



**culture 21**

UCLG Committee

---

9

**Cultural Actions  
Supporting Gender Equality  
in Cities and Territories**



**UCLG**

United Cities  
and Local Governments

---

The report is available on-line at [www.agenda21culture.net](http://www.agenda21culture.net).

This report can be reproduced for free as long as the authorship is mentioned. We recommend the following quote: **Shaheed, Farida (2021) "Cultural Actions Supporting Gender Equality in Cities and Territories", UCLG Committee on Culture Reports, nº9, Barcelona, 29 October 2021.**

Author: **Farida Shaheed.**

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.

“Culture is the prism through which we perceive – and are perceived by others.

[...] Culture embodies our collective humanity: creative geniuses, pursuit of knowledge, innovation and pleasure but also the flip side: prejudices, discrimination and exclusionary behaviour. Parts of culture that need to change.”

---

**Farida Shaheed** at the 4th UCLG Culture Summit in Izmir (Turkey), 10 September 2021

# UCLG CULTURE COMMITTEE

**United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)** is the world organisation created in 2004 which represents local and regional governments and defends their interests on the world stage. It currently represents 70% of the global population, and it is the association of cities with most members, and with the greatest capacity of influence before the United Nations. The World Secretariat of UCLG is based in Barcelona.

UCLG has an important cultural programme based on the Agenda 21 for Culture, approved in Barcelona in May 2004, on the Declaration "Culture is the 4th pillar of Sustainable Development", approved in Mexico City in November 2010, and on the practical toolkit "Culture 21: Actions", approved in Bilbao in March 2015.

The **UCLG Culture Committee** is a unique global platform of cities, local governments, associations, organisations and networks that cooperate and promote the role of Culture in Sustainable Cities. The mission of the UCLG Culture Committee is to promote culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development through the international dissemination and the local implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, and to foster and make more explicit the relationship between local cultural policies and sustainable development. This narrative is based on human rights, good governance, people-centred development and the co-creation of the city.

## THE COMMITMENT TO CULTURE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

UCLG, the Culture Committee and its members are fully committed to transforming the SDGs ideals into a lived reality for all by representing, defending, and amplifying the voices of local and regional governments. Unequivocal commitment to sustainable development and gender equality is reflected in numerous documents of this constituency.

In 2021, UCLG reiterated its championing of gender equality as a human right with implications for the whole-of-society in '**A Global Feminist Municipal Movement - The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality**' as part of the Generation Equality process. Earlier moves include the **Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men** (2013), the **Durban Political Declaration** (2019) and the manifestos on **The Future of Equality: Beyond Beijing+25** (2019) and **The Future of Culture** (2019), reinforced by the **Presidential Decalogue for the COVID-19 aftermath** (2020), the Mexico City – Barcelona – Montreal **Declaration on the Right to the City for Women** (2019) and the Local and Regional Governments Leaders **Call to Action Women's Leadership for the Post COVID-19 Era** (2020), and its engagement in the CSW65 with the **Joint Statement of the organized constituency of Local and Regional Governments** (2021).

Significant steps of the Culture Committee towards this goal also encompass: **Culture 21 Actions**, the **Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals** guide, '**OBS**' **database of good practices**, **UCLG Culture Summit**, **UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 International Award**, the **Rome Charter** and the more recent **Seven Keys** programme. These provide resources to make operational innovative cultural policies based on human rights that place gender equality as a fundamental element for peaceful societies, where creativity based on diversity can flourish.

Website: [www.agenda21culture.net](http://www.agenda21culture.net)  
Social media: [www.twitter.com/agenda21culture](https://www.twitter.com/agenda21culture)  
[www.facebook.com/agenda21culture](https://www.facebook.com/agenda21culture)



---

The report “Cultural Actions Supporting Gender Equality in Cities and Territories” is a contribution from the cultural perspective to address women’s rights and gender-responsive policies for sustainable development. Drawing upon data collected from UCLG archives, the experience and insights of UCLG members and partners that responded to an open call to submit gender-equality initiatives in the cultural field, extensive research of positive examples from around the globe and a series of key informant interviews, and noting too challenges that require further discussion and debate, the document presents policies, programmes or projects recently implemented at the local level which constitute inspiring achievements in this field, and includes a list of key policy areas to be considered, first and foremost, by cities and local governments in their policies relating to gender equality and culture.

This report was presented as a draft on 10 September 2021 at the UCLG Culture Summit held in Izmir and online, at the plenary session “Promoting Local Actions on Culture and Gender Equality”. The final version was published on 29 October 2021.

This report has been written by Farida Shaheed, Director of the Shirkat Gah women’s resource centre and former UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, and coordinated by Marta Llobet at the Secretariat of the UCLG Culture Committee, also composed by Sarah Vieux, Agnès Ruiz and Jordi Pascual.

The draft received comments, observations and suggestions from:

Edgardo Bilsky, Anna Calvete, Ainara Fernández, Fátima Fernández, Amanda Fletty, Pablo Sebastián Mariani, Rodrigo Messias, Prachi Metawala, Jaume Puigpinós, Maria Alejandra Rico, Cécile Roth and Pablo Fernández (UCLG World Secretariat); Jacqueline Moustache, Thierry Sanzhie Bokally, François Paul Yatta, Najat Zarrouk, Mustapha Moufid and Drissa Keita (UCLG Africa); Jaimie Just, Sarah Benz and Martin Revault, (CEMR); Bernadia Tjandradewi and Liz Villegas (UCLG-ASPAC); Salim Korkmaz and Osman Çorumlu (UCLG-MEWA); Octavi de la Varga, Lia Brum and Silvia Llorente Sánchez (Metropolis); Ana Falu (UCLG UBUNTU); Lisa Colley, Ianto Ware and Sarah Feijen (Adelaide and Sydney); Luciana Blasco, Isabel Rocca and Magdalena Juricic (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires); Esteve Caramés and Jaume Muñoz (Barcelona City Council); Anna Villarroya, Marta Casals and Jordi Baltà (Barcelona); Bernardo Silva Martins Ribeiro, Hugo Salomao Franca, Janine Ladeira de Avelar and Giorgia Araujo da Costa Val (Belo Horizonte); Lina Alejandra Ramírez Galeano, Andrea Tatiana Silva Barrera, Monica Alexandra Barrios González, Yully Marcela Ramírez Contreras, Henry Murraín and Alejandra Núñez Murcia (Bogotá City Council); Funda Erkal, Ayşegül Sabuktay and Onur Eryuce (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality); Sevd Nur Küçükırlı (Konya); Christine Tollet and Marc Villarubias (Lyon); Jasmina Dizdarevic Cordero, Fiona Winders and Magnus Metz (Malmö City Council); Vannesa Bohórquez and Marlene Fautsch (Government of Mexico City); Lucina Jiménez, Ana Arteaga Romero, León Alba, Raquel Portillo and Michelle W. (Mexico City); Mariana Percovich (Montevideo); Marie-Claude Therrien and Siloe Yassa Roy (Montréal City Council); Carine Roland, Sophie Boule, Maguelone Cathala and Raphaele Ardilouze (Paris City Council); the Dirección de Fomento Cultural of Puebla; Francesca Angelucci and Annalisa Rabitti (Reggio Emilia); Imma Vilches (Terrassa City Council); the City of Vigan Administration, Shi Qi and Wang Chenjia (Xi’an); Basma El Husseiny (Action for Hope); Yvette Hardie (ASSITEJ, Cape Town); Armando Bolaño, (Cayeye Films Foundation); Valeria Marcolin (Culture et Développement); John Smithies and Raji Uppal (Australian CDN); Gitte Zschoch and Sybilla Britani (EUNIC); Greta Galeazzi, Sylvain Pasqua and Anna Kedziorek Ramírez (European Commission); Gaia Jungeblodt, Ege Yıldırım, Gabriel Caballero, Sophia Labadi and Bente Mathisen (ICOMOS); Nathalie Guay and Céline de Dianous (IFCDC); Stephen Wyber (IFLA); Aleksandra Uzelac (IRMO); Aránzazu Aramburu, (IWPA); Romina Bianchini (Mujeres X la Cultura); Lisa Sidambe (Nhimbe Trust, Bulawayo); and Diana Stratan (UNIC).

A special gratitude to the persons interviewed, namely Mariana Percovich, Bernadia Tjandradewi, Ana Falu, Luciana Blasco, Isabel Rocca, Magdalena Juricic, Anna Villarroya, Lisa Sidambe and Yvette Hardie, and a warm and sincere gratitude to Emilia Saiz for her great leadership in this field within all the bodies of UCLG.

The Secretariat of the UCLG Culture Committee expresses gratitude to all those who have contributed to this report. The Secretariat takes all responsibility for the contents that appear in the final version of this report.

The UCLG Culture Committee expresses support to all the cultural initiatives that are contributing to the achievement of gender equality.

---

# Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1. Sustainable Development and Culture	13
1.2. Gender Equality & Women's Rights to the City	16
1.3. Cultural interventions to change gender narratives	20
<b>2. Gender-responsive cities and urban cultural narratives</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1. Actions promoting gender equality narratives	22
2.2. Essential ingredients for gender-equal sustainable cities	23
2.3. Challenges	26
<b>3. Gender-equality initiatives in cities and territories</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1. Cultural activism beyond municipal boundaries	45
3.2. Responding to specific issues or situations	47
3.3. Promoting women and non-binary culture creators	52
3.4. Documenting Her Stories and stimulating feminist thinking	54
<b>4. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>57</b>
Actions for local and regional governments to consider	59

---

# Executive Summary

UCLG is committed to sustainable development that leaves no one and no place behind and to making **cities as accessible and enjoyable for women and girls as for men and boys**.

**Without sustainable cities** – where more than half the world lives, and more than two-thirds will by 2050 – **no future is sustainable**. Sustainability depends on melding the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of development **through culture** that **permeates all aspects of human life**: from dry legal texts to the vibrant colours, tempos and excitement of artistic and scientific creativity and play, from the grandiose to the everyday, in mega-cities and sleepy towns.

Culture is how we assign meaning. **Cultural lexicons** modulate our understanding, response to, and engagement with our human, natural and manufactured worlds. Culture embodies our collective humanity: creative geniuses, innovation and pleasure but also the flip side: prejudices, discrimination and exclusionary behaviour that must be overturned through cultural processes that are always sites for contesting – and contested – meanings and values, jostling for acceptance.

Climate change and COVID-19 underscore the need to re-think development models. The pandemic surfaced deep-seated inequalities and exclusions and disproportionately impacts the marginalised: religious and ethnic minorities, the poor, migrants, the differently-abled – and within each category, women, girls and persons of non-binary identities even more so. **COVID exacerbated gender inequalities**: domestic violence spiralled; more women were retrenched due to less secure jobs; women's care work multiplied as they looked after the ill – many never returned to paid jobs. Rejecting **a return to the pre-pandemic so-called “normality”, UCLG leaders call upon** local governments to adopt “a system change approach to address pre-existing issues”.<sup>1</sup>

**Gender is intrinsic to all cultures** because there are only three incontrovertible facts of life that, regardless of all other differences, every society must address: birth, death and the existence of sexes. Consequently, all societies construct gender systems defining the roles, responsibilities and rights of girls/women and boys/men; rewards for obedience and penalties for rebellion. Male/female binaries are also applied to non-binary identities.

**Cities and municipalities are pivotal levers of change** and local governments have a responsibility to make city narratives, dynamics, and institutions more gender-equal, inclusive and democratic. **Every city has its narrative**: a lexicon conveyed in the names of streets, plazas, buildings, in who is reflected/included and who is not/excluded in public imagery and events, museums, cultural venues, guidebooks, and teaching

---

<sup>1</sup> 'UCLG Decalogue for the post COVID-19 Era. An opportunity to take responsibility towards future generations' and 'The Live Learning Experience Knowledge Hub. Women's leadership. Critical for rethinking the future in the post COVID-19 era'. See also 'Towards a Global Feminist Municipal Movement'.

---

materials; in how public spaces are designed, who occupies these, and whether these are equally accessible to all at all times of the day and night.

Making **Women's Rights to the City** a living reality for all requires **cultural interventions to help construct more gender-equal democratic landscapes** by upturning deep-rooted gender normative rules. Economic and other dividends are gained through cultural interventions. WHO confirms that cultural actions improve health and reduce municipal healthcare costs but remain an under-tapped resource.

**Municipalities and local cultural authorities are already refashioning gender roles and urban lexicons**, often in partnership with civil society, cultural actors, academics, gender experts and the private sector. Some municipalities are seeking to comprehensively restructure the entire cityscape and cultural lexicon; others are taking multiple actions. Even without a transversal change agenda, authorities are using cultural interventions to leverage incremental changes. Some focus on particular issues, such as addressing violence against women and girls and overcoming toxic masculinities, or ensuring the inclusion of particular groups such as migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, those living with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ communities.

**Specific initiatives** in the cultural field range from **teaching children new gender roles** in school and play to promoting **new narratives** in museums, city tours, promotional materials, and creative engagements; from **reshaping masculinity** in media programmes, performances and new bedtime stories to **revamping iconic cultural events**; from encouraging and **supporting women's engagements and self-expression** in community centres, performances, exhibitions, festivals, and neighbourhood activities to making **public spaces and events more comfortable and safer** for women and others, and encouraging more gender equitable use of public spaces by reserving times, giving women priority and arranging childcare.

**Women's contributions to cities and territories** are being made visible through new imagery and renaming streets and public places. **Women's creativity, perspectives, voices and struggles are being promoted and projected** by libraries and museums collecting and sharing feminist writings, materials and imagery of women's movements; adopting gender equality yardsticks for competitions and events or making these women-exclusive; populating public narratives with female and non-binary perspectives through, for example, cartoon competitions and refashioning traditional folktales.

