



UCLG - MEXICO CITY - CULTURE 21
7th EDITION - INTERNATIONAL AWARD

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE JURY

21 JUNE 2026



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CULTURE 21 INTERNATIONAL AWARD

CONTEXT

The 7th edition of the **International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21** aims to recognise cities, local or regional governments, and leading individuals who have excelled in the promotion of innovative practices linked to the exercise of cultural rights, citizenship and sustainable development. The Award reaffirms the leadership of Mexico City in the relationship between culture and sustainable development, and the commitment of UCLG to place culture as a fundamental dimension of sustainable cities. The Award has two categories: “City, Local or Regional Government” and “Individual”.

CATEGORY:

CITY, LOCAL OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

This category will award a city, local or regional government whose policy, programme or project has significantly contributed to the promotion of the exercise of cultural rights in local sustainable development.

The Award is given to the local or regional government that wins the competitive call process, which is open to direct and indirect UCLG members, as well as to any local or regional governments collaborating with UCLG partner organisations. Indirect members of UCLG include local or regional governments that are members of an association or federation of local or regional governments that is, in turn, a member of UCLG.

In the 7th edition, the Award recognises two thematic subcategories, designed to recognise innovative policies, programmes or projects, reward the performance of local and regional governments and promote the replicability of cultural practices in favour of people, the government and our planet. The aforementioned subcategories are based on the following axes:

a) Cultural rights and care

Care, understood as the collective organization of life and the relationships that sustain it, is increasingly permeating local cultural policies. From this perspective, culture is conceived as a space for reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature, generating new forms of coexistence, well-being, and justice.

Cultural policies, programmes, and projects based on cultural rights and care recognize the value of creativity, diversity, and heritage as resources for regenerating communal life. Linked to local strategies on health, inclusion, and well-being, they address social, economic, and



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environmental justice in an integrated manner and repair the legacies of discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, these cultural policies, programmes, and projects can be understood as a care infrastructure when they materialize the relationships that sustain community life.

b) Cultural policies and gender equality

Gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach in municipal competences and actions. Cultural policies, programmes, and projects can contribute to revising gender narratives from a feminist perspective and integrating an intersectional perspective that guarantees equity. These cultural policies, programmes, and projects contribute to creatively transforming the narrative and imagery of cities and territories, so that they reflect the history, identity, and values of the populations that inhabit them, in a diverse, inclusive, plural, and representative manner.

Considering cultural factors and how they facilitate or impede the exercise of human rights is essential to understanding that cultural representations, and, in turn, social norms and behaviours can be at the root of gender inequalities and the inability of women and girls to fully exercise their rights.

The Jury decided that the winners of the Award (in alphabetical order) were the candidatures: **“Living Heritage for a Resilient Future”**, submitted by Ramallah (Palestine), and “VAI Program (Valorization of Cultural Initiatives)” submitted by São Paulo (Brazil):



Ramallah. “Living Heritage for a Resilient Future” is a long-term municipal policy that aims to safeguard and activate cultural heritage as a living urban resource. Facing a context of ongoing occupation, this citywide initiative reflects the city’s strategic commitment to preserve, revitalize, document and make accessible cultural heritage as a core element of identity, memory, belonging and social cohesion. The initiative brings together local communities, cultural practitioners, educational institutions and national stakeholders, to put in place targeted interventions, including local protection legislations, inclusive annual awareness programmes, and the preservation of the city’s archives and museum. The Jury highlighted this initiative as a remarkable example of a wide and solid local policy based on cultural rights and with a gender perspective that values and ensures continuity of collective memory and heritage across generations.



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São Paulo. “VAI Program (Valorization of Cultural Initiatives)” is an initiative that recognizes young people as creators and producers of actions relevant to society, across a wide variety of artistic and cultural expressions. VAI Program provides financial support for artistic and cultural activities, primarily those developed by low-income youth from areas lacking resources and cultural facilities in the city of São Paulo. It is based on the acknowledgement of culture as a fundamental right, and on the understanding that it is the responsibility of the public sector to promote and encourage such practices, especially in the city’s peripheral areas. The Jury emphasizes the positive impact that this initiative has had over the years, including the promotion of civic participation of youth in the implementation and evaluation of cultural policies, and its recognition as an important public tool for social inclusion and gender equality.

