

## THE CULTURAL POLICY OF MEXICO CITY



development diversity  
policies **culture** public  
knowledge space  
heritage intercultural innovation

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### 1. Context

**Mexico City, Federal District**, is the capital and seat of the federal powers of the United Mexican States and the biggest city in the country. It is considered its main political, academic, economic, financial, business and cultural centre. It is located in a large basin on the high plateau of the centre of the country, at an altitude of 2,240 metres, and has a surface area of 1,495 square kilometres, divided into sixteen political

*delegaciones*. Its population is estimated at 8.8 million people, although together with its conurbation area (*Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México*) the number amounts to 21 million, making it the third largest urban centre in the world, the largest in the American continent and the most populated Spanish-speaking city in the world.

Mexico City is the richest urban space in the country because of its social and ethnic diversity, where modernity coexists with the customs and traditions of the native peoples and of the immigrants (national and foreign) who have enriched the capital with their culture. At present, 55 native languages are spoken out of the 62 in the country. Average school attendance is the highest in the country: 10.2 years compared to 8.1 years elsewhere. According to data from the Economic Census 2009, there are 382,056 companies, which employ 16.4% of all working people in the country.

Since 1997, when its residents could for the first time elect their own representatives, the city has been led by a left-wing government, which has laid the foundation for the capital to be recognised not only for its democratic participation but for its determination to preserve and broaden public liberties, based on recognition of the full rights of its residents.

## 2. Mexico and culture

Mexico City boasts the lion's share of Mexican culture and is also a meeting point for the cultural expression of the different regions and ethnic groups that form part of the nation. Nationally, it has the highest proportion of cultural venues, and has four sites included in the UNESCO World Heritage List:

- a) the Historic Centre – where over 1,400 historic buildings have been catalogued by the INAH and the *Declaratoria del Camino Real Tierra Adentro* as a cultural route has been launched,
- b) the area of *chinampas de Xochimilco*,
- c) the *Casa Estudio Luis Barragán*,
- d) the *Ciudad Universitaria*. Moreover, the capital has 310 archaeological sites, 5 of them open to the public, and an estimated universe of 7,000 historic monuments with artistic value from the 20th and 21st centuries catalogued by the National Fine Arts Institute, 222 religious buildings and 23 protected natural areas. There are also several areas of environmental value, including the Chapultepec Forest, urban forests, public parks and 3 zoos.

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## 3. Goals and main challenges

The most significant challenges of Mexico City cultural policies are:

- Reduce the breach that prevents certain cultural initiatives from being accessible to all people in Mexico City.
- Ensure that the Secretariat for Culture is assigned at least 2% of the city council budget during the next few years. As stipulated by the Federal District Act on Cultural Promotion in Article 19 Section IV, this is fundamental for achieving the goals established in terms of culture, as well as for starting and operating the different programmes to be implemented and those underway.
- Facilitate the articulation of initiatives with different backgrounds and horizons with the aim of consolidating public spaces and creative expressions of different kinds, aims, genres and meanings.
- Train and stimulate the public by bringing them closer to knowledge of art and historic and contemporary cultural events, to value the tangible and intangible historical, artistic and cultural heritage of our city, out of respect for and awareness of the diversity of all creative manifestations.

- Provide knowledge and technology to entrepreneurs and emerging companies in the cultural industry and related services, with the aim of making the economic dimension of culture possible.
- Achieve the inter-institutional linkage between Mexico City Secretariats to implement cross-over actions that meet the principles established by the Agenda 21 for culture.

#### 4. The cultural policies of Mexico

The cultural policies of Mexico City focus on the *capacity to build community*. The least favoured social sectors, those suffering marginalisation and exclusion, constitute the population of priority attention for developing a building process that expresses and recognises their identity and encourages their creativity.

The cultural policies have been designed from the perspective of cultural rights, with the aim of establishing a fundamental reference to implement organisational, planning, promotional and development processes, characteristic of a social capital.

Thus, the organisation of the cultural field of the city results from the interest of the citizens in participating in the actions of their cultural and social environment, in having an experience more rooted in the public sphere and in using the city as a space of creativity, leisure and enjoyment.