In many cities, **transformation** is catalysed and/or supported by **feminists and social justice actors joining hands with local authorities**. Many independent libraries and museums too are revising gender notions, transforming narratives and stimulating feminist thinking. Others are using the **power of arts and culture to create dialogue, challenge and overturn gender inequality attitudes** and promote women's voices, perspectives and analyses.



---

**Numerous challenges arise** in revising deeply embedded gender notions: teachers may resist new curricula they feel is “culturally alien”; **values** expressed in constitutions and policy may clash with people’s traditional cultural paradigms; **traditional male leaders** who have no official posts may be seen as the city’s custodians; alternatively, key decision-makers, such as mayors, may still be viewed more like “kings” than civil servants accountable to citizens. Promoting common values is especially challenging for large cities that host multiple cultures and communities, and where **relationships amongst the diverse city dwellers, and between them and authorities** may need to be reset.

A **common challenge** is **government structures**; in particular, sector-wise vertical operations ill-suited to the cross-cutting issues of gender and the multiplicity of authorities in the culture sector. The **result is segmented decision-making based on fragmented data, undermining the effectiveness of planning, execution and review**. Overcoming hurdles requires ingenuity, creating spaces for interaction and debate, especially at a local level, and discussions around difficult topics to forge a way forward.

**Current initiatives offer a rich compendium of proven diverse pathways** to more gender-equal, diversity-inclusive sustainable cities. **Pathways are diverse** because while gender inequalities are universal, the cultural parameters and dynamics of gender differ tremendously from one place to another, as do political systems and administrative structures. Hence, authorities can – and should – select and adapt the most suitable and doable in their context but bear in mind the following factors of success:

- **Public institutions explicitly committed to gender equality** instilling these values in staff; **policies receptive to** and **supportive of female** and non-binary creations; **less onerous regulations**; protocols and SOPs to ensure compliance.
- A **gender-lens for policy formulation and gender responsive budgeting**: All policies have gender-differentiated impacts, even seemingly gender-neutral activities such as clearing snow and a gender analysis can save costs for the municipality.
- A **gender equality/women’s empowerment** municipal entity – with a seat at the central decision-making table and healthy budget supported by **strong interlinkages** of gender-equality, diversity and cultural decision-making processes and institutions.
- **Comprehensive transversal gender-equality frameworks** are preferable. These require the input of many actors and institutions, and robust coordination among government departments and other institutions/actors.
- **Small-scale and standalone actions are useful but risk becoming tokens of intent** rather than catalysts of change. Supporting women’s economic or social activities in the cultural arena, may answer women’s **practical needs but not the strategic need** for a system change and new cultural lexicon.

- 
- **Changing symbolically significance cultural practices** can catalyse new gender norms.
  - **Sustainable transformation demands the full participation and ownership of residents. An open-door policy** for citizens and specific communities to meet top officials combined with officials proactively meeting the more marginalised and vulnerable communities **shows the city cares and instils greater ownership of initiatives**. Interaction is especially important for women hesitant to approach authorities because they fear they will not be heard or be taken seriously.
  - **Processes are vital important as the actions taken**. Consultative community conversations make otherwise unread policies come alive. **Community participation in planning, implementation and assessments** helps to ensure municipalities are responsive to and inclusive of all inhabitants; community ownership maximizes the chances of success.
  - **Multi-faceted collaboration** in planning, execution and evaluation across government entities, and with others (e.g., academe, artists, creators' groups, the private sector, civil society actors) **increases success. Academia and experts** offer robust evidence-gathering, analyses, and surface women's contributions and feminist groups. **Women's groups, especially feminist ones** bring new insights and innovative approaches. Those working at the grassroots are well-attuned to local issues and what will work best for diverse women.
  - **Documentation and data analysis** undergird robust evidence-based policy decisions, effective new narratives and initiatives. A simple first step is to count women in cultural events, awards and institutions, educational materials, public imagery and names, public spaces and facilities.
  - The **disparities of gender and other factors in digital connectivity** – a lifeline for the young – must be recognised and addressed.

**Ultimately, Women's Rights to the City** will only be realised when cities reflect not only their past and current realities but their aspirations. **This demands context-specific transformative strategic thinking**. What works in one place may not in other places; what works for smaller cities may not be right for larger ones, etc., but change demands **new feminist** approaches, and policies and institutions committed to eliminating all forms of gender discrimination and harmful practices in which **cultural interventions are only one – albeit vital - part of the equation**. Women, girls and persons of non-binary identities must be supported – including financially and through spaces and trainings – to be **co-creators of cultural life and lexicon, to shape new multi-voice urban narratives and development that is truly sustainable and meaningful for all**.

---

# Cultural Actions Supporting Gender Equality in Cities and Territories

Report written by Farida Shaheed

“I always knew that gender was everywhere but working in this [Gendered Landscape] project has really opened my eyes to things in a much more specific and detailed way: I can’t unsee it!”<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Without sustainable cities there is no sustainable future. More than half the world’s population currently resides in urban areas (55%); more than two thirds will by 2050 (68%). High urbanisation characterises Northern America (82%), Latin America and the Caribbean (81%), Europe (74%) and Oceania (68%). Less urbanised Asia (50%) and Africa (43%) will undergo the most rapid urbanisation.<sup>2</sup> As hosts of most of the world’s population, cities have a particular responsibility to be crucibles of positive change and lead the process for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfilling the promise of UN Agenda 2030 to leave no one and no place behind. This can only be achieved by ensuring gender equality and democratic processes inclusive of all.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and its members are fully committed to transforming the SDGs ideals into a lived reality for all by representing, defending, and amplifying the voices of local and regional governments. Unequivocal commitment to sustainable development and gender equality is reflected in numerous UCLG documents. The former requires sector-specific policies combined with transversal and integrated approaches;<sup>3</sup> the latter, policies that guarantee “cities, metropolitan spaces, urban and rural areas are accessible and equally enjoyable for women and girls as they are for men and boys [...] that women’s talent thrive [...] and that their experiences and visions contribute to improving livelihoods for all”.<sup>4</sup>

In 2021, UCLG reiterated its championing of gender equality as a human right with implications for the whole-of-society in ‘**A Global Feminist Municipal Movement - The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality**’ as part of the Generation Equality process. In tandem, the Feminist Municipal Movement

---

<sup>1</sup> Gendered Landscape Lead Expert Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse. ‘Pushing boundaries and doing the impossible’. URBACT. Access Action Planning Network.

<sup>2</sup> ‘68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN’. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (press release).

<sup>3</sup> See the report ‘Towards the localization of the SDGs. Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories’ (2021), developed by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and facilitated by UCLG.

<sup>4</sup> UCLG Manifesto on ‘The Future of Equality: Beyond Beijing+25’. Statement from the UCLG World Congress to the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) on Beijing+25 and Agenda 2030’ (2019).

---

is about women rights but equally “a new way of understanding and governing our cities and territories, based on solidarity and empathy”.<sup>5</sup> This new way of conceiving of and exercising politics as a bottom-up co-creation with local leaders committed to equality the Movement believes is the only possible sustainable pathway for the future. The aim is a society in which diversity thrives so that girls, women, non-binary people, boys and men, migrants and indigenous peoples, people of all ages, ethnicities and races, the differently abled, and LGBTQI+ etc. are equally empowered.

Earlier documents include the **Paris Local and Regional Governments’ Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men** (2013), the **Durban Political Declaration** (2019) and the manifestos on **The Future of Equality: Beyond Beijing+25** (2019) and **The Future of Culture** (2019), reinforced by the **Presidential Decalogue for the COVID-19 aftermath** (2020), the Mexico City – Barcelona – Montreal **Declaration on the Right to the City for Women** (2019) and the Local and Regional Governments Leaders Call to Action **Women’s Leadership for the Post COVID-19 Era** (2020), and its engagement in the CSW65 with the **Joint Statement of the organized constituency of Local and Regional Governments** (2021).

The UCLG Culture Committee is committed to strengthening women’s leadership in cultural policies and decision-making and promoting the recognition of women’s contribution to the cultural life of cities. Its 2021 work programme identified gender equality and women’s rights as issues deserving more attention. The Committee is progressively devoting more resources, together with other networks and civil society organisations, to the promotion, implementation, monitoring and learning of gender equality strategies that meet the needs of all actors in the field of culture. The Committee reinforces linkages with key global agendas and promotes understanding of culture as a pillar of sustainable development. In addition, the Committee is developing a narrative that integrates key elements of the gender-culture relationship in the framework of sustainable development, exploring collaboration with policy areas such as the right to the city, social inclusion, education, migration, environment, health and urban planning, along with the localisation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

Significant steps towards this goal encompass: **Culture 21 Actions**, the **Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals guide**, **‘OBS’ database of good practices**, **UCLG Culture Summit**, **UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 International Award**, the **2020 Rome Charter** and the more recent **Seven Keys programme**. These provide resources to make operational innovative cultural policies based on human rights that place gender equality as a fundamental element for peaceful societies, where creativity based on diversity can flourish.

This report contributes to this endeavour. **Drawing upon extensive research of positive examples** from around the globe and the **experience and insights of UCLG members and partners**, and noting too challenges that require further discussion and debate,

---

<sup>5</sup> **‘A Global Feminist Municipal Movement - The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality’** (p. 3).

---

**the report identifies a list of key policy areas to be considered, first and foremost, by cities and local governments in their policies relating to gender equality and culture.** These areas should also be considered by all stakeholders active in this field.

While culture and gender intersect in complex ways in all forms of human interaction and creativity – whether artistic, scientific/technological or athletics, social or professional, in both public and private spaces – this report is confined to issues and spaces that fall within the remit of local government and municipalities. Still, it should be noted that gender inequalities in the culture and creative sectors are deep-seated and multiple. Available data indicates that while taken as a whole, in some countries women may outnumber men in these sectors, far fewer women than men occupy top echelons of various professions; they drop out earlier due to the added burden of care work; they are less recognized in terms of awards, and less present in public performances, as published authors and creative artists.<sup>6</sup>

The report prepared with the UCLG Culture Committee is based on data collected from UCLG archives, an open call to submit gender-equality initiatives in the cultural field, extensive online research and a series of key informant interviews. Access to information was limited by both language and responsiveness of actors. Hence, actions being taken for gender equality in the cultural arena in East Europe and Asia in particular may not be fully reflected in the report.

## 1.1. Sustainable Development and Culture

Development cannot be sustainable without a paradigm shift: from conceiving of, planning for, and implementing development in disconnected siloes to adopting a more holistic approach. Agenda 2030 stresses the concept of EPIC: Every Policy Is Connected. This means that multi-faceted strategies and approaches are more likely to succeed and be sustainable than singular standalone initiatives in specific fields/spheres. Sustainable development demands conjoining in a single embrace the four dimensions essential for sustainable development recognized by UCLG<sup>7</sup> and UNESCO<sup>8</sup>: economic, social, cultural and environmental. The key to conjoining these four dimensions is culture, making the cultural dimension essential.

Culture, it must be stressed, is not to be understood merely as hermetically sealed manifestations of recognised artistic or architectural achievements – these only reflect fragments of culture. Culture is a prism through which we perceive – and are perceived –, understand, respond to, and engage with our human, natural and manufactured environment. It is how we assign meaning to our lives and, importantly, what we think progress means, and what constitutes development. Inextricably linked to people's sense of self, belonging and identity, culture permeates all human

---

<sup>6</sup> Aleksandra Uzelac, Barbara Lovrinic & Suncana Franic, 'Women in Culture and Creative Sector in Croatia'. *Economia Della Cultura* – a.XXIX, 2019, n.4.

<sup>7</sup> **Agenda 21 for Culture** (2004).

<sup>8</sup> 'What is Education for Sustainable Development' (UNESCO).

---

activities and institutions in all societies: from dry legal texts to the vibrant colours and tempos of artistic endeavours; from our food, songs and dances, to music, art and architecture, science and technology; from the grandiose to the everyday; from the expansive urban cultural landscapes of mega-cities to quiet niches of small towns. Culture is the core of being human: it embodies our collective humanity, with all its fragilities and imperfections: creative geniuses, pursuit of knowledge, innovation and pleasure but also the flip side: prejudices and exclusionary behaviours.

Viewing culture as being restricted to certain areas of life, or of greater relevance in some societies than in others, is misplaced. The diverse all-encompassing nature of culture is underlined by the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of UNESCO,<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its Comment 21,<sup>11</sup> and UCLG itself – for example in the **2020 Rome Charter**.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, culture is never static. As stressed by the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, it is an evolving process “created, contested and recreated within the social praxis of diverse groups interacting in economic, social and political arenas. It is manifested in individual and collective self-expression, understanding and practices”.<sup>13</sup> The centrality of culture in human existence makes it an essential pillar of sustainability as elaborated in great detail by Jon Hawkes in his seminal piece,<sup>14</sup> which underpins became the UCLG policy statement ‘Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development’.<sup>15</sup> This understanding is starting to be recognized globally by others too,<sup>16</sup> including an increasing number of municipal authorities, and in line UCLG policy documents,<sup>17</sup> such as the **Pact for the Future for the People, for the Planet and for the Government** to be adopted in 2022, that will envisage a development “powered by solidarity, equality, culture, and accountable institutions that leave no-one and no place behind”.<sup>18</sup> European capital cities<sup>19</sup> in the ACCESS Action Planning Network, too, recognise that “a more inclusive culture has the ability to facilitate greater understanding of individuals and their lives, increase empathy towards others and develop an appreciation of the diversity of human experience and cultures. **Culture plays an important role in finding solutions to the complex issues of today’s urban metropolises**”.<sup>20</sup>

The centrality of culture in human existence is reflected in cultural rights being recognized as integral to human rights. Enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – amongst other conventions – cultural rights are not about preserving culture as it currently exists. Rather, cultural rights protect “the rights for each person, individually and in community with others, as well as

---

<sup>9</sup> See the **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**.