The Jury also decided to make special mention of the following projects (in alphabetical order):



Munich (Germany), for “#FemaleHeritage”. The project acknowledges that collective memory, narratives and imaginaries are fundamental cultural elements in open and vibrant cities, and focuses on addressing historic inequalities, specifically those related to the underrepresentation of women in literature, knowledge and science communication. Archivists, curators, educators and librarians in the municipal archive of Monacensia are helping to bring digital this curation and networking initiative beyond Munich.



Pichincha (Ecuador), for “The Pichincha Urban Art Festival”. The purpose of this public festival is two-fold: it promotes urban visual art through the participation of national and international artists with experience and expertise in graffiti and muralism; and it develops creative proposals centred on the prevention and elimination of violence against women. The festival, which organises artistic educational activities for children and young people, constitutes and illustrative example of how culture contributes significantly to fostering dialogue, reflection and positive transformation through art.



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Recife (Brazil), for “**Free Play: Recife for Women’s Right to a Carnival without Violence**”. This project addresses structural inequalities existing in a massive cultural event such as the Recife Carnival. Acknowledging that the festive period is a time of vulnerability for women, who are exposed to harassment and gender-based violence in public space, Free Play coordinates prevention, assistance, and care and guidance interdepartmental services to ensure the enjoyment of public spaces with freedom, dignity, and safety, and to guarantee cultural rights for all.



Salvador (Brazil), for “**The Salvador Capital Afro Movement**”. This initiative is a strategic public policy that connects culture, tourism, and the Black creative economy as a strategy for inclusive, sustainable, and anti-racist development. It integrates public policy, cultural identity, and economic development through an Afrocentered and historically reparative approach, designed to address inequalities and provide equal opportunities through an innovative model in Brazil that is strengthening the international visibility of the city.

Winners and special mentions perfectly illustrate how local governments can address the integration of cultural rights and care systems, and the promotion of gender equality. The Jury wishes to emphasise the need for cities and local governments worldwide to prepare and implement a new generation of cultural policies that are shaped by a gender perspective. The winners and the special mentions are inspiring examples of these policies to come. Also, the Jury affirms winners and special mentions are examples of local implementation of **Culture 21 Plus**, through powerful actions at the local level focused on resilience and cultural rights in difficult contexts, youth and social cohesion, the promotion of gender equality and collective memory, as well as on intersectional policies, cultural participation and the enjoyment of public space for all.



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CATEGORY:

INDIVIDUAL

This category will recognise an internationally renowned individual who has made a fundamental contribution to cultural rights, and to the relationship between culture and sustainable development. The Individual award will be designated by the Jury without an open competition process.

The Jury has decided that the Individual Award be shared ex-aequo by two people (in alphabetical order):



Dr. Nancy Duxbury. PhD. in Communication from Simon Fraser University in Canada. Nancy Duxbury is a leading scholar in the global conversation on culture in sustainability. She is a Principal Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, where she has worked since 2009. She leads the coordination of the interdisciplinary research group on “Urban Cultures, Sociabilities and Participation,” the CREATOUR Observatory on Culture and Tourism for Local Development, and co-coordinates the PhD programme “Cities and Urban Cultures.” The work of Nancy Duxbury focuses on policies for the integration of culture into sustainable local development, as well as on models of cultural development in small communities. She also investigates the interdisciplinary field of cultural mapping, which encompasses the fields of academic research, collective practice and art to understand and articulate meaningful cultural resources and how places hold culture.

Nancy Duxbury is the coordinator of a four-year Horizon Europe research project, entitled “IN SITU: Place-based innovation of cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas.” She was also the leader of a major three-year research project on creative tourism in Portugal called “CREATOUR: Creative tourism destination development in small cities and rural areas.” Her research is interdisciplinary in nature, and both the events she organises and her publications are meeting places that bring together academic and practical knowledge, as well as artistic approaches. She is an adjunct professor at the Simon Fraser University School of Communication and Thompson Rivers University’s Department of Journalism, Communication, and New Media. She is also a co-founder of the Creative Cities Network of Canada.



