

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS


FINAL REPORT

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culture 21

UCLG Committee



Agenda 21 for culture is the first global document to establish a framework for helping cities and local governments engage in sustainable cultural development. It was approved on May 8, 2004 in Barcelona as part of the first Universal Forum of Cultures, where United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) adopted Agenda 21 for culture as a reference document for its ambition in the area of culture, which focused on defending human rights, maintaining cultural diversity, facing the challenges of sustainable development, deepening citizen participation, and creating conditions for peace. Since then, the UCLG Committee on Culture has been coordinating such processes.

In this context, culture is considered both a driver and catalyst of sustainable development. Furthermore, the values inherent in Agenda 21 for culture are based on the concrete, practical experiences of cities and local governments as well as contributions from international organisations, universities, and activist movements.

Beginning with Agenda 21 for culture (2004) and **Culture 21 Actions** (2015), the UCLG Committee on Culture has established a set of concrete programmes for implementing the role of culture in sustainable development. “**Pilot Cities**” is a learning programme for local governments that is based on 9 Commitments and 100 Actions that form the framework document, Culture 21 Actions. The programme, which lasts approximately 30 months, provides local outreach, international peer-review, capacity building, local pilot projects, public seminars, and the development of good practices. Its European component, **Pilot Cities Europe**, is carried out in partnership with **Culture Action Europe**, the largest European network of cultural institutions and actors.

The City of Namur joined the Pilot Cities Europe programme in 2015 and has completed its participation in late 2018. This final report has been written by Catherine Cullen, with input from the Secretariat of the UCLG Committee on Culture.

FINAL
REPORT





BACKGROUND

The city of Namur joined the programme in 2016, affirming its commitment to making culture a key part of its local policy. This also highlighted the cross-cutting effects of culture on planning and synergies with other areas of local policy, including social cohesion, environment, economy, urban planning, education, youth, and public spaces, among others. Namur was already strongly involved for several years in a sustainable development approach. Indeed, its commitment to the Pilot Cities programme simply deepens a cultural policy that is already very sensitive to the major issues of Agenda 21 for culture, and its underlying principle of the close relationship between citizenship, culture, and development.

In direct relation to the general policy programme, it can be said that the communal Cross-Cutting Strategic Programme (PST) in Namur is symbolic of the city's strong will to establish a sustainable governance approach. The fact that major projects in recent and coming years—the footbridge, the cable car, the new cultural infrastructure such as the Grand Manège theatre or the new museum centre, to name just a few—means that citizens will be able to use dedicated structures like the Urban Planning Pavilion, and therefore follows the same principles. Indeed, not only does this space provide all involved citizens with information on major urban projects, but it also serves as a forum for exchanges and dialogue between the different actors in the area. This is a form of governance that is also central to the commitments of Culture 21 Actions.

As an innovative university city, the capital of Wallonia, Namur, has been a “Smart City” for a few years now. However, it has gone a step further to create a “smart city geared towards sustainable development and human progress, which means tackling current issues around mobility, cleanliness, employment, housing, environment (water, energy, waste), and social cohesion, and to trying to solve them through innovative solutions, particularly by using the tools and opportunities offered by new technologies”. Although the concept of the Smart City was initially linked to technological innovation, today it has become a model of sustainable urban development that promotes innovation both by and for users, wherein digital technology is one of the key solutions to current problems. Institutions have to act as a platform for exchange rather than as mere transmitters or receivers of information. Cultural infrastructure, associations, artists, cultural actors, and committed citizens all play crucial roles in the development of this new model for a collaborative economy. The city is committed to seeking more horizontal and participatory measures for decision-making and action, with consideration for local public or private actors and citizens, as partners in public action and as full-fledged actors in an urban ecosystem.

The Milan Pavilion, a Belgian pavilion at Expo 2015 in Milan, was bought to be relocated to Namur, and will give the city an important digital centre. This will be a tool for both tourism and technological interest, but it will also ambitiously



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incorporate local initiatives such Kikk, (the international festival for digital creation linking the arts, science and technology), Trakk (a creative hub, and incubator for innovative companies), the future digital hub of Grognon, or the future “Namur Innovative City Lab”. While we can only highlight the cross-cutting work carried out by the city of Namur corresponding to several actions and commitments in Culture 21 Actions, it is clear that culture plays, and will continue to play, a leading role in Namur’s sustainable human development. The centre is even at the forefront of a number of flagship projects for the city’s technological and participative development: the civic platform and the work around Namur Confluent Culture are among the pilot measures of the Namur Pilot City programme.