<sup>10</sup> See the report ‘**Gender & creativity: progress on the precipice, special edition**’, published by UNESCO (2021) which affirms that “for a truly inclusive and prosperous creative economy to take shape, we must step up our efforts to promote gender equality in this sector [culture]”.

<sup>11</sup> See **General comment No. 21** (2009).

<sup>12</sup> The **2020 Rome Charter**.

<sup>13</sup> **A/67/287** Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights report on ‘The enjoyment of cultural rights by women on an equal basis with men’ (2012), para 2.

<sup>14</sup> Jon Hawkes, 2001. ‘**The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability – Culture’s essential role in public planning**’.

<sup>15</sup> See ‘**Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development**’ (adopted 17 November 2010).

<sup>16</sup> ‘**Culture as a Driver for Sustainable Urban Development**’, Gaetan Siew and Zaheer Allam.

<sup>17</sup> See ‘**Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals. A Guide for Local Action**’ (UCLG, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> ‘**Facilitating a “Pact for the Future”: The role of the International Municipal and Regional Movement powered by UCLG**’.

<sup>19</sup> Amsterdam, Dublin, Lisbon, London, Sofia, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius.

<sup>20</sup> **Culture for All. ACCESS Action Planning Network** (URBACT).

---

groups of people, **to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development** [and] also protect access to heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place”.<sup>21</sup> Cultural rights protect and promote the right of every person to access, take part in and contribute to cultural life without discrimination and without fear. Access encompasses access to cultural life beyond one’s particular community. The right to take part in cultural life includes the right not to take part in any cultural process or activity that undermines human dignity. The right to contribute means having the wherewithal (resources and opportunities) to explore and realise one’s creative potential, and to join, leave, re-enter or create new communities of shared values and to challenge existing norms without fear and penalties. Taking this forward, Agenda 21 for Culture affirms that cultural rights guarantee everyone’s “access to resources they need to freely pursue their process of cultural identification throughout their life, as well as to actively participate in, and reshape, existing cultures”. This implies rights, freedoms and responsibilities as well as lifelong access to, participation in, and contributions to “cultural and symbolic universes...in the construction of citizenship and peace in our societies”. As stated in the 2020 Rome Charter, “public authorities, national and local governments, have legal duties in respect of participation in culture”, and embedding the perspective of women, children and young people in cultural policies is essential to enable people’s capabilities to discover, create, share, protect and enjoy culture.<sup>22</sup>

When an authority puts in a policy the importance of women’s voices, and promotes participative processes, with their priorities, this changes culture [...]. We really need to recover the narratives of women, since they are omitted; to recover the meaning of places; to convince city leaders that we are facing a new epic, and women’s [specific] demands and needs must be acknowledged. They are all demands of equality.

**Ana Falú, Executive Director, CISCSA; UCLG UBUNTU Advisor**

**Three vital characteristics of culture must be borne in mind when considering the achievement of gender equality in cities.** First, while culture is increasingly recognised as a driver of the economy,<sup>23 24</sup> culture is in fact the thread intertwining all other dimensions because it is the lexicon of understanding that sculpts what is considered appropriate and desirable as well as what is to be ignored or rejected. Aspirations – the desired and envisaged future – is a cultural competency.<sup>25</sup> As stressed

<sup>21</sup> **A/HRC/14/36** ‘Mapping cultural rights: nature, issues and challenges’ (2010).

<sup>22</sup> **The 2020 Rome Charter.**

<sup>23</sup> **‘Culture: a driver and an enabler of sustainable development. Thematic Think Piece’.** United Nations System Task Team, UNESCO (2012).

<sup>24</sup> **‘The Creative Economy. New driver for development’** [press release]. UNESCO (2014).

<sup>25</sup> UN Special Rapporteur for cultural rights report **A/HRC/20/26.** ‘The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications’ (2012).

---

by Jon Hawkes “culture is both the medium and the message – the inherent values and the means and the results of social expression. Culture enfolds every aspect of human intercourse: the family, the education, legal, political and transport systems, the mass media, work practices, welfare programs, leisure pursuits, religion, the built environment”.<sup>26</sup> Imbedded in the very fabric of our lives, cultural frameworks can both facilitate and obstruct popular as well as institutional ownership of sustainable development agendas. Cultural norms can help to overcome or reinforce exclusions and discrimination. The role of culture for sustainable development is thus critical. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that (1) culture does not exist outside human beings, (2) culture is never static: it is constantly being created through human interactions that reinforce the status quo or introduce innovations and changes, and (3) all cultures contain aspects contrary to human rights and democratic processes. Safeguarding against deepening exclusions of particular groups and overcoming discriminations so that no one and no place is left behind, makes it indispensable to proactively encourage, catalyse and support the reshaping of cultural constructs through democratic interactions and negotiations.<sup>27</sup>

Second, development strategies are always implemented – and human rights enjoyed – within specific cultural and socioeconomic frameworks. Transformations are thus contingent upon the factors and dynamics operative on the ground, including cultural traditions, practices, values and beliefs on the one hand and the operative administrative and political dispensations on the other. Moreover, as all cities are inhabited by multiple diverse groups, it is incumbent on local authorities to develop strategies, formulate policies and devise mechanisms that take into consideration the diversity of residents and accommodate distinct – and possibly divergent – needs. This is particularly relevant to meeting the human rights obligations to which local governments are bound. Many local authorities have and continue to review their relationship with residents to address discriminatory practices in public service delivery.

Third, development – whether planned interventions or unplanned changes – inevitably have dissimilar outcomes and impact for different genders as well as other features such as class, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability immigration status, and location – urban/rural, near or farther from centres of decision-making/power. Gender, however, is pivotal as it cuts across all other factors.

## 1.2. Gender Equality & Women’s Rights to the City

Concepts of gender are an inherent and deeply embedded element of all cultures because “All societies have to address three incontrovertible facts of life: birth, death and the existence of sexes. This means “all societies [...] construct gender systems

---

<sup>26</sup> ‘Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development’. Policy document adopted in Mexico City on 17 November 2010. UCLG (2010), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> The 2020 Rome Charter.



---

defining the roles, responsibilities and rights of girls/women and boys/men [... and] constructs of gender play a central role in people's self-definition as a social collectivity".<sup>28</sup> Therefore, for development to both benefit everyone and be sustainable, development policies, strategies and initiatives must be rethought using a gender lens as gender permeates all aspects of life, including cityscapes and city life. As the lead expert of an urban 'Gendered Landscape' project, Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, says, "I always knew that gender was everywhere but working in this project has really opened my eyes to things in a much more specific and detailed way: I can't unsee it!".<sup>29</sup> Even the most seemingly gender-neutral municipal decisions can have important gender-specific outcomes. For instance, the order in which streets are cleared of snow may appear gender neutral, but a gender-sensitive analysis of snow clearing in Karlsloga, Sweden, unearthed critical gender-differentiated impact due to the order in which streets were cleaned. Priority was given to thoroughfares, then main streets and small streets and pavements cleared last. As more women walk than men, they use pavements more, so were more likely to fall, injure themselves and require hospitalization. The revision of the policy following this gendered analysis enabled savings in municipal health costs.<sup>30</sup> So while Hawkes correctly asserts that "What is good for the economy is not necessarily good for society", what is good for society can be good for the economy and the municipality as a whole.

Cities and municipalities are pivotal for gender equality. Cultural processes are always sites for contesting – and contested – meanings and values, jostling for acceptance in an ever-changing world,<sup>31</sup> and nowhere is this more evident than in our urban environments. Cities play a dynamic role through planned interventions, the multiplication of choices, and opportunities for unplanned encounters and engagements in public spaces. In many ways, cities are like social synapses of humanity: receiving and transmitting a multitude of signals, in which local authorities and governments that govern public spaces for human interaction, engagement, and creativity, including discussions and debates, play a decisive role. Municipal decisions and actions can be a fulcrum for altering the lexicon of cultural understanding to be more gender equal. It is encouraging that the Council of the European Union incorporates gender equality as one of the five priorities of the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022,<sup>32</sup> in line with the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025<sup>33</sup> of the European Commission, which adopts a dual approach of gender mainstreaming and intersectionality in all policy areas, and therefore encompasses the culture and creative sectors.

Gender equality has progressed in all parts of the world thanks to a multitude of efforts since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in 2015. Still, the 2020 COVID-19 crisis has vividly

---

28 Farida Shaheed, 'Citizenship and the Nuanced Belonging of Women', in *Scratching the Surface: Democracy, Traditions, Gender*, Jennifer Bennett, ed. (Lahore, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2007).

29 Gendered Landscape Lead Expert Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse. **'Pushing boundaries and doing the impossible'**. URBACT. Access Action Planning Network.

30 **'Sustainable Gender Equality. A film about gender mainstreaming in practice'**. See also the video **'What is Gender Responsive Budgeting'**.

31 See **A/HRC/14/36** 'Mapping cultural rights: nature, issues and challenges' (2010).

32 **Draft Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022** (2018).

33 **'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. COM/2020/152 final'**. European Commission (2020, March 5).

---

surfaced the extent to which inequalities and exclusions persist. The pandemic also exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and problems: domestic violence spiralled; more women were retrenched as they are concentrated in poorly paid, less secure jobs— often in the informal markets; women were at higher risk of contracting the disease as they constitute the bulk of the lower ranks of health service providers; women’s socially sanctioned care and nurturing duties multiplied as they assumed responsibility for caring for the ill, children and the elderly – tasks that prevented many women from returning to paid jobs; the digital gender gap meant fewer women and girls were able to access online resources and cultural events in the digital sphere. This differentiated impact stems from deeply embedded culturally determined social constructs of gender roles coupled with the lower priority accorded females (and non-binary genders), evident for example, in the hugely reduced access to reproductive health services impacting pregnant and lactating women during this period, or the shut-down of essential services such as shelters and prevention centres. Hence, political **leaders of UCLG**, such as the Mayors of Bogota and Barcelona, **reject a return to the unacceptable pre-pandemic “normality”** and **advocate a new way of conceiving of care and its centrality for development, cities and local public services**, and stress that “local government responses should focus not only on immediately curbing the effects of the pandemic on gender equality, but rather on a system change approach to address pre-existing issues”.<sup>34</sup>

In the last few years, gender has been present on the agenda thanks to civil society [...]. Main infrastructures have strategic plans in which they project a gender perspective as a goal. But, especially during COVID times, gender has disappeared in the recovery plans.

**Anna Villarroya, cultural policy expert,  
Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends**

The UCLG **Feminist Municipal Movement** links gender equality with its call for **Women’s Right to the City**<sup>35</sup> as “a powerful idea” that is “relatively new and complex, since it encompasses all rights — civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental” as expressed in the ‘Transformative Commitment of cities and territories to Generation Equality’.<sup>36</sup> The right to the city also represents a powerful call in favour of renewing the role of bottom-up practices in urban development and city life. Therefore, as recalled by many local authorities in the right to the city movement, it is essential to foster dialogue between social movements and government institutions;<sup>37</sup> between local government and bottom-up feminist mobilization at the local level.

---

<sup>34</sup> ‘UCLG Decalogue for the post COVID-19 Era. An opportunity to take responsibility towards future generations’ and ‘The Live Learning Experience Knowledge Hub. Women’s leadership. Critical for rethinking the future in the post COVID-19 era’. See also **Towards a Global Feminist Municipal Movement**’.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Cities for Women, Sustainable Cities. The Right to the City, for Women’, UCLG, 2019, March 7 (press release).

<sup>36</sup> ‘A Global Feminist Municipal Movement - The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality’ (p. 6).

<sup>37</sup> ‘Final Declaration of the First World Summit of Local Governments for the Right to the City. Saint-Denis and Aubervilliers’ (2012).

---

Local authorities govern public spaces for human interaction and engagement, creativity and contestation for most of the world's population. The vitality of making municipal policies, spaces and structures gender inclusive and responsive in all aspects cannot be overstated; the 2019 Mexico City – Barcelona – Montreal Declaration on Women's Right to the City, championed within the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, can only be realised by proactively redesigning municipal planning and interventions to increase opportunities for all, co-creating local policies with attention to public spaces, care, safety, representation and equality.<sup>38</sup> Planning the city from a gender approach is "to think and build cities for the whole of society in its diversity and complexity" and transform cities into territories of equality of opportunities.<sup>39</sup> As Siphhelele Ngobese, researcher of the South Africa Cities Network says, "the wellbeing of spaces impact on our lives" making it essential "to consider how and what the built environment enables so all can reap the benefits of living in urban cities [...]. The unequal distribution of care work and use of time among the population becomes evident in cities; women and girls experience cities differently [from men and boys], including in their access to public and cultural services and their participation in the cultural life of communities. As drivers of sustainable development, cities need integrated spaces and integrated economies that allow everyone to play a role and allow everybody to participate and benefit".<sup>40</sup> As stated by UCLG, to achieve sustainable development and leave no one and no place behind, "**it is critical to guarantee that cities, metropolitan spaces, urban and rural areas are accessible and equally enjoyable for women and girls as they are for men and boys**,"<sup>41</sup> as well as persons of non-binary identities.