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Prof. Dr. Amareswar Galla. Salzburg Global Fellow (2019 & 2025); Emeritus Faculty, Australian National University, Canberra is the Founding Executive Director of the International Institute for the Inclusive Museum (iiiM). Distinguished Professor of Indigeneity and Inclusive Museum & Heritage Studies (KISS & KIIT), Galla is a globally renowned expert in sustainable heritage development, inclusive museum management, cultural democracy, intangible heritage, the role of culture in poverty alleviation, and the integration of community voices with heritage conservation. He has provided strategic cultural leadership, serving as Australia's first Professor of Museum Studies and as Chief Curator in Amaravathi Heritage Town. Throughout his career, Galla has contributed to advancing inclusive museums and sustainable heritage development and establishing regional observatories and programs in partnership with bodies including UNESCO.

His engagement has been visible across Australia, Europe, and the Pacific Asia region, developing strong networks of collaboration at the international level. Among other positions, he has been the UNESCO Chair on Inclusive Museums and Sustainable Heritage Development; he was also the first Australian elected as the President of the Asia Pacific Alliance Executive Board, Vice President of the International Executive Council, and Chairperson of the Cross-Cultural Task Force of the International Council of Museums. He was the founder of the National Affirmative Action Programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management at the University of Canberra, in the 1980's and 90's and is a Senior Founding Trustee of the Pacific Islands Museums Association and founding Editor-in-Chief of academic journals dealing with Sustainable Heritage Development.

The Jury acknowledged the quality of the nominations received and highlighted the inspiring impact of the two ex-aequo winners in this category, whose contributions have shaped both cultural rights and sustainable development. Whilst celebrating the legacies of the two winners, the Jury also recognised the intrinsic challenge of comparing lifelong professional careers with those in their early stages during the Award's deliberation process. In this regard, the members of the Jury strongly encouraged the submission of further future nominations of emerging professionals, as a career in its early stages can also bring exceptional innovation and drive. For this reason, the Jury invites future Juries of this Award to recognise the momentum of young generations, who will ultimately be the ones shaping the future of our cities.



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JURY

The Jury of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 is made up of the following five members, all of whom are prestigious international experts with impeccable trajectories and a proven track record in the cultural world, ensuring in this way the notoriety and relevance of the Award:

- I **Iseult Dunne** (President of the Jury) is chief Executive of Dublin City Council Culture Company (City winners ex aequo of the 5th Edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21). She is Project Director and Producer focusing on activating cultural audiences and participation, and Leader of the 2015 team for Dublin's European Capital of Culture 2020 bid process, which resulted as its legacy in creating the Culture Company specialising in cultural participation and audience development citywide.
- I **Yarri Kamara** is an independent cultural policy researcher, writer and translator. She provides research and policy advice to institutions and governments supporting cultural sector development, particularly in Africa. A member of the UNESCO 2005 Convention Expert Facility, she authored the chapter "Culture and Sustainable Development" in UNESCO's 2022 report Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity and co-authored UNESCO's flagship 2023 report on the African fashion sector. As an advisor she has worked with cultural policymakers in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, and with institutions covering the African region such as Africalia and the Creative Economy Practice at CCHub.
- I **Dwinita (Tita) Larasati** co-founded Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF) in 2008. She is the Focal Point of Bandung City of Design, UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN); member of the Global Creative Economy Council (GCEC); research fellow of Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC); and the Executive Committee at Indonesia Creative Cities Network (ICCN). She is the Head of Master in Design Program at the Faculty of Art & Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). In her spare time, she creates and publishes her graphic diary.
- I **Ana Francis López Bayghen Patiño** is the Secretary of Culture for Mexico City since October 2024. She is a cultural promoter, activist, feminist, actress and theatre director. She is a co-founder of the Mexican League of Women in Theatre, the National Association of Stage Directors and the National Network of Independent Venues in Mexico City. In 2011, she received the Omecíhuatl Award from the Mexico City Institute for Women. She served as a local councillor and chair of the Equality Committee of the Mexico City Congress from 2021 to 2024, where she worked for the recognition of the cultural rights of those involved in art and culture.



