twenty-first century. As the sixteenth largest city in France, it sits at the heart of the Loire Valley tourism region along the Loire castles route, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city is home to 150,000 inhabitants and acts as the centre of a grouping of 33 towns, bringing together some 283,000 people.

With two universities and seven large international schools, Angers is a city that attracts youth. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the population is under the age of 30, and every year 33,000 students choose to attend university here.

Recognised for its engagement and achievements in sustainable development, Angers serves as an example for other cities. It has received many awards in this area.

Angers is an enterprising territory that welcomes many businesses. It has a globally competitive hub in the plant sector called, Vegepolys. The electronics industry is another sector of excellence in Angers, housing a high-tech campus project.

It is thus a decidedly international European city. It hosts a large European film festival, developed over years of creating close ties with other European cities like Haarlem, Osnabrück, Pisa, Wigan, and Toruń, as well as international cities such as Bamako, Tantai, and Austin.

In order to revisit the cultural policy surrounding sustainable development and societal challenges, after 2008 the City of Angers implemented Agenda 21 for culture in the region.

2. Angers and culture

The cultural policy in the City of Angers is based on the idea that culture enriches and renews the identity and attractiveness of the territory. This is done through its history, overall potential, collective memory, and development. Underlying all of this is the belief that artistic and cultural activities contribute to the promotion of human development, quality of life, and social bonds throughout the city.

3 core values

- Artistic emergence and creation are the hallmarks of Angers because they enable creativity and innovation, provide access to knowledge, construct collective imagination, renew ideas, and establish a culture of critical thinking.
- Together these strengthen the attractiveness of the Anjou region. Culture is a valuable element of the economy and tourism, but it also affects quality of life and extends the accessibility of a territory.
- Furthermore, it contributes to a meaningful coexistence by creating social ties between citizens. Culture presents diversity, social cohesion, citizenship, openness, sharing, and interaction.

Angers supports all cultures and the art forms that come with them. Some examples include the Premiers Plans European film festival, the Tempo Rives contemporary music festival, the Accroche-Coeurs street theatre festival, and the African film festival.

As a result, the City has opened itself to helping artists in many ways. They fund active local associations and a number of creative and cultural diffusion spaces. These include: Le Quai theatre, the National Contemporary Dance Centre, the Angers-Nantes Opera company, the National NTA (New Angers Theatre) Drama Centre, the Chabada concert venue, the Angers Regional Conservatory, the Gallery of Sound, and the School of Fine Art, among others.

The area accounts for five art museums, the Château d'Angers castle, a wealth of rich history, archaeology, a natural history museum, 17 cinemas, 12 libraries and an art library, as well as nearly 26 venues and spaces devoted to live entertainment like theatre, opera, and dance.

3. Primary objectives and challenges

Cultural policy is spread across 8 main objectives:

- **Favouring creation, diffusion, and innovation while ensuring artistic integrity.**
 - o The idea is to make the city a place for artistic creation and diffusion through artists' residencies, and the use of public spaces.
 - o It also includes developing support for professional and emerging regional artists.
 - o This must be achieved by galvanising a base for cultural structures and encouraging partnerships.
 - o The city must help develop the use of digital tools and technology.
 - o It must also introduce and usher in the implementation of actions and innovative undertakings that allow new artistic forms to be tested.



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- **Preserve, enrich, and value the cultural wealth and heritage of a region, enabling their adoption and diffusion by current and future generations.**
 - This is done by preserving, enriching, studying, and promoting the collections in galleries, museums, libraries, archives, art libraries, and communicating their importance to a wider audience.
 - The city must also identify, safeguard, and showcase built, architectural, urban, and environmental heritages. In doing so, it lends a better understanding of the surrounding heritage to inhabitants and visitors.
 - The city must improve the locations and accessibility of libraries. It must emphasise them as social living spaces, and places to access knowledge and information. One way is by integrating a variety of digital support.
 - It is also important to foster artistic discovery through rich and diverse programs in live entertainment, including theatre, dance, and music.
 - By promoting the dynamism and visibility of Angers in the fields of technology and visual arts, it solidifies its place as a centre for creating contemporary art and film.
- **Contribute to the accessibility, development, and attractiveness of the region.**
 - Angers must contribute to the region's economic, tourism, educational, and social development. This includes the city's urban areas and urban communities, as well as improving quality of life and cohabitation.
 - A key factor is participation in grassroots projects and recognising their strengths.
 - They lend a greater visibility to the cultural diversity of a territory and enable accessibility through a wide range of events.
 - Another important aspect is to encourage and develop both national and international initiatives.
- **Fostering education and transmission of knowledge.**
 - The city must play a vital role in artistic education, notably for youth, as they are the future generation.
 - Providing the necessary tools for inhabitants and regional actors to access municipal cultural services empowers them with information and knowledge. Some tools may include training courses, adequate resources, artistic initiatives, conference proposals, and many others.
 - It is important to recognise and support high quality artistic education through the CNDC, CRR, and ESBA schools as well as the Gallery of Sound, and Premiers Plans workshops. All of these build bridges between professionals and amateurs, opening up these institutions to a wider audience.