**Every city elaborates narratives of who it is** because all "places and territories are social constructs [...] reflecting the history, identity, and values of the populations that inhabit them".<sup>42</sup> A lexicon of meanings is conveyed in a multitude of ways: in physical landscapes through the names assigned to streets, plazas, buildings etc., in who is reflected (and who is not) in monuments, statues, and public portraits; whose stories and voices are showcased in public events (parades, festivals etc.), and reflected in local museums, socio-cultural venues and centres, guidebooks and school educational materials. It is evident in the way public space (with all its multiple elements) is designed, in who has centre stage in cultural events, celebrations or commemorations, playgrounds, sports venues, radio and television programmes – and whether public spaces are equally accessible to all at all times of the day and night. The Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City<sup>43</sup> (2014) stress the role of participation and rights-based narratives to better reflect cities diversity to foster residents' emancipation: "A human rights city is an open and participatory process where all actors are engaged in the decision-making and implementation

---

38 'Co-creating Local Policies for Women Rights'. Special session in the framework of the Iztapalapa's IOPD Conference organised by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG.

39 'A Global Feminist Municipal Movement – The Transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality' (p. 55).

40 'Gender equality in city planner'. GBV Epidemic (2021, February 17).

41 UCLG Manifesto on 'The Future of Equality: Beyond Beijing+25. Statement from the UCLG World Congress to the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) on Beijing+25 and Agenda 2030' (2019).

42 'Agenda 21 for Culture' (2004).

43 'Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City (Gwangju Principles)'. Adopted at the 2014 World Human Rights Cities Forum. Gwangju, Republic of Korea. UCLG (2014, May 17).

---

process to improve quality of life in the urban context”. These **city narratives reflect societal inclusions and exclusions**; they are rarely gender inclusive and commonly also exclude other marginalised groups.

Equally important as changing the gender composition of decision-making structures in local governments and local cultural institutions, is changing the narrative(s) of the city itself. As Ana Falu, Executive Director, CISCSA and UCLG UBUNTU Advisor states, “**cities are planned with very androcentric models and patterns, at different levels**; public policies are thought from an androcentric point of view. **We need different tools and approaches, and one is culture**”.<sup>44</sup> Making Women’s Rights to the City a reality demands a rewriting of these narratives and an altering of policies and institutions governing public spaces. A new lexicon of the city can emerge by reshaping all cultural expressions of who the city is and who it is for through the active participation of all towards a truly sustainable and meaningful development. Women, girls and persons of non-binary identities in all their diversity must be supported to participate in cultural life, to shape the city’s multi-faceted identity; local authorities must adopt robust multi-faceted measures to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and harmful practices.

### 1.3. Cultural interventions to change gender narratives

There is a host of reasons for including a cultural intervention approach to local government initiatives to make cities more gender-equal democratic landscapes. Boosting the number of women in administrative structures, decision-making forums and economic planning is essential, but may not suffice by itself. As pointed out by Beit Jala, Palestine, merely ensuring women’s presence in political structures is essential but insufficient to alter the deeply entrenched cultural parameters that govern gender relations. The sentiment is echoed by Bernadia Tjandradewi, Secretary General of the UCLG regional section for Asia Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), who notes that even when quotas exist and are filled, women may not be ready; when elected they struggle because they “don’t have good capacity for being mayors, understanding administrative issues, being good leaders”.

Cultural interventions also have physical and mental health dividends. They enable reaching the marginalized, reinforce resilience and provide new ways of changing thinking. Arts interventions have proven efficacy in promoting better health and reducing healthcare costs. As evidenced by WHO research, they promote physical and mental health but “remain an under-tapped resource that need to be harnessed effectively”.<sup>45</sup> The cultural nature of such initiatives ensures relevancy for persons from diverse cultural backgrounds, opening important avenues through which to engage minority or hard-to-reach groups, who may be at higher risk of poor health and

---

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Ana Falu, Executive Director, CISCSA and UCLG UBUNTU Advisor.

<sup>45</sup> **The Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report** ‘mapping global academic literature, referencing over 900 publications, incl. 200 reviews & over 3000 further studies.’

---

therefore generate higher health-care costs. Across the globe, music interventions have improved the mental and physical health of diverse groups, including women survivors of violence, young mothers, the differently abled, abandoned children and adolescents, communities living in extreme poverty, and migrants, helping to build self-esteem, agency and resilience.<sup>46</sup> Collaborative theatre processes have sculpted new social spaces as processes that contribute to participatory justice in decision-making, meaning-making and solidarity building across societal spheres.<sup>47</sup> Worldwide, cultural heritage institutions are actively catalysing a revision of gender perceptions and relations.<sup>48</sup> As public service bodies with expertise in how information is collected, presented and used, libraries<sup>49</sup> and museums have a particular role in transforming narratives of gender and exclusions in support of the realisation of rights for everyone without exception, a new “shared knowledge”.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic that exposed gender inequalities simultaneously highlighted the vitality of cultural interactions for well-being and ability to cope with crisis – visible in the responses to impromptu concerts or street performances from balconies or the street or on-line connections and networks. People’s eagerness, indeed need, to express themselves artistically, enjoy the creativity of others and reconnect socially, underscores our need as human beings for cultural interaction. Because places and territories are social constructs, the pandemic is an opportunity to **reshape the lexicon of meanings in urban spaces**, for it is the cultural lexicon that undergirds the normative standards we adhere to and the values we promote. As stated by Gonzalo Carámbula, former Director of the Department of Culture at the Municipality of Montevideo, “the **state’s relationship with culture can be understood as a ‘hexahedron in motion’ that features ideological, political, economic, institutional and especially gendered problems – a dimension usually absent** in theoretical texts and local indicators on **public cultural management**.” Consequently, gender mainstreaming policies in culture is critical, despite resistance inherent in the status quo.<sup>51</sup>

You can’t change people’s minds from a  
top-down approach – with men as much as with  
women – and I think arts is the way to do it.  
This space can create change.

**Yvette Hardie, theatre director, producer, educator and advocate**

---

46 ‘**Music as a Global Resource: Solutions for Cultural, Social, Health, Educational, Environmental, and Economic Issues**’ (Bartleet, B-L., Hesser, B., 2020).

47 See for example, **Empatheatre**.

48 See ICOMOS’ report: ‘**Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals. Policy guidance for heritage and development actors**’ (2021).

49 See IFLA’s report: ‘**Libraries Delivering Gender Equality. How Libraries Feature in National Reports on the Beijing Declaration**’ (2020).

50 ‘**Culture 21 Actions**’ (UCLG, 2015).

51 ‘**Cultural policies with a perspective on gender equality: Montevideo going forward in its cultural shift**’. Good practice available at the ‘OBS’ database of good practices on culture and sustainable cities of the UCLG Culture Committee.

---

## 2. Gender-responsive cities and urban cultural narratives

### 2.1. Actions promoting gender equality narratives

Women's rights to the city can only be realised for all women through a **comprehensive reshaping of urban gender roles and lexicons. Around the world, some cities, local and regional authorities have undertaken an impressive array of actions to refashion** structures, systems and urban cultural lexicons to reshape the entire cityscape. Others have undertaken specific actions to leverage change; some have focused on ensuring the inclusion of particular groups of residents such as migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, those living with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ communities; yet others have acted to overturn toxic masculinities and encourage new masculinities through helplines, services and radio programmes but also through theatre, performances and new bedtime stories.

Initiatives have selected cultural practices with particular symbolic significance to catalyse new definitions of "gender-appropriate" roles and practices through public signifiers. These vary significantly. For example, **Taipei**, introduced women as musicians and deacons in Confucius Temple ceremonies – tasks hitherto exclusively reserved for men – quietly changing norms through religio-cultural practices. Less quietly, **Montevideo** (Uruguay) eliminated queens and crowns in its popular iconic carnivals, initially meeting significant resistance.

Many municipalities have promoted women's economic well-being, including in cultural sector activities, providing opportunities and spaces for women to meet, learn skills, crafts and trade. For example, the city of **Jeonju** (Korea) is revitalising traditional cultural activities and involving women in its sustainable development efforts. **Xi'an** (People's Republic of China) has built culture platforms for women and celebrates outstanding women in public events such as 'Advanced Collective of Women's Achievement Model in Urban and Rural Areas'.<sup>52</sup> Cultural platforms include safe spaces for women provided by the Xi'an Municipal Women's Federation for family activities, including Tiktok competitions, and a renovated home for women and children in the Industrial Park of Old Steel Factory (Han Senzhai Subdistrict) that offer women opportunities to congregate and participate in basic and development services. The **Konya** Metropolitan Municipality (Turkey) too provides spaces and opportunities for women through free certified courses at Family Art and education centres (ASEM), KOMEK Courses and Sports centres. Childcare and game rooms are provided to ease women's participation.

---

<sup>52</sup> Other events include 'Excellent Women in the New Era', 'Women Pace-setter Individual', 'Women Pace-setter Collective', 'Women's Achievement Model' and 'Civilization Heroine'.

---

Beyond celebrating particular women on specific days and women-only events, local and regional governments are **making visible women's contributions to cities and territories** in various ways: from including women and persons of non-binary identities in city's statues, street names and visual imagery, to promoting women's stories (herstory) in public events, festivals, museums, libraries and community centres as well as promotional information and city tours. **Women's creativity, perspective and voices** are being promoted in various other ways too: municipal libraries collect fictional and non-fictional feminist writings, as well as other materials, such as posters of women's movements, and disseminate these in various ways, including specially organised events and linkages with schools. Considerable initiatives project women's voices in cultural and creative sectors through women-exclusive competitions and events or adopting a gender lens in selection criteria. Populating public narratives with female and non-binary perspectives encompasses innovations such as gender-focused cartoon competitions and the refashioning of traditional folktales.

Actions for more **gender equitable use of public spaces** encompass: scheduling timings for women, giving them priority in usage of parks, gyms and other public locations or arranging childcare. Numerous efforts seek to **make public spaces and events more comfortable and safer** for women and other marginalised groups. In the rich diversity of actions leveraging change, certain factors stand out for yielding especially advantageous dividends, that are especially effective as part of integral and systematic interventions involving diverse policy areas.

## 2.2 Essential ingredients for gender-equal sustainable cities

**Institutional arrangements are critical levers of change.** A gender equality department – or otherwise empowered municipal entity – at the centre of decision-making with sufficient budgetary allocation with the explicit aim to alter gender constructs and narratives is essential. Mainstreaming the rights-based approach in local policy-making and municipal administration is a powerful lever to advance this agenda. Increasing women's presence in economic or social activities within the existing development paradigm may be a useful way to address women's practical needs, but do not address women's strategic need for a system change and a new cultural lexicon. For example, while women's economic empowerment is absolutely crucial, remunerative work by itself may not spark gender transformative processes because, for example, the money earned may be insufficient to alter intra-family gender dynamics or women may not have control over their earnings. To be transformative, income-generating activities for women must be based on an understanding of existing gender dynamics and be planned in ways that strive to alter such dynamics and be accompanied by gender-equality discourses.

---

In the cultural arena, effectiveness significantly improves when (1) feminists occupy decision-making seats and (2) strong interlinkages exist between gender equality and cultural decision-making processes and institutions. Gender equality champions within key institutions have been able to both use and create new opportunities for change.

Networking with other government and civil society organisations allows us to reach citizens who would not respond to a cultural call. Our role as civil servants is to be close to citizens, to be in permanent conversation with them. The head of government goes out every day to walk around different parts of the city. All ministers and secretaries do that.

**Luciana Blasco, Director Vice Secretary of Cultural Policies,  
Autonomous City of Buenos Aires**

**An open-door policy** undergirds many of the most successful initiatives promoting gender equal cities. This operates in two ways: First, top officials proactively engage with citizens and representatives of specific communities, and encourage people to approach them with ideas or problems and have made the necessary institutional arrangements for this. Second, high ranking officials – mayors, ministers, heads of departments or entities – themselves go to the people: engaging communities, in particular those who are marginalised or more vulnerable. Such arrangements and interactions help to overcome a too-frequent gap between policy-makers and residents; they have symbolic value that shows the city cares; and practical dividends as there is greater ownership of initiatives. Open-door policies, especially at the cultural level, are key to fostering change to more caring societies with greater social cohesion and a high sense of belonging and ownership of change among citizens.

I had to leave my desk and reach out to all the officials and civil servants, so that everyone would recognize my face. That took me my whole first year in government. But it is a very feasible recommendation. The civil servants are the ones who remain... Even if the office sucks you to the desk, and it may seem like a very silly recommendation, you have to get out of the desk. This works, it is effective.

**Mariana Percovich, playwright, professor, theatre director  
and former Director of Culture, Montevideo**



---

**Multi-faceted collaboration enhances success** – be it amongst government departments/institutions, or collaborating with academic institutions and/or civil society groups. Involving gender specialists, alongside cultural actors, in the planning, execution and evaluations processes is essential as they can help pinpoint issues needing attention and suggestion ways forward. Collaborations with academic institutions and experts are particularly important for gathering evidence and analysis.

**Documentation and data analysis strengthen measures** in numerous ways. A simple first step is mapping the current situation. In the cultural field, this has ranged from counting women's presence in cultural events, awards and institutions, to the presence of women's voices in museums, libraries and educational curricula and materials, to reviewing the names of public spaces – streets, buildings monuments and who is celebrated in public events in parades, theatre, art and music festivals etc. – to a gender analysis of who uses public spaces, including parks and athletic establishment and facilities. Evidence-based policy decisions help to overcome the general absence of women, girls and persons of non-binary identities in the city's cultural landscape – as well as the invisibility of particular segments of city residents. Research – often in collaboration with universities and other academic institutions especially university gender studies departments/centres – has brought forth the historical and contemporary contributions of women to the city or territory. Academics have the technical capacity for rigorous research and analysis and provide new insights and ideas. Such documentation is vital for, while the availability of data on culture is improving, disaggregation by sex remains rare.<sup>53</sup> Documentation and research then translate into new narratives and new initiatives for various audiences in multiple ways, making for a more gender-equal and all-inclusive cityscape.