Issues of governance are continuously raised in municipal policies and practices, reflecting a genuine commitment to human sustainable development. The 2012-2018 declaration on community policy made culture a central issue in creation, dissemination, training, and public accessibility. In Namur, culture is considered important both independently, and because of its impact on society, addressing one of the fundamental principles of the Agenda 21 for culture: Culture is just as essential to sustainable development in Europe as the economic, social, and environmental pillars.

With respect to new forms of governance in the field of culture, there are two clear examples of civic participation in Namur: a creative project in the renovated, and real, Confluence space, as well as a virtual space where the project has implemented a collaborative platform for citizen participation, currently led by the Department of Culture.

The three areas and the four pilot measures chosen by Namur in the context of the Pilot City project were developed at the same time as many other initiatives that could have been included in the programme, and which also represented the different commitments and initiatives of Culture 21 Actions. Some examples include: a new museum centre in partnership with the Bateliers in the historic centre of Namur, pooling resources across different projects including “*The creative resources desk*”, innovative mediation projects like “*Videomuz*”, partnerships with the KIKK digital pavilion, a new venue for the TRAKK (creative hub), a digital plan project at the Confluence Urban Planning Pavilion, artist residencies at the *Abattoirs*, a commitment by the City of Namur to coordinate events, or renovating the *Halle Al’Chair* to host a modern information centre for tourists. With respect to governance, an example includes drafting a shared cultural agenda, the upcoming Cultural Stakeholders Forum. While some of these are not part of the “*pilot measures*”, the unifying and inclusive projects chosen for this area only help enrich and contribute to advancing the city’s sustainable cultural development.



NAMUR PILOT CITY

As part of its participation in the Pilot Cities Europe programme under the Agenda 21 for culture, on June 2, 2016 the City of Namur organised a self-assessment exercise on its cultural and sustainable development policies. It allowed the city to examine its strengths and weaknesses in this area using the “radar” tool to compare its results with the averages obtained in 2015 by a global panel of experts. This phase was followed by the development of a work plan focused on three areas included in the Culture 21 Actions document. These were *Cultural Rights*, *Governance of Culture*, and *Culture and Education*, and proposing 3 “*pilot measures*” to be implemented in the months following the initial workshop.



CULTURAL RIGHTS

PILOT MEASURE 1

ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLATFORM

In January 2018, the City of Namur set up a participatory platform online as part of its policy for citizen participation, an initiative related to the issue of cultural rights. This platform was designed to allow residents to propose their ideas and projects for Namur within the identified major areas. It went online in May 2018 with the launch of a first pilot project, “The Call to the Walls”.

Various departments of the City were involved and worked together on the design and implementation of this project: The Department of Culture, Education, and Leisure, the Department of Support Services, and the Information and Communication Service. Citizen participation on the platform, as well as project feedback and citizen voting on cultural projects, are regularly monitored by the Department of Culture.

“THE CALL TO THE WALLS”

The first project to be proposed on the platform pertained to the artistic creation of “Street Art” frescoes on the walls of the city. The goal of the city is to “create an artistic urban pathway that contributes to Namur’s cultural and tourism development while promoting access to culture for all”.

At first, the City invites interested citizens to offer a wall they own –or not– on which to paint the fresco. The artist is then selected by the owner of the wall from their portfolio. Then, the chosen artist presents at least three projects, two of which are selected by the owner. These two proposals are submitted for an online vote by Namur’s residents.



GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

GOOD PRACTICE 2 CONTINUING WORK ON “NAMUR CONFLUENT CULTURE”

Analysing the “Namur Confluent Culture” Plan

Released in 2013, the white paper “*Namur Confluent Culture*” (2013-2022) is seen as a participatory process within the city, a concerted and coherent partnership dynamic that serves as an informal Council of Culture through its style of governance. At the end of a preliminary consultation phase for all citizens, elected representatives, and individuals involved, the document was reviewed, expanded upon, and amended. In fact, more than 470 modifications were made to the initial text. All areas of culture are part of it: infrastructure, events, urban development, promotion, financing, interaction, and cooperation. The feedback was delivered and discussed in a meeting, and it is the resulting responses that formed the basis of the Namur Culture White Paper.

Halfway through this process, an evaluation was carried out of the percentage of completed, ongoing, and future projects. It was found that nearly 40% of projects have already been completed, 50% are in progress, and 10% of the city’s projects still need to be developed. Every year, the City of Namur conducts a plenary session, bringing together all the cultural stakeholders to continue to build this pillar of governance, and to develop Namur’s shared cultural policy together. It was important to include this under the “*Pilot Measures*” as an essential element of cultural life in Namur: To continue, develop, and improve.