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I Rocío Lombera is the General Coordinator for International Affairs at the Mexico City Government. An architect and community educator, she has over four decades of experience in the field of urban and social management, with a perspective centred on full rights, social and territorial justice, and collective well-being. At the Iztapalapa Mayor's Office, she played a leading role in flagship socio-urban transformation projects, particularly the UTOPIAS (Units for Transformation and Organisation for Inclusion and Social Harmony). At the international level, she coordinated the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Popular Education and Local Power and served as Regional Advisor for the UN-Habitat Urban Management Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Jury analysed the applications presented in the two categories in May 2026, and held its final meeting on 12 June 2026.

The Jury acknowledged how cities worldwide are taking actions in line with the two axes of the Award, recognising their fundamental role in advancing sustainable development by placing cultural rights, care and gender equality at the heart of public policy. In this light, the Jury also expressed its most sincere gratitude to cities and local governments that are supporting cultural policies, programmes and infrastructure, encouraging collective reflection and decisive action upon the relationship between freedoms, cultural rights, inclusion and gender equality, democracy and peace, care and wellbeing, public commons, community building, and the promotion of international cooperation and solidarity, with initiatives that make evident that culture is “a” driver if not “the” driver of development, and central in the just transitions we, the humanity, are needing today.

The Jury would also like to express their gratitude to all candidate cities for their effort and dedication, and for the resources and enthusiasm they invested in presenting their candidacies. The Jury wishes to commend the involvement of the thousands of people associated to UCLG and Mexico City who have worked on the candidacies and the nominations.



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PARTICIPANT CITIES

This edition of the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 received **59 submissions** from **cities and local and regional governments** from all corners of the world:

Akyurt (Ankara, Turkey), **Amadora** (Portugal), **Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Barranquilla** (Colombia), **Beit-Jann** (Israel), **Bishkek** (Kyrgyz Republic), **Bogotá** (Colombia), **Caguas Autonomous Municipality** (Puerto Rico), **Canary Islands Government** (Spain), **Cartagena de Indias** (Colombia), **Cologne** (Germany), **Concepción** (Chile), **Cuenca** (Ecuador), **Cundinamarca** (Colombia), **Dubai** (United Arab Emirates), **Gangwon Province** (Republic of Korea), **Goyang** (Republic of Korea), **Guadalajara** (Mexico), **Guimarães** (Portugal), **Herzliya** (Israel), **Hidalgo State** (Mexico), **Horta** (Azores, Portugal), **Izmir Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **La Falda** (Córdoba, Argentina), **Lamu** (Republic of Kenya), **Lisbon** (Portugal), **Ludwigsburg** (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), **Maricá** (RJ, Brazil), **Mersin Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Munich** (Bavaria, Germany), **Nairobi** (Republic of Kenya), **Nantes** (France), **Niterói** (Brazil), **North Minahasa** (North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia), **Nuevo León** (Mexico), **Ofaqim** (Israel), **Olot** (Catalonia, Spain), **Oulu** (Finland), **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** (Israel), **Parshuram** (Nepal), **Pichincha** (Ecuador), **Puebla** (Mexico), **Ramallah** (Palestine), **Recife** (Pernambuco, Brazil), **Reconquista** (Province of Santa Fe, Argentina), **Rehovot** (Israel), **Rennes Métropole** (in partnership with the City of Rennes) (France), **Rosario** (Argentina), **Salvador** (Brazil), **Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **São Paulo** (Brazil), **Seoul** (Republic of Korea), **Strasbourg** (France), Tel **Aviv-Yafo** (Israel), **Terrassa** (Catalonia, Spain), **Toluca** (Mexico), **Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Yakutsk** (Russian Federation), and **Yerba Buena** (Argentina).

PREVIOUS EDITIONS

The **first edition** of the Award was held between 2013 and 2014. The “City, Local or Regional Government” category was won by the programme “Arena da Cultura” presented by Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais, Brazil), and the “individual” category by Manuel Castells and Farida Shaheed.

The **second edition** of the Award was held in 2015-2016. The Jury granted the Award to the project “Cultural heritage and reinvigoration of socio-economic activities in Timbuktu”, from the City of Timbuktu (Mali), and to the project “I AM... / The adventure of one community in the middle of a transformation”, presented by Vaudreuil-Dorion (Quebec, Canada), in the “City” category. In the “Individual” category, the Award was also given jointly to Jon Hawkes and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.