**The processes adopted for catalysing change are as vital as the actual actions.** Pivotal to sustainable community-owned change is identifying issues through consultations with concerned citizens before considering possible solutions.<sup>54</sup> **Broad consultative processes** engaging different communities in the city – women and other marginalized/intersectional discrimination – not only help to pinpoint the most appropriate actions and strategies, but ensure community ownership of initiatives proposed and implemented by local authorities. The participation of communities in the planning, implementation and assessments processes is stressed in literature<sup>55</sup> as well as experts interviewed for which guidelines have been developed.<sup>56</sup>

Women's organisations are important voices to be included in consultations and collaborations. Women's organisations/associations who work at the grassroots with women from diverse communities are often well-attuned to both the issues confronting women and to what may work best for them. Feminist associations in particular can be

---

<sup>53</sup> See **'Measuring Women's Contribution to Culture'** (press release). Institute for Statistics, UNESCO (2014, December 2).

<sup>54</sup> **TAKSO** is an outcomes planning platform developed by the Culture Development Network in Australia, which is being used in a variety of state and local authorities and cultural organisations to address the needs of each community. Organisations identify the outcomes needed to address goals, including gender equality. This participatory tool helps to understand to what extent the outcome has been achieved for the activity participants.

<sup>55</sup> See the **Intercultural Cities Programme** (ICC).

<sup>56</sup> See **'The intercultural city step by step. A practical guide for applying the urban model of intercultural inclusion. Revised edition.'** Council of Europe (2021).

---

an important source of support for gender equality political municipal actors and local authorities. they have been critical to unearthing women's historical contributions. Academics, activists and those engaged in cultural and creative endeavours can bring new insights for innovative approaches.

## 2.3 Challenges

Change is never accomplished without challenges and altering deeply embedded cultural notions of gender can be especially difficult. These need to be acknowledged, confronted and addressed. Many challenges are context-specific and require context-specific responses. Gender inequalities and discrimination are universal, but the cultural parameters, dynamics and elasticity of gender-normative rules differ tremendously from one place to another. Political systems vary as do administrative structures.

In some countries, in the past [local and regional governments (LRGs)] mayors were considered as kings, but this is changing, although we do not see 100% change [...]. So maybe women don't go to local facilities for these reasons [of behaviors and attitudes]. If we manage to convey the idea that the aim of LRGs is to serve people, that could improve.

**Bernadia Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG-ASPAC**

Overtuning culturally embedded gender norms and harmful practices can be more challenging in some places; certain practices may be more resistant to change than others – in some societies, taboos may impede even broaching certain topics. Ingrained beliefs underpinning practices require long-term interventions through, for instance, the educational system, but as stressed by experts and activists alike this may be hard<sup>57</sup> if teachers are “stuck in old paradigms” and resist new curricula which they feel is “culturally alien”.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, there may be significant dissonance between the values formally expressed in constitutions and policy documents on the one hand, and people's traditional culture paradigms on the other. Hence, traditional male leaders may be “regarded as the custodians of the city” even when they occupy no official posts,<sup>59</sup> especially where democratic processes are more recent and less robust. Conversely, those in key decision-making posts, such as mayors, may still be viewed more like “kings” than civil servants accountable to citizens.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Bernadia Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG-ASPAC.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Yvette Hardie, theatre director, producer, educator and advocate.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Lisa Sidambe, Programme Director on Global Affairs at Nhimbe Trust.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Bernadia Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG-ASPAC.

---

Discrimination, built on sociocultural norms, pervade all stages of public life. Our constituency is ready to address this controversial side of culture [...] with creative initiatives that can acknowledge the danger of monolithic thinking and lead to change and evolution, boosting culture both as an enabler and a driver of development. Positive transformation requires fully acknowledging cultural aspects, practices and agents as substantial elements of sustainable development, and the rights of women and girls are central to this aim.

**Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG**

Initiatives seeking change must bear these in mind. To overcome such hurdles, it is essential “to bring these two things together, finding a new space. That can only be done at a local level,” as pointed out by Yvette Hardie, theatre director, producer, educator and advocate. Sometimes however, a **very strong and cross-cutting “shock policy”** (‘política de choque’) might be the answer, as asserted by Mariana Percovich, playwright, professor, theatre director, and former Director of Culture, Montevideo. Promoting common values and criteria for advancement can be especially challenging for large cities where a multiplicity of voices and cultures coexist. Ultimately, “culture, creation and heritage must simultaneously be involved in actions and initiatives relating to territories, social, educational, environmental and equality issues.”<sup>61</sup>

An important **common challenge** relates to government structures that are typically organized into sectors operating in a vertical manner, ill-suited to address issues of gender that cut across all sectors. Furthermore, the culture sector itself may operate under separate authorities responsible for specific aspects. Theatres, exhibition halls, museums, and libraries, as well as public spaces such as parks, tend to operate under distinct authorities and, for instance, national and international festivals may fall under the tourism authority, while smaller localised cultural events are the responsibility of the cultural department/authority. This can lead to segmented decision-making in which only a fragmented picture is available with any given institution, undermining the effectiveness of planning, execution and review. Policies and authorities are context specific and sometimes the provincial/state policy may be stronger than the local policy or authority; synergies have to be crafted according the specifics of context.

Additionally, public cultural bodies may have difficulties demonstrating the vitality of a comprehensive and coherent approach to gender which takes into account multiple factors such as the need to:

---

<sup>61</sup> Submission to this report from Marc Villarubias, independent advisor, former Director for Cultural Cooperation, Lyon.

- 
- Create and sustain safe cultural spaces free of violence;
  - Have human resources aware of and committed to a culture of gender equality and respect for diversity;
  - Hold inclusive dialogues with communities;
  - Initiate concrete actions that make visible the contributions of women and persons of non-binary identities to the cultural life of the city.

Interventions that seek to ensure **the cultural rights of all may meet resistance from established cultural actors and institutions** because these may be considered to be diverting resources from professionals in the field. Such dynamics require careful negotiations.

In any event, **cultural interventions** alone never suffice. These must accompany other measures to make women's right to the city a reality, such as improved street lighting, public transport and care system, helplines, educational and economic opportunities for women. A separate issue to consider in the cultural and all other fields is the vitality of digital connectivity in today's world, especially for younger people – an importance further underscored by the pandemic. This makes it imperative to acknowledge and address the disparities of access due to gender and other factors through an intersectional approach.

Finally, while a political environment supportive of transversal deep-seated change may not always be available, city authorities have been able to bring about incremental changes through their actions and these provide important lessons for better more effective planning of dynamic gender-equal sustainable cities, as do some civil society initiatives.

---

### 3. GENDER-EQUALITY INITIATIVES IN CITIES AND TERRITORIES

**MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY** — The Municipality adopted **gender equality plans as cross-sectorial strategic plans in 2002 that “emphasis[e] the cultural components while generating transformative gender-based policies as part of the Municipality’s policy and strategic guidelines”**.<sup>62</sup> The gender budget is separate from and in addition to other culture-related budgets around which policies have also been amended to promote gender equality. Actions encompass appropriate institutional arrangements, robust budgets, data collection, collaboration of different departments, people’s participation, feedback mechanisms, and proactive engagement of universities, CSOs, and communities. In 2015, a **lead role was assumed by the Department of Culture**, that enjoys one of the three top budgets and a large staff, in defining goals and budgetary allocations. To its existing responsibilities for cultural infrastructure (ensembles, theatres, museums, and libraries) and artistic activities, the department added initiatives to bolster **inclusive democratic processes and the full enjoyment of the cultural rights** of citizenship, the **appropriation of public space**, and the **coexistence and development of local identities and community culture**. The aim is “not just positive actions seeking modifications to transform some types of needs and differential interests” but an integrated approach that achieve “real social change”.<sup>63</sup>

The **institutional framework was strengthened** by a qualified equality team composed of officials from all policy areas, a programme-defined crosscutting gender-equality budget, incorporating a gender perspective in institutional management and, importantly, training and awareness-raising workshops for civil servants so they could become gender-equality advocates. Mechanisms and procedures have been established to mainstream human rights and gender mainstreaming in **five-year Gender Equality Plans** with specific, measurable, and standardised objectives being implemented by the Department’s 49 branches. The Department of Culture’s **Gender Team** promotes and monitors cross-over gender approaches in collaboration with **Municipal Equality Teams** and **Neighbourhood Committees**. **Regular meetings** are held with professional arts groups, CSOs and the Universidad de la República; plans and implementation are also discussed with cultural groups receiving public funding. **A Gender Observatory formulates relevant gender parity indicators** for established arts centres (National Theatre, Orchestras), arts training schools, cinema, Juan Carlos Onetti Literary Award, and Programme for Strengthening the Arts.

---

<sup>62</sup> **‘Cultural policies with a perspective on gender equality: Montevideo going forward in its cultural shift’**. Good practice available at the ‘OBS’ database of good practices on culture and sustainable cities of the UCLG Culture Committee.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

---

**Regulatory frameworks have been altered;** gender equality clauses are included in calls and contests. The iconic *Reinas del Carnaval* ('Carnival Queens') competitive event was renamed *Figuras del Carnaval* ('Carnival Personalities') in 2017 and regulations revised so that women over 18, transsexual and women living with disabilities could participate. New regulations safeguard against gender stereotyping in the *Carnaval de las Promesas* ('Carnival of Promises') involving children and teenagers.

A **series of talks and conferences** highlighted gender inequality in the field of film and theatre production and direction; the report of a conference on gender mainstreaming in theatre recommended measures to be taken by both public and private theatres.

In the **design and definition of operational budgets**, the **Department of Culture prioritises decentralization**. Seeking to guarantee cultural rights of all with a human rights approach, Equality Plans and revised governance structures proactively bring cultural events to peripheral neighbourhoods and support residents to occupy main stages. The aim is **"to tear down symbolic walls between [citizens] and to build positive ties connecting the population with the rest of the city"**.<sup>64</sup> For example, as a space for community life, the **SACUDE Civic Centre of Municipality D** has transformed a neighbourhood with a young population confronting enormous problems: dropouts, drug use, and adolescent pregnancies. Residents were provided access to performances staged on Montevideo's cultural scene: trips to museums, cinemas, dance, and theatre, paths to the beach, parks, and plazas, as well as close interaction with quality artists were organised; a free travel pass on public transit during the summer and school holidays enabled mobility. Many artistic and cultural events were brought to the city outskirts in SACUDE: from cinema, theatre, and dance, to symphony, philharmonic performances and photography exhibits. This was complemented by workshops for youth in diverse cultural disciplines and sports but also training for unemployed youth.

The policies have enabled **many female artists to have platforms and resources; groups of community women to gain access to spaces they did not enjoy previously for mutual support, strategizing and promoting ideas**. Transsexual women and women survivors of violence have been supported as authors of cultural meaning-making, sometimes in a larger percentage than professional artists. Engaging various actors at different levels has catalysed new ways of thinking about gender issues that some residents and organisations had initially resisted, and today, empowered neighbourhood groups are promoting cultural changes. The challenge has been **sectors with greater privileges and professional visibility resisting the support to popular culture**.

**IZMIR, TURKEY** — Awarded the title of 'Women Friendly City' by the United Nations in 2010, the Municipality believes that **gender equality is essential not only for women but for all members of a society to celebrate an equal and fair life**, for which

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

---

multi-faceted interconnected actions include cooperation with non-governmental organizations and professional chambers. **Administrative measures** to ensure the presence of women and non-binary identity persons in decision-making bodies include a **Gender Equality Commission** in 2006 and a **Local Equality Action Plan** created by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The **Directorate of Women's Affairs**, established under the Social Projects Department in 2012, coordinates the services in all administrative units and other subsidiaries for gender equality promotes **public memory of women in the city**.

A multitude of actions **project women in public narratives**. The **Gender Equality Cartoon Contest 2021**, an international open call, mobilised 549 cartoonists from 62 countries submitting 1,672 artworks around the gendered dimensions of Environment, Power and Decision-making, the Economy, Poverty, and Education as well as 'Violence against Women', 'Women's Rights' and 'Empowering Young Girls'. Awarded works were exhibited in Izmir and other Turkish cities. A new award, **Star of Izmir**, will be granted to people and entities carrying out women's empowerment activities and social responsibility projects.

Konak Municipality established the **Women's Museum Izmir** in 2014. The first women's museum in Turkey has a section dedicated to the women's movement and holds gender-related exhibitions and drama activities. The City Council has approved another women's museum to showcase historical representations of women from different backgrounds, illustrate and raise awareness of women's rights movements. Activities will include creating **a network with national and international women's museums** through congresses, workshops, training courses, joint and collaborative projects. **A book commemorating women's struggle** in Izmir aims to inspire future generations: *The Story of Forty Years from Her Voice (Izmir Women's Movement after 1980)* documents the experiences of different women including all women's organizations in Izmir: associations, foundations, platforms, coordination units and initiatives. **Women's Urban Memory Walks** integrate women's perspective and narrations in the city's history, highlighting places of significance to the women's movement in Izmir that started in the 1800s with the first recorded women's protest against "bread price rise" in 1828.