Namur’s Urban Building sites

The City of Namur integrates specific cultural and artistic clauses in outlining major projects. This integration is the result of the very precise work of the Department of Culture and shows that urban stakeholders in Namur view the cultural sphere as a key element of the city’s development. The cultural and artistic clauses form a basis for urban projects, insofar as they are included in the preparatory documents. Cultural and artistic reflections are considered essential for the future development of the City and integrate Culture in all cross-cutting activity.



GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE



PILOT MEASURE 3 THE CULTURE FORUM

A Forum for Cultural Actors

The aim is to create a private area for virtual exchange between cultural actors, with follow-up for requests and projects, and eventually to establish a common agenda.

An assessment was also carried out with cultural actors on the transformation of this forum into an autonomous self-regulatory system.

The City has embarked on an ambitious project to create and implement a Culture Forum in 2019 through an online citizen participatory platform whose role will be to establish a discussion on the challenges and future of the city's cultural issues. This forum will facilitate greater levels of exchange between stakeholders and the voluntary cultural and artistic sector. The aim is to obtain more regular feedback than during the plenary sessions of "Namur Confluent Culture".



CULTURE AND EDUCATION

PILOT MEASURE 4 THE GRAND MANÈGE

This project focuses on the design and building of a theatre with perfect acoustics, a conservatory for more than a thousand students, and an associative hub for the promotion and diffusion of music and singing, all under one roof. The future *Grand Manège Hall* will be able to face the challenges of unamplified classical music and singing, as well as those of emerging music. It will also be able to host theatre and dance performances. This centre will lend a new dynamic to the rich musical life of the city and region. Furthermore, this corresponds to the commitment to exchange, cross-cutting actions, and diversity in the many proposals of Culture 21 Actions.

The capacity of the *Grand Manège* room, combined with the future promise of new spaces, such as the Province of Namur House of Culture, will also facilitate better scheduling of current music, including rock, jazz, and others. A reception area, common rooms, and a restaurant cafe will be open to the public, creating a complete cultural, interdisciplinary space for exchange.

The artistic project also aims to be open to all actors who make Namur a centre of creativity and arts education. Indeed, collaboration with the Conservatory (music, theatre, and dance), which will be adjacent to the *Grand Manège* space will bring unconventional creative and pedagogical potential, enabling a range of artistic skills, cultural activities, and innovative practices. In the second phase of the project, the business quarter will settle there and mixed housing settlements will be created.



OBSERVATIONS

Given the exceptional commitment by the City of Namur to new cultural and tourism infrastructure, alongside a strong ambition for technological innovation, a crucial question in years to come will focus on the question of the new distribution of skills, the cross-cutting nature of operations, and the ability to engage in, and sustain long-term citizen participation.

The Cross-Cutting Strategic Programme (PST) is obviously a valuable tool for its inclusive and effective vision of the city's initiatives, so as to improve services to its population. The awareness of city officials of the importance of culture for the city's attractiveness (tourism, economic development), social cohesion, fundamental freedoms (combatting exclusion or supporting the right to cultural expression), and sustainable development (combatting climate change or supporting the educational impact of art), are strong assets for a "smart city" project.

At the end of this process, there was an area that was not emphasised or was undervalued: the link between Culture and Economy. Indeed, a lack of analyses on this subject has been noticed several times during workshops. After further research and analysis, a formal or informal body bringing together elected officials, economic actors, artists, cultural leaders, researchers, academics, the tourism sector, and those in the field of the economics of culture, could help examine the contribution of culture to the economy so as to better understand what is currently understood about the effects of cultural attractiveness, cultural tourism, ICT, and creative industries on development and employment.

After this first phase project implementation focused on Culture 21 Actions, it would undoubtedly be useful for the City of Namur to continue to develop projects related to the themes in Agenda 21 for culture. This especially includes maintaining diversity, cross-cutting initiatives, eco-organisation, exchange, arts and culture training, as well as culture and social inclusion. The goal is to ensure that economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility are always accompanied by cultural vitality.

Given the careful and successful work of Namur as a Pilot City, its consistency within its goals as an international trailblazer, and its proven ability to influence the work of other cities, the City of Namur could join the Leading Cities programme under the UCLG Committee on Culture. These Leading Cities have gained experience in implementing Agenda 21 for culture and hold solid conceptual and practical knowledge on the place of culture in sustainable cities.

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