- **Encouraging discovery and cultural expression for everyone.**
 - o The crucial element here is favouring cultural diversity.
 - o It also entails developing mediation activities and public awareness campaigns with the aim of facilitating meetings between citizens and artists and their works.
 - o An important aspect of this is to encourage and promote citizens' cultural expression and amateur activities.
 - o Furthermore, support must be given to those in disadvantaged situations who face obstacles to their expression, especially detainees or people who are ill.
- **Facilitating participatory initiatives and the co-creation of cultural policies.**
 - o Important elements include the development of cooperative endeavours and co-creation projects with local and civil society actors.
 - o This involves encouraging citizens' participation in projects and initiatives.
 - o Furthermore, there is a focus on favouring eco-responsible approaches.
- **Outlining and creating connections between cultural approaches to projects and cultural policies.**
 - o We must recognise the importance of developing transversal, multidisciplinary approaches.
 - o This involves integrating the economic, tourism, urban, educational, and environmental spheres into artistic and cultural activities.
 - o Ultimately it must instill cultural policy within the framework of an overall regional project.
- **Establish and promote networking among cultural actors.**

For Angers, Agenda 21 for culture forms the cornerstone of its renewal of cultural policies, and also creates a large space for dialogue between various regional actors.

4. Agenda 21 for culture and Cultural Policies

In order to revisit cultural policy surrounding sustainable development and societal challenges, in 2008 the City of Angers implemented Agenda 21 for culture in the region.

Given the project's strong participative element, the inhabitants of the Anjou region can then become party to constructing, implementing, and monitoring Agenda 21 for culture through plenary meetings and work groups. The project is centred on a commitment charter that defines local challenges adapted for this particular context; it accepts commitments for appropriate response.

- The city must also recognise cultural diversity as a shared wealth, and enable cultural expression for all.
- Again, doing so involves establishing cultural approaches to regional projects and policies.
- Strengthening cultural and artistic exchange and interaction creates a more harmonious coexistence.
- This includes cooperative approaches as well as the co-creation of initiatives or cultural policies.
- These contribute to a diverse and responsible cultural economy, while also bringing together culture and the environment.

The charter conveys the aspirations of social collectives and partnerships, questioning cultural policies with regard to notable changes in society. Furthermore, it highlights a willingness to make culture a core issue in recognising social development as a powerful environmental and economic force.

For Angers, Agenda 21 for culture forms the cornerstone of its renewal of cultural policies, and also creates a large space for dialogue between various regional actors. It includes sharing good practices, insight, and local community projects.

The many projects being implemented throughout the region are for collective heritage, set within the framework of the collectively adopted commitment charter.



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Cultural actors have established ways of reducing the environmental impact of their activities or even making their practices more open to different audiences. Transversal projects initiated by groups are built upon the relationship between inhabitants and their natural environment, or even the perceived representation of a region and a poetic image of the city.

A specific **48 actions plan** was also adopted in June 2013 by the City of Angers. By bringing together 13 different branches, it is a transversal inclusion of sustainable cultural development issues. It is a testament to the political will to recognise and guarantee a place for artistic creation and cultural expression; it creates cultural effervescence, and it enables democratic debate of ideas, which are essential for regional development.

- Actions must support everyone's cultural diversity and cultural expression. They include celebrating intergenerationality, educational activities concerning language, setting up participative exhibitions in libraries, and many others.
- Actions must also ensure the interaction between cultural policy and other policy areas. This must take into account cultural issues in urban management projects in addition to the attractiveness of a territory. These may include activities in neighbourhood museums, developing actions in support of cultural accessibility for people with disabilities, or mediation support staff in hospitals, retirement centres, or correctional facilities.
- Actions must support cultural exchanges and interaction. Here, some examples include creating intergenerational and elderly reading spaces in libraries, organising an annual event highlighting the fight against discrimination, educational cultural-discovery workshops, entertainment featuring Angers' twin cities, and citizens' participation during significant cultural events.
- Actions must enable cooperation and co-creation among actors. In partnership with regional actors, this may include support for spreading the work of amateur and independent musicians; networks and projects supporting marginalised and low-income individuals; a video games users' committee to structure what is on offer by libraries in this field; the creation of public awards, and exhibitions in museums.
- Actions must promote a responsible economy that develops support for both professionals and students in the cultural and creative sectors, establishing councils, artists directories, times for exchange, newsletters, and spaces for artistic creation.

- Actions must strengthen the ties between culture and the environment by implementing a guide for the eco-design of temporary exhibits in museums; participative science programs with citizens; art exhibitions on the environment; vegetable and plant exhibitions.

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5. Results and Impacts

The ongoing development of cultural policy in Angers and the incorporation of Agenda 21 for culture makes it possible to advance the cultural practices and uses of the region. It enables co-construction between actors, diversity among cultural forms, recognition of individuals' cultural expression, public and civic participation, and much more. This collective progress gradually permeates into the larger territory and comprehensively affects the recognition of cultures as shared wealth, strengthens social bonds, and powerful forces in local development.

Many projects were seen to have a significant impact. They stood out in the reoccupation of public space; the organisation of meetings and exchanges between cultural actors; the promotion of citizens' participation; and the reflection upon the relationship between humans and nature.



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6. Further Information

Website: <http://www.angers.fr/agenda21delaculture>

Social networks: Facebook

Online books or illustrative documents:

- The commitment charter for the Angers region on Agenda 21 for culture.
- An explanatory summary sheet on Agenda 21 for culture.
- The 2012-2013 Action Plan for the City of Angers which advocates Agenda 21 for culture.

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