To **change the gender narrative**, the Municipal Council of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality recently ratified the decision for the **Men's and Masculinity Studies in Society and Culture**. The initiative aims to transform the perception of "masculinity" in socio-cultural spheres through city-wide staff training courses and practices and workshops to generate discussion around patriarchy and gender-based power relations in culture. Equally important and unusual is the Tell me, Izmir! project seeking to **eliminate patriarchal narratives from fairy tales** and transform these into egalitarian narrations.

---

A number of actions **ensure public spaces that promote women's voices and encourage women's participation in culture creation**. *Women Making Films in their Neighbourhoods* provides an opportunity to unveil social problems and formulate neighbourhood solutions from women's perspectives. Simultaneously, it creates spaces for women to express themselves through cinema, and to acquire a profession in the field of cinema. *Woman Meets City Life* supports women with limited access to urban resources to engage with the city culturally, and develop their sense of self and belonging – benefiting approximately 19,000 women to date. *Women's Affairs Integrated Service Centres* provide women with psychological, legal and social services. Workshops, training and activities aim to empower women, support their participation in social and cultural life, and strengthen employment. Similar centres are planned in all Izmir's provinces. The *Impact of Culture and Tradition on Women's Life* project addresses gender codes and enable the transformation of cultural and traditional roles through workshops. It will also ensure intercultural interactions at local, national and international levels, host national and international conferences. A new initiative consists of **monthly forums in thirty districts of Izmir** to support women to develop social, cultural, artistic, legal and political projects. Forums will also serve as a common platform to discuss the problems faced in all aspects of life.

**BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA** – In 2015, the city that doubles its population during the day and is home to significant social movements including women's movements and transfeminisms, made its goal “a more humane and egalitarian city”<sup>65</sup> to be achieved through a process of cultural transformation. The eradication of gender inequalities is a central and cross-cutting objective aligned with the perspective of feminist and transfeminist movements. With a motto of “proximity”, the government accompanies and supports grassroots developments and initiatives for transformation. Civil servants are required to be close to and in permanent conversation with citizens; the head of government, ministers and secretaries all walk around different parts of the city every day. This, coupled with a vast cultural infrastructure, collaboration with different ministries, and a very thorough engagement with the network of organisations throughout the territorial remit of the Ministry of Culture ensures the government is cognisant of the interests of the diverse communities and segments of city dwellers.

All cultural institutions proactively issue open calls inviting communities to become a part of cultural spaces; networking with other government sectors and CSOs reaches citizens unlikely to respond to calls. **The Ministry of Culture plays a central role** in making issues visible and carries out actions of high symbolic value through its different administrative units (theatres, libraries, etc.), including in public spaces and in collaboration with civil society cultural actors. To gauge the effectiveness of the many mechanisms established to build links with communities, citizen participation indicators have been created using digital tools.

---

<sup>65</sup> Quotes refer to the submission from Buenos Aires to the report, unless otherwise specified.



---

The Ministry of Culture and local cultural agencies have the unique task of building and disseminating the desired cultural values to guide citizens' practices. For this, Buenos Aires provides spaces, infrastructure, opportunities and tools to "learn, reflect, build and deconstruct the vital meanings of their journeys, associated with their configuration as holistic and complex people in their diversity." Cultural management is designed to provide communities with resources so that each person can build a better place to live from an informed, critical and sensitive point of view.

**Commitment to gender equality** has translated into local laws and the city's adherence to national laws that protect and expand the rights of women and the LGBTQI+ community; a gender-based violence hotline which responds to more than 60,000 calls annually and the '**Agenda for the Equal Rights of Women and Diversities**'. The Agenda generates cultural actions that make women and dissidents visible as active participants in artistic fields, in thinking and culture as a whole. Gender parity and the representation of women and the LGBTQI+ communities as leaders are promoted through a participatory and collaborative approach that includes creating networks, with calls and specific campaigns amplifying their voices. The Agenda's Gender Training Plan ensures that the Culture Ministry's team is aware of, committed to and strengthened as a promoter of a culture that eradicates inequalities and discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation: an annual and transversal training programme builds capacity and understanding of gender issues (roles and stereotypes, gender violence, sexual diversity, inclusive communication, and new masculinities) of all the Ministry's strategic teams: from Communication to Human Resources and Administrative Teams, Teaching and Educational Coordination to Management and Public Attention. To ensure that all its spaces are free of gender-based violence for workers, the artistic and cultural ecosystem, and audiences, the Ministry of Culture developed a Protocol in 2019 applicable to the entire working environment.<sup>66</sup> The guide was the outcome of a process of reflection across all areas of the Ministry, taking into account the multiple specific realities in which teams work and the dynamic characteristics of the actions implemented by the Ministry for and with the community.

The Ministry of Culture deploys an impressive array of actions to make visible the gender perspective, working strategically under a solid work plan connecting the various departments of the Ministry of Culture with actions, projects and public policies that all have common goals. For example, to ensure historiography recognizes women as the makers of the tangible and intangible heritage of Buenos Aires, audiovisual pieces produced under the *Mujeres Detrás del Casco* ('Women Behind the Helmet') initiative showcase the stories of women who give life to the historical helmet of the capital. Similarly, audio guides to the historic centre relate women's contributions to the city.

---

<sup>66</sup> Based on the general guidelines of Law 6083 and its Annex Protocol of Action - Law No. 6.083, in force since 2019.

---

The **Centro Cultural Recoleta** (Recoleta Cultural Centre) run by women, disseminates women's diverse experiences and struggles in campaigns such as *Mujeres Acá y Ahora* ('Women here and now'). In 2021, *Acá estamos Nosotras* ('Here we are: the women') showcased different journeys to March 8th. 50 virtual conversations brought together more than 1,000 women of different ages from different parts of the country to collectively reflect on the current feminist struggles. Cycles of workshops, talks, recitals and visual exhibitions highlighted the multiple diverse voices of the feminist movement around crucial debates.

To promote **visibility and an acknowledgement of women in the cultural field**, outstanding women musicians performed symphonic and chamber concerts in the 113th anniversary of the Teatro Colón, interpreting pieces written by great female composers – many of whom have been systematically invisibilised, or published works under male pseudonyms, or were simply considered minor creators. Likewise, baroque music performed by an ensemble of the country's most renowned women musicians demonstrated the virtuosity of female composers. In the audiovisual field, the latest edition of the *National Festival Women and Film* showcases more than 40 films by women filmmakers. Support of *Impulso Cultural*, *Mecenazgo* and *BA Audiovisual* ensured this could be enjoyed on the Ministry of Culture's virtually platform, *Vivamos Cultura*.

Additionally, funding institutions for the artistic and cultural sector, such as the Metropolitan Fund for Culture, Arts and Sciences, give special consideration to proposals presented by women and/or dissidents, or that promote gender equality. The *Instituto Superior de Arte del Teatro Colón* will conduct a series of virtual master classes, many linked to gender issues such as the class, *Boquitas pintadas. A brief history of uranists, inverts and transvestites through opera*, that traces the chronology of rebellion against imposed gender and sexual normativity in the history of opera.

**Masculinities are also being addressed.** A writing competition by the theatre company, *Complejo Teatral Buenos Aires*, for example, encourages adolescents and young men identifying as male to express their life journeys: '*Retratos de masculinidades*' ('Portraits of Masculinities'). Winning texts will be used as dramaturgy and represented in some stage format.

**BARCELONA, CATALONIA, SPAIN** — Committed to eliminating inequalities as a principle of social and political justice<sup>67</sup> and recognising that gender differences are enriching, the City Councillor's Office for Feminism and LGBTI Affairs incorporates a gender perspective across all areas: culture, economy, sport, health care, employment, participation, international relations, etc. Likewise, the City Council's Gender-mainstreaming Department ensures that gender equality is a central goal of the entire City Council, municipal areas and districts. The municipality works closely with feminist organisations and entities to address the full range of gender issues: from

---

<sup>67</sup> Barcelona City Council. '**Women and feminism. Commitment to gender equity**'.

---

prevention and a variety of facilitative services for survivors of gender-based violence and LGBTI-phobia to encouraging the political and social participation of women and LGBTI people and providing them legal, psychological and community support tools. To bring the City Council closer to civil society, a working group of civil society experts, 'Culture and Gender', was created in 2019 by The Institute of Culture of Barcelona (ICUB) in collaboration with the Gender-mainstreaming Department as part of the *Cultura Viva* ('Living Culture') programme to diagnose the current situation with a gender lens and has recently present an action plan: 'Culture and feminism: Measures to advance in the mainstreaming of the feminist perspective in culture in Barcelona'.<sup>68</sup>

New more equitable concepts of gender are encouraged. **La Bonne: Annual Young Creators Award** stimulates the construction of fairer more equitable gender roles in short films to trigger the **collective imaginary as a tool for transformation**. Women under 36 years of age create and produce audio-visual short films on the feminist topic announced for the year. The city offers **resources and services for men wishing to rethink their masculinity**; promotes the democratisation of care work; works with all the city's sports, commercial, leisure businesses, neighbourhood and district festival organisers, and education promoters, to make these safe environments for women, girls and LGBTI people. Programmes promote gender equality in schools.<sup>69</sup>

Community interaction is facilitated by municipal civic centres (many now run by CSOs) that offer different cultural activities, spaces for groups to meet and take courses on literature, music and also spaces to rehearse and present artistic products – a number promoting gender equality. Created in the early 20th century, *La Bonne*<sup>70</sup> is a space for meeting, exchanging ideas and creating feminist cultural projects. It has a multidisciplinary approach encompassing various fields: audio-visual, performance, performing arts, living arts, research, feminist thought as well as various feminist and anti-racist initiatives. In the **Sagrada Família neighbourhood**, gender mainstreaming is led by the Sagrada Família Civic Centre, a community networking and information hub that engages the public in cultural programming: shows, exhibitions, film cycles, concerts, etc., offers courses and workshops, spaces and support for creative and other projects specialising in gender and equality. The Sagrada Família Josep M. Ainaud de Lasarte Library houses has a special collection on feminism, LGTBI issues and queer theory as well as general materials.

In April 2021, Barcelona launched a new Right to Culture Plan, **Fem Cultura** ('We Make Culture'), promoting cultural rights through new public policies. Elaborated in collaboration with UCLG Culture Committee, the plan has a healthy budget for nine policies – one being fostering **equal participation in the cultural domain** in terms of **gender and other identities**. The goal is to overcome gender disparities in the city's cultural world, achieve a balanced presence of women in decision-making, ensure

---

<sup>68</sup> See the report (in Catalan): '**Informe: Cultura i feminismes Mesures per avançar en la introducció de la perspectiva feminista a l'àmbit de la cultura a Barcelona**'.

<sup>69</sup> **Feminism and sexual and gender diversity. Area of Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminism and LGTBI Affairs**, Barcelona City Council.

<sup>70</sup> Previously the "Francesca Bonnemaison Women's Culture Centre".

---

parity in cultural programmes, avoid sexist and androcentric gender stereotypes in programming and communication and apply an intersectional perspective to account for other factors of inequality such as class, origin, race, etc. The city's cultural policies developed by the ICUB, associated projects and organisations will all be planned, managed, executed and evaluated from a feminist perspective; actions designed by the ICUB Department of Strategic Projects, the Councillor's Office for Feminism and LGBTBI Affairs and its Directorate of Gender Services and Time Policies.

Numerous **administrative measures** include expanded indicators for cultural usage and public management to generate gender-disaggregated data for all centres under the City Council. This exhaustive analysis of the city's reality will facilitate the interpretation, evaluation and design of new cultural policies. A mandatory training of municipal personnel and the staff of cultural institutions, consortiums and facilities will ensure the feminist perspective is supported by gender-sensitive internal staff at the ICUB, associated facilities and bodies; it will also be applied to internal promotions, especially for executive positions. A Gender Mainstreaming Unit in ICUB will ensure the effective implementation of protocols for applying a gender perspective in all municipal actions. The Unit and a new Gender Commission in the Culture Council, the main participatory body of the cultural sector and Barcelona's citizens in Culture, will establish a specific evaluation system to assess grants, subsidies and financial aid, and make sure cultural budgets have a gender perspective. A gender perspective will be incorporated in all municipal educational activities and facilities as well as in all internal and external communications of the ICUB and associated facility, project or body according to the City Council's Inclusive Communication Guidelines. A protocol to combat sexual and gender harassment is being developed for all City Council and associated facilities, projects, programmes and festivals. Mandatory gender parity in all City Council-supported cultural programmes will guarantee the visibility of the creative work of women artists and professionals in public centres and festival programmes, including in outsourced services and consortium organisations of which the City Council is a member.

**UMEÅ, SWEDEN** — Placing gender equality at the heart of the city, the '**Strategy for Gender Equality Work in Umeå Municipality**' has a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable approach. Continuous **monitoring of gender representation** in the city cultural scene and events identifies inequalities, underpinning new remedial actions. The **Gendered Landscape** initiative focuses on the whole city rather than specific resident groups to elicit an **integrated understanding of inclusion, gender equality and sustainable urban development** that highlights power structures and dynamics. <sup>71</sup>he sole focus of Gendered Landscape is not gender parity but intensive gender equality work, and heightened awareness as well as increased women's stage presence in the city's eight biggest festivals – from 38.4 percent in 2013 to 45 percent in 2015. The **need for qualified staff** responsible for urban development within and

---

<sup>71</sup> 'Gender equality at the heart of the city. A tour to an urban "gendered" landscape to raise awareness and promote gender equality' (URBACT).