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Mexico City has adopted the Fribourg Declaration, supported by UNESCO, which seeks to foster Cultural Rights in the countries of the world for their own development in this respect. Mexico City is the only government of the Republic, including the federal, which has incorporated it as a framework of reference. The aim of the cultural actions undertaken in the capital is for all people and groups, in coordination with the public, private and social sectors, to interact and promote initiatives to ensure they are implemented and respected. This has involved a broad process of agreement and reflection in which cultural work is enriched with civil and social organisations, cultural agents, academic institutions and the artistic and cultural community. The initiative of the public actors has resulted in the integration of legislation and mechanisms that guarantee respect for and safeguarding of cultural rights in a city which is the geographical area with the greatest cultural demand, provision and infrastructure in the country.

Our objective is to foster the right to culture and the building of citizenship through programmes and projects that encompass different lines of action and contribute to the reconstruction of the social fabric. Thus, we seek to contribute to the development of a fairer society, with greater access to education and cultural goods through the exercise of culture as a universal human right.

Our challenge is to consolidate a cultural policy that guarantees respect for plurality and freedom of expression, consolidates relations with artistic and cultural agents of the city, increases equal opportunities in cultural issues and, above all, contributes to creating community in the city.

##### 1.1. Guiding principles of cultural policy

- a) Recognition and protection of cultural rights
- b) Promotion of regulatory frameworks for citizen participation
- c) Solidarity and cooperation between different actors and governing bodies
- d) Decentralisation of cultural development
- e) Equal access to culture
- f) Cross-over approach to cultural work

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## 1.2. Action lines

The cross-over action lines of cultural policy are as follows:

- Human rights
- Gender equality
- Multiculturalism
- Disability
- Senior citizens
- Children
- Sexual diversity
- Native groups
- Youths
- Recovery and use of public spaces

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### Links between Rights and Action Lines of Cultural Policy

Right to	Policy Action Line
Identify with a cultural community	Community cultural development
Cultural identity and heritage	Preservation and dissemination of cultural and natural heritage
Education and training	Artistic and cultural education and training
Access to and participation in cultural life	Access to and participation in cultural goods and services
Information and communication	Information and cultural communication
Cultural cooperation	Governance and cultural cooperation

## 1.3. Current projects

Some programmes and projects that illustrate the cultural policies of the city as listed below:

- Fábricas de Artes y Oficios (FAROS) in Mexico City
- Ollin Yoliztli Schools of Artistic and Cultural Initiation
- Programme for the Promotion of Reading and Books
- Capital Dialogue: New Narratives, New Dialogues
- Performing Arts and New Cultural Alternatives Programme
- “Galerías Abiertas en la Ciudad de México” Programme
- “Código DF”, Online Cultural Radio
- “Imaginación en Movimiento” Programme, Cultural Industries
- Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra
- Music Ensembles Programme

- Historic Routes in Mexico City

Further information at: [www.cultura.df.gob.mx](http://www.cultura.df.gob.mx)

## 5. México and culture: which effects, which results?

The cultural policy implemented in Mexico City has achieved an inclusive and equitable cultural provision to guarantee free access to cultural goods and services in the city based on the consolidation of the public space as a setting for new forms of coexistence, leisure, dialogue and generation of community.

With the adoption by Mexico City of the **Agenda 21 for culture** in 2011, several actions were developed with the aim of ensuring that cultural public policies are articulated with a common end: to have an impact on cultural freedom by guaranteeing the cultural rights of the population.

In this respect, we took as a basis the principles of the Agenda 21 for culture and we began an exercise in designing and consolidating the cultural policy, as seen in Section 1 of the Federal District General Development Plan 2013-2018 taking as a framework of reference sustainable development in cultural policy. This enabled us to reorganise the programmes, transform the work procedures and practices within the institution, design and propose a new organisational structure allowing the ideal operation of the cultural work in the city, fairly distribute the use of public resources, establish actions for artistic and cultural initiation, and train new publics in creative processes.

## 6. Other information

Website: [www.cultura.df.gob.mx](http://www.cultura.df.gob.mx)

Social networks: <https://www.facebook.com/Cultura.Ciudad.de.Mexico>

<https://twitter.com/CulturaDF>

<https://www.pinterest.com/culturacdmexico/>

<https://www.youtube.com/culturamadf>

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