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The **third edition** of the Award was held in 2017-2018. The cities of Lyon (France), and its cultural policy “The Sustainable City of Lyon: the Charter of Cultural Cooperation” and Seongbuk (Seoul, Republic of Korea), with the programme “Common Seongbuk Artist Roundtable: Local Culture Governance” were recognized by the International Jury as winners in the category “Cities”. In the category “Individuals”, the Jury decided to award jointly Basma El Husseiny, and Patrice Meyer-Bisch.

The **fourth edition** of the Award was held in 2019-2020. The winners in the “City” category were Medellín (Colombia) with the project “Network of Artistic and Cultural Practices”, and Ségou (Mali) with the project “Ségou: A Creative City”. In the “Individual” category, the Award was given to Eusebio Leal and Vandana Shiva.

The **fifth edition** of the Award was held in 2021-2022, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and post-pandemic recovery; the winners in the “City” category were Buenos Aires (Argentina) with the project “Abasto Cultural neighbourhood: Economic Boost and Urban Regeneration”, and Dublin (Ireland) with the project “AWE - Cultural Engagement through Accessibility, Wellbeing and Evidence”. In the “Individual” category, the Award was given to Lourdes Arizpe and Daisy Fancourt.

The **sixth edition** of the Award was held in 2024, focusing on cultural rights as a key driver of local sustainable development. The winning cities were Gwanak-gu (Republic of Korea) and La Paz (Bolivia) in the category “City / Local or Regional Governments” for their initiatives “Capital of Youth Culture” and “Traditional Medicine Information and Guidance Centres – Qullañ Uta,” respectively. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Alfons Martinell Sempere were awarded ex-aequo in the “Individual” category.



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CONCLUSION

There is no single model of development: each policy and programme are meaningful in specific and different local contexts, and constitute unique and original proposals. Also, action should have documented evidence of the impact and the successes achieved in candidate cities and regions.

The Jury acknowledges the increase in the quantity and quality of applications relating cultural rights to care and cultural policies and practices to gender equality. The winning projects in this 7th edition of the Award are fully inscribed in this perspective. The Jury encourages all cities to develop local projects and programmes that explicitly address these fields, in locally meaningful processes that have people and the planet at the centre, and that are nationally and internationally connected.

The candidacies to this edition of the Award are fully consistent with the promotion of the exercise of cultural rights in local sustainable development, and particularly with the relationship of cultural rights and care, and cultural policies and gender equality. Candidacies show that care is increasingly permeating local cultural policies, materializing the relationships that sustain community life and reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature. Candidacies also demonstrate that gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach in municipal cultural policies, and that they are creatively transforming the narrative and imagery of cities and territories, going to the root of inequalities, so that they reflect the history, identity, and values of populations in a diverse, inclusive, plural, and representative manner. They all are generating new forms of coexistence, well-being, solidarity and justice.

The Jury notes that in these difficult times, when peace among peoples, respect for Mother Earth and dignity for all are at stake, applications to this Award show that, throughout the world, many initiatives arise as beacons of human development with heritage, memories, diversity, knowledge, creativity and quality of life at the core, incorporating cultural rights as a building block of peace and wellbeing in all caring cities and regions. Cities and local governments are central for sustainable development because they localise and promote the right of all to participate in cultural life. The leadership of cities and local governments is a precondition to “leave no one and no place behind”. This is what UCLG enshrined in its Pact for the Future (Daejeon Declaration, October 2022), and continues to advocate for in its Local Social Covenant (Tangier, June 2026), with culture as one of its main axes.

The Jury also notes that local cultural policies, programmes and projects are essential to promote human rights and democracy. Unchaining the potential of heritage, creativity and diversity -that is, culture- and turning this potential into a reality (with a standalone Culture Goal in the SDGs) is an



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unequivocal part of the solution to humanity's challenges.

Awards for both categories will be presented on 7-8 October 2026 in Mexico City, with the Award ceremonies and a Peer-learning Exercise on Cultural Rights and Gender Equality. All members of UCLG are cordially invited to attend.

www.agenda21culture.net/award



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Government of Mexico City — Secretariat on Culture



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