---

outside the city administration is stressed. A key component is good cooperation between the Municipality and the Umeå University's Centre for Gender Studies. In 1999, research on the gendered use of public spaces led to a decision by the municipal board of leisure to divide practice hours of sports complexes according to which division soccer teams played in, regardless of gender. Consequently, the city's leading women's soccer team got to choose their practice hours before the leading men's team. This practice has been adopted by all municipal arenas.

In 2009, the Municipality introduced **guided bus tours with "gender glasses"** to raise awareness about the multi-faceted aspects of Umeå's gendered landscape, presenting both initiatives having improved gender equality and challenges. For instance, when passing in front of the biggest high school, visitors are informed about girls and boys making gender-typical choices in education; in front of the hospital, consequences of a gender segregated labour market. As the bus passes by parks, issues of security and safety in public spaces are shared. **Highlighting the constant interactions between public and private present in a city**, the tour includes places with work by CSOs and public works of art. Diverse stakeholders are engaged at stops, including different levels of government; the cooperation between local, regional and national level in working with gender equality is highlighted at the county administrative office. **Tours catalyse a better understanding of gendered power structures** in the city's context and the necessity of new initiatives and projects to transform cities.

As part of the Gendered Landscape, **Freezone**, a collaboration between different parts of the municipality and groups of girls in the city, built new knowledge about "what **young women deal with every day and the need for public spaces where nothing is expected of you**",<sup>72</sup> culminating in a new park in the city centre. Collaboration between the municipality, Umeå University and the Swedish immigrants-school created understanding of the **difference between being seen and feeling like an object or a subject in public spaces**, influenced by background, age, gender and disability. A review of city's planning process led to modifying the manner in which public forums are arranged to ensure that more inhabitants take part in the process.

Umeå opened the first **Women's History Museum** in Europe in 2014, when the city was entitled European Capital of Culture, showcasing women's historical roles and perspectives. The museum also offers activities and exhibitions on issues related to **gender, power, resistance and opportunities**.<sup>73</sup>

**PARIS, FRANCE** — The **city of Paris has made gender equality one of its political priorities**. In 2018, the Mayor of Paris, a woman, **called for extending this into the field of culture and an action plan was designed along four axes**: (1) eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting equality in public sector cultural undertakings, in particular public speaking and artistic assignments; (2) guaranteeing professional equality and access to managerial positions in the field of culture; (3) valuing and

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> For more information about the museum visit its [website](#).

---

promoting the artistic creation of women. (4) enhancing and promoting the heritage and the presence of women in the history of the arts. Administrative measures include establishing **training courses for staff in the Cultural Affairs Department** on gender equality in culture, and the **proactive recruitment of women** for managerial positions in cultural establishments. As a result, in 2019 cultural establishments subsidized by the city of Paris now have 42 female directors and 56 male directors, and five are jointly directed by women and men.

To change concepts of gender normative roles, **non-stereotypical children's reading lists are published systematically** and the city promotes the purchase of such books by libraries. The Ministry of Culture's model to assess the gender equality processes in art educational establishments led to "le Pôle Supérieur d'Enseignement Artistique de Paris Boulogne-Billancourt (PSPBB)", a higher education establishment in Paris Boulogne-Billancourt, adopting an ethical charter for gender equality and the prevention of discrimination.

To **value and promote women's creative works**, the city proactively acquires women's works in the Contemporary Art Fund and in visual art project aid: in 2019, 44 percent of the acquired works were by women; in 2020, this was 56 percent and the jury for the acquisition commission consisted of an equal number of women and men. Several actions support **women's creativity and place in the world of music and theatre**. The Paris Chamber Orchestra campaign as a 'Promoter of Diversity' led to its being ranked the orchestra with the greatest emphasis on female artists in its programming for three consecutive years by SACEM (Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music). The Paris Philharmonic launched an international Maestra competition for conductors and *Elles* ('She's') weekend. The *Gaîté lyrique* has been running workshops to **help women over 77 years old to discover digital cultures**, artificial intelligence and big-data with *Au Bonheur des Dames. The Edit-a-thon Wikipedia Art + Feminist of ART + FEMINISM* seeks to create or improve on Wikipedia as many pages as possible about women. The *Computer Girrls* exhibition promoted better knowledge and recognition of women in the history of computing and new technologies. The *Loud and Proud Festival* highlights gender, especially M/F equality. The *Plateaux Sauvages* of the 20th arrondissement devotes three **days of feminine creativity** through its *l'Équipé-e* ('Equipped Female/Male') festival. To **promote visibility**, the city is systematising names of women for cultural establishments/groups and developing public tributes to female personalities. In 2014, half the proposals submitted to the naming committee were of women; in 2019, 80 percent of those adopted concerned women.

Other initiatives include the recently started ***Cité Audacieuse*** ('Audacious City') as the **first place in France dedicated to promoting women's rights and gender equality** that houses 15 associations, provides spaces for collaboration and meetings and a café open to the public. To address violence against women the city developed "le violentomètre"<sup>74</sup> ('the **violentometer**') with the Paris Observatory for Violence Against

---

<sup>74</sup> Submission from Paris to this report.

---

Women – that helps young girls decipher the presence or threat of gender-based and sexual violence in their relationships. In the public domain, the city of Paris launched a campaign to help women re-appropriate public space including the **Gender and public space** guide that offers an egalitarian and mixed gender approach to urban policies.

The municipality **supports associations promoting gender equality** in the cultural field such as *AWARE* (Archives of Women Artists), *Research and Exhibitions*, that works to integrate women artists of the twentieth century in the history of Art, the *Centre Simone de Beauvoir*, that preserves and distributes audiovisual archives on the history of women, *H/F Ile de France*, that identifies gender inequalities in cultural circles, especially in performing arts, and the *Rainbow Submarine*, that runs the *Chérie Chéris* festival, and organises and promotes film festivals on gender issues.

**TAIPEI** — The **Gender Equality Office** of the Taipei City is acting to alter the cultural landscape to be more gender equal and inclusive through innovations in terms of **religio-cultural rituals**, by **encouraging participation** of women and girls in sports and science, and by promoting and financially supporting **LGBT rights and visibility**.

To break the notion of women being physically weak and impure (due to menstruation) and alter concepts of gender, the city is **gradually including women as musicians and deacons in Confucius Temple ceremonies**. For example, Taipei Hakka Yimin Festival **appointed a woman** as the principal consecration officer for the worship ceremony and included a female group to carry the sedan chair. Similarly, in **funerals, women are encouraged to hold the ceremonial “dou”** (a bamboo dipper) at the **front of the funeral procession** and women have started to be ranked in the obituary. Additionally, the deceased’s sexual orientation and will are respected for a more humane funeral ritual. The symbolic altering of cultural practices in public religious events challenges deep-seated normative concepts of gender, triggering new norms.

Taipei authorities **encourage women’s participation in arts and culture, science and sports by providing subsidies for art creations and relevant activities around gender issues** as well as ethnic minorities and new migrants. An **award for Promoting Gender Equality in Sports** has been established and **women’s sports team named** to encourage participation. **Science camps** have been **held for 20 consecutive years** to encourage female students, providing female tech-icons and scientists an opportunity to share learning experiences and ideas, and break through gender boundaries.

A dedicated budget has supported the **Taipei LGBT Civil Rights Festival** for 21 years; three rainbow landmarks in Taipei City have been established and a **sightseeing bus tour**, *Riding the Rainbow on a Trip*, introduced in 2020. Other gender inclusive policies include **gender-friendly restrooms** and offering memorial certificates to foreign LGBT couples.

---

To **raise public awareness** around gender equality and diversity, the *Taipei Pictorial* carries occasional reports on promoting more equitable division of housework, cultural norms of worship, sports competition, and same-sex partners.

**MEXICO CITY, MEXICO** — Overseen by Mexico City’s Ministry of Culture, Mexico City too has one of most comprehensive approaches to gender and culture with a focus on substantive equality and violence prevention as provided for in law.<sup>75</sup> In 2021, the multi-faceted gender-sensitive cultural public policies were brought together in a new **Local Government Equality Program**, coordinated by the **Women’s Secretariat of Mexico City**. Importantly, the **objectives and action plans were drafted by women participating in citizen forums**.

In the cultural arena, community-based activities encompass: activities in Book and Cinema Clubs, funding women artists’ groups and gender-based community projects, and supporting public festivals such as the *Festival Time of Women*. **Schools and Cultural Centres** teach arts and crafts through non-formal educational activities with a gender perspective, **promoting content and expressions free of sexist stereotypes** in disciplines such as dance, painting, music, theatre, literature, community radio and photography. **Women’s participation in history** is projected in myriad way: in museums, guided tours, museography, history contests, temporary exhibitions, conferences and workshops through the active participation and collaboration of a host of actors such as: National Museum of the Revolution, Museum of the Old Palace of the Town Hall, Museum of Mexico City, Museum Photo File, Museum of the Railways, Pantheon Museum of San Fernando, Agora Museum, Village Gallery and Historical Archive of Mexico City. A **gender perspective is incorporated in theatres, performing arts events and public squares**. Women musicians are promoted in the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra and Mexico City Typical Orchestra. In the film industry, festivals, calls and film cycles highlight women’s work and there is a policy for gender equality for online radio and television.

**LYON, FRANCE** — The city of Lyon has a three-pronged approach to the emancipation of girls and women, their promotion and engagement in the public sphere and gender equality in culture: (1) working **within the city policy framework** in working-class neighbourhoods where a large part of the population is of foreign origin; (2) promoting women’s **participation in the governance of projects** in these territories, in which gender equality is a priority objective, and (3) developing a **multisectoral municipal public policy for gender equality**.

In the first action plank, those involved in popular education such as the *Maison des jeunes et de la culture*, social and neighbourhood centres, use culture to empower young girls. Studies carried out in these neighbourhoods on the multifactorial discrimination of immigrant women are shared with all stakeholders and results translated into artistic creations by the Théâtre du Grabuge company. **Teams of women and men**

---

<sup>75</sup> Articles 6 and 7 of the Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence in Mexico City.



---

**artists develop participatory projects.** For example, the Théâtre de Grabuge featured the words of community women in performances such as 'The Assembly of Women' and 'The Fireflies Assembly'. The company *Le Lien Théâtre* is developing important work to combat gender stereotypes and other forms of discrimination. Actions have promoted girls in the urban dance scene – hitherto a very male-dominated and masculinist environment. There are serious challenges to applying the concept of French secularism (“laïcité”) in these neighbourhoods where interaction between girls and boys is regimented, leading to debates on whether activities should be run together for boys and girls or exclusively for girls.

For the second plank, the city engages **committed women and men cultural activists to promote gender equality** in culture. The *H/F* (M/F) movement in France was born in Lyon following nation-wide media reporting of widespread gender inequalities in cultural and artistic circles unveiled by Reine Prat's 'Yes, yes, women exist' initiative. The H/F association, now present in all regions of France, focuses on: (1) Documenting and disseminating the **metrics of inequality** in culture and raising awareness on these in cultural circles and beyond; (2) Lobbying local and national authorities for to make public funding for culture conditional on respect for gender equality; (3) Creating “cultural equality seasons”; (4) Denouncing untenable situations through media-publicised actions such as handing out 'red cards' to institutions and events considered in violation of gender equality; (5) Making women visible in public spaces, in particular around heritage such as “the heritage of mothers”.

Under the third plank, diverse actions of the **multi-sectoral municipal gender equality policy include: establishing a gendered municipal budget, ensuring public communications exclude gender stereotyping** and discrimination; commissioning studies examining the gendered use of public spaces in order to underpin policy, such as the reorganisation of nursery and primary schoolyards that redistribute spaces in a gender balanced way. The **2017-2022 Cultural Cooperation Charter**<sup>76</sup> commits the 28 largest cultural establishments in the city's public service to gender equality, including by generating and making public **annual gender statistics in terms of human resources, programming and audiences.**

To promote women's visibility, **streets and buildings have been named for women** and the new **concepts of matri-heritage** introduced. Collaborative initiatives, too, contribute to changing the cityscape, such as workshops leading to, for example, the municipal library's *Where are the women?* the Museum of Fine Arts (Beaux Arts) *Parcours femmes* (Women's Journeys), and the **matri-heritage trail of the City History Museum.** The city is engaged in a more gender balanced programming of *Nuits Sonores*, so far, a very masculine electronic music scene.

Lyon has succeeded in mobilizing culture to empower girls and women, but, like Montevideo, it has confronted resistance from amongst established cultural circles.

---

<sup>76</sup> 'The sustainable City of Lyon and the fourth Charter of Cultural Cooperation'. Good practice available at the 'OBS' database of good practices on culture and sustainable cities of the UCLG Culture Committee.

---

**REGGIO EMILIA MUNICIPALITY, ITALY** — The municipality is strongly committed to **interweaving gender policies with cultural activities to instil a rights-based culture** that promotes equal opportunities. All cultural spaces in the city – whether publicly owned or managed by cultural associations – are encouraged to become at once spaces for art and actors for awareness raising. Towards this, the female City councillor in charge of cultural policies, territorial marketing, equal opportunities and *Cities without Barriers* initiative, launched an **overarching programme**. The ***Culture won't stay at its place!*** programme **promotes actions and collaborations between the city and its cultural spaces**, allowing for **knowledge opportunities to open up to wider publics**. The entire system of cultural activities has been co-designed with the territory addressing new targets and new topics. The Municipality **works closely with the women's shelter** run by the Nondasola association.

The **Municipal Equal Opportunities Department and Civic Museum Department jointly ran participatory processes involving all gender-related associations to produce a shared public art-piece** created by a renowned female artist. The art-piece is a wallpaper that serves as a permanent marker of the city, symbolizing its commitment to overturn hate, discrimination gender stereotypes and violence against women. The "*Parole parole parole*" ('More than words') wallpaper has been **installed in the city's general registry office, the local museums, women's shelter, the hospital and local cultural spaces**. The selected artist and Nondasola association are currently running training at the G. Chierici art high school so the art-piece wallpaper can be installed in the school's main hall with the full engagement of students and professors to promote understanding of its essential message.

**MALMÖ, SWEDEN** — The **Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö** established by the city as an independent body, first focused on health inequities and sustainable development but quickly found that Malmö's vibrant cultural and voluntary sectors act as bonding cement. Acknowledging cultural rights as an integral part of human rights, in 2010, **Malmö ICORN-city**<sup>77</sup> was initiated with the strong involvement of civil society as one of the first four shelter cities for persecuted artists, providing a safe haven for invited writers and subsequently also for musicians. The **first guest writer, a woman, suggested rereading history from a feminist perspective**, leading to the **100 years of immigrant women's life and work in Malmö**. This collaboration between the former ICORN guest writer, Feminist Dialog, Malmö Museums and researchers from Malmö University had significant **involvement of many women active in civil society**. The project enriches Malmö's history by adding an immigrant women's perspective; stories are preserved in the museum archives and collections for future generations.

In 2011, the Municipality assigned "*Kulturuppdraget*" ('**The Culture Assignment**') to the Institute for Sustainable Development 'to examine culture as the 4th dimension of sustainable urban development' as a joint venture between the city and Malmö University. The same year the City Council adopted a **Development Plan for Gender**

---

<sup>77</sup> International Cities of Refuge Network.

---

**Equality Integration** and **Gender Equality Strategy** aiming to open up institutions for all citizens with a holistic and critical view of normativity and inclusion, and to **create environments where artists may maintain sustainable collaborative initiatives**. This is complemented by **gender-training of museum staff**. One strain was “The Role of Culture in Achieving Gender Equality in Cities and Territories” initiative, that is **developing exhibitions at Malmö museums** such as around the shipping industry in the “Teknikens och Sjöfartens” (‘Technology and Shipping’).

On the 100th anniversary of universal and equal suffrage in Sweden, in 2021, Malmö Museums will **highlight historical women** connected to Malmö on the City’s Instagram account; the magazine *Historiskan* will publish a post about a historical woman every week, using pictures come from the museums’ collections.<sup>78</sup> In collaboration with young women residents interested in modest fashion, Malmö Museums are creating an exhibition exploring the city’s contemporary fashion industry and that of the 19th and 20th centuries. In tandem, with the exhibition, Malmö Museums will collect new objects for its costume collection and carry out contemporary documentation.

**DUBLIN, IRELAND** — The City Council established Dublin’s Culture Connects in 2016 to take forward the Agenda 21 for culture and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>79</sup> The **inclusion of culture as a core development objective across all of the Council’s work** recognises culture’s central role, and in 2018, the Dublin City Council Culture Company<sup>80</sup> was created to run all cultural initiatives and buildings across the city. The company represents Dublin in *ACCESS Culture for All* and has formed a **local citizens’ advisory group**, with which it explores new ideas around policies for cultural inclusion and an action plan.

Cultural projects with communities connect artists, groups, and villages with libraries, museums and creative places across Dublin City. **Universal access for citizens — including all genders — and community participation** is ensured in all programmes through pro-active engagement and outreach, facilitating groups, identifying barriers and supporting additional requirements for participation. All activities are financially supported by Dublin City Council to ensure equality of access and social inclusion that incorporates a definite gender-equality lens. First-time cultural **opportunities are created for communities previously left out of cultural activities** as a fundamental way to **shaping a sustainable cultural ecosystem**.

With the National Neighbourhood programme,<sup>81</sup> the Dublin City Council Culture Company undertakes year-round activities for people to see and make culture in their own locations with people they know. New experiences, explorations, and connections are the foundation for people to build creativity into their everyday lives. In particular, gender-equal elements encompass a Culture Club, consisting of a series of hosted

---

<sup>78</sup> Instagram account **#kvinnorisamlingarna**.

<sup>79</sup> ‘**Dublin Culture Connects**’. Good practice available at the ‘OBS’ database of good practices on culture and sustainable cities of the UCLG Culture Committee.

<sup>80</sup> **Dublin City Council Culture Company**.

<sup>81</sup> ‘**The National Neighbourhood**’. Dublin City Council Culture Company.

---

talks and tours that introduce and encourage people to connect with the cultural spaces of the city. A gender perspective ensures that women's voices are present in cultural places, including in museums that showcase women's movements and participation as well as in the *14 Henrietta Street* guided tour that shares stories of specific houses and streets as part of the story of Dublin and her citizens.

Other initiatives that can change the dominant narrative include: OurCityOurBooks.ie,<sup>82</sup> an interactive process of an expanding **virtual bookshelf** of writings that have shaped and represent the lives, families, and culture of the city's people, supported by a website and programme connecting communities of readers with the books that have shaped the lives of Dubliners. Tea & Chats consist of year-round informal conversations with groups of people to elicit their **thoughts and ideas about the city and culture**: what the city and specific community mean and **how culture can help to connect everyone**. Conversations also take place in Richmond Barracks, a building of historical importance in Inchicore owned by the Dublin City Council and run by the Dublin City Council Culture Company. This has been converted into a library, garden, cafe and space for Culture Connects, a year-round programme of cultural activities celebrating the experiences and interests of local communities and people. A new addition in 2019 is *Creative Residency* at King's Inns, to encourage artists and organisations to think bigger and expand horizons, informed by the city's people and places in new ways, such as, **exploring the theme of art and law**. A future theme could be gender equality and inclusiveness.

**VAUDREUIL-DORION, QUÉBEC, CANADA** — This **small city** of 37,000 initiated a creative cultural community project, *Je Suis* ('I Am'), to encourage residents and reinvent their community by actively participating. The aim was ensuring people's **participation in creative and cultural activities to enable residents to become true cultural actors and citizens in their city**; express their feelings; gather together; get to know each other and learn to respect each other's differences feel part of a living environment shared and nurtured by everyone. The **local cultural policy was revised** according to the frame of reference supplied by **Quebec's Agenda 21 for culture**; actions were preceded by a year's consultations and coordination amongst different departments. The university was asked to **help develop Quebec's first regional cultural mediation task force** for innovation, providing tools, training, and support. **Encounters with artists are encouraged resulting in collaborative collective creations of paintings, sculptures, choreographies, plays, poems, etc.** Actions help break the isolation of people with limitations and allows professional **artists and cultural actors** to break away from the prejudices that separate them from their community.

**Cultural freedom is at the heart of the program**, creating participative activities that transform into major festive events. **All public spaces are used in 600 annual activities wherever the citizens live or spend time** (streets, schools, parks, clinics,

---

<sup>82</sup> OurCityOurBooks.ie.

---

stores, nursing homes, etc.) in order to **produce creative spaces for diversity** where differences can lead to the enhancement of individuals and the community. **“The citizen becomes a true cultural player, providing the perfect atmosphere of conviviality and exchange.”**<sup>83</sup>

**VICTORIA, SEYCHELLES** — The Seychelles Constitution “recognizes the right of every person to take part in cultural life and to profess, promote, enjoy and protect the cultural and customary values of the Seychellois people”.<sup>84</sup> The Ministry responsible for culture has overall responsibility for implementing the government’s cultural policy. The 2004 Seychelles **cultural policy was revised** to fully address **gender inequality in culture** in 2020 following consultations with various stakeholders including the local Gender Unit. The policy, that awaits cabinet approval, aims to create a **cultural environment conducive to the participation of all**; systematically collect **sex-disaggregated national data** related to culture; enhance the gender balance in artistic and cultural public offerings, develop and implement gender-responsive policies and strategies in culture; ensure gender balance at senior management levels in the cultural sector; address the cultural norms, practices, beliefs and portrait of gender relations in media that causes gender inequality and encourage more men to take up a career in the field of culture.

**TERRASSA, CATALONIA, SPAIN** — The Terrassa City Council has developed a **Gender Perspective Style Book — a set of guidelines for events in public space**, introducing **new regulations to comply with gender equality** — as part of the **Pilot Cities Europe programme**. The initiative was catalysed by the **City Council’s belief of public spaces as venues for democratic expression of citizenship** and that “citizens have the right and duty to use it in a way that is equitable for all”.<sup>85</sup> To be approved in July 2021, the new regulations promote gender (and other) inclusivity such as: making authorisation for cultural, sports and leisure events in public spaces conditional on showing how a gender perspective is **integrated both within their institution and in the proposed activity**. Institutions will have to state whether they have a protocol to prevent and act against sexual harassment – those who do not will have to sign the **City Council Protocol** and ensure its application during the activity. The Guidelines were developed with the participation of many people including gender experts and civil society groups working with culture at the grassroots. Implementation will enable Terrassa to document practices and gender equality in the cultural domain and public spaces which will underpin future cultural policies. Initially, the idea was to present the guidelines to cultural organisations and to provide training courses on gender perspective so that they can apply the rules in their cultural practice. Now it is **not only Culture, but other policy areas are working in this document with consensus**.

---

83 ‘Vaudreuil-Dorion: JE SUIS... / Reconstructing a community through cultural mediation’. Good practice available at the OBS database of good practices of the UCLG Culture Committee.

84 Submission from Victoria to this report.

85 See the ‘Terrassa Pilot City programme’ promoted by the UCLG Culture Committee.

---

## 3.1. Cultural Activism Beyond Municipal Boundaries

**WOW Festivals** — The **WOW (Women of the World) Foundation**, launched in 2010 by Jude Kelly, former Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, London, is a female-led civil society organization that believes a gender equal world is desirable, possible and urgently required. **WOW showcases the power of arts and culture in creating dialogue on socially relevant issues to challenge and overturn attitudes towards gender inequality.** WOW festivals, events and other actions celebrate women and girls, take a frank look at the obstacles they face and discuss solutions for change, also engaging men, boys and persons of non-binary identities. Starting in London, WOW has become a movement with homes everywhere: from Beijing to Karachi and Kathmandu; from Brisbane to Rio's favelas, from Baltimore Territory women at WOW Katherine. To date, there have been over 80 festivals and events across six continents, reaching more than two million people.<sup>86</sup>

In partnership with women and organisations across the world, WOW organisers in each location ensure the content is created *by* the local community *for* the local community. Each festival is different but every WOW Festival has a WOW Marketplace, an Under 10s Feminist Corner, WOW Speed Mentoring, performance, talks and debates, and WOW Bites. WOW has a strong and expanding digital presence.

In May 2016, **Karachi**, Pakistan became the first South Asian city to host a full-scale WOW Festival as a partnership of the WOW Foundation and the British Council, local female curators and a host of CSOs and financial partners. WOW Karachi 2016 and 2017 brought together exceptional and inspiring women from across South Asia to celebrate women's achievements, discuss significant gender issues, and amplify Pakistani women's voices – from leading female cultural professionals to politicians, community leaders, artists, journalists, activists and entrepreneurs. WOW Karachi forged new partnerships to support creative people to collaborate and experiment with new ideas, building sustainable ways of working and knowledge sharing. The vast array of festival activities included: workshops on pursuing a path to success in the arts and financial literacy; talks and panel discussions topics encompassed identity, self-worth, and women in science and the media; performances showcased dances, storytelling and music; interactive sessions for **children explored gender roles**; speed mentoring sessions; short stories "bites" on a wide range of subjects including gender-based violence and heritage preservation, and screening of films exploring gender issues. WOW Karachi 2017 involved 376 artists, a physical audience of 2200 and reached over 6 million people digitally.<sup>87</sup>

Festivals are preceded by **'Think-ins' engaging local communities** to develop meaningful and more representative programming around themes such as **women's**

---

<sup>86</sup> The **WOW Podcast** (WOW Women of the World).

<sup>87</sup> **WOW - Women of the World Karachi**. Good practice available at the OBS database of good practices of the UCLG Culture Committee.

---

**roles in cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, heritage practices, and celebration of women's intersectionality.** Post event assessment with both male and female attendees showed that gender perceptions had been challenged, with attitudes shifting towards greater appreciation and valuing of women and girls as well as increased support for their rights. In 2018, over 300 local community representatives participated in the WOW Think-in. South Asia WOW Festivals led to the British Council's *Creating Heroines* project, an international collaborative project bringing together female artists, graphic novelists and illustrators.

**ALTAVOZ PROJECT** — Implemented by the EUNIC cluster in Bolivia in 2019-2020, Altavoz sought to **promote and reflect on gender equality as a human right**, including respect for sexual diversity, from the perspective of art and culture. As recalled in the 4th UCLG Culture Summit held in Izmir and online on 9-11 September 2021, the project, supported by the EU Delegation in Bolivia, made possible an **unprecedented articulation around innovative critical thinking**, triggering deep reflections on gender issues and empowering the Bolivian artistic-cultural sector. Project phases included: (1) a census and analytical mapping of 203 cultural, artistic and social actors dedicated to the promotion and defense of gender equality and diversity in Bolivia; (2) the Altavoz National Encounter in La Paz, a participatory, horizontal and transdisciplinary space where 45 **cultural actors were mentored to develop projects focused on gender equality and sexual diversities**, and (3) 9 emerging projects implemented by local actors in cities of Bolivia: Cobija, Cochacamba, La Paz, Potosí, Oruro, Santa Cruz, Sucre, Tarija and Trinidad. One example is "Open Voice" in Cochabamba, an artistic and communicational campaign aimed at producing audiovisual pieces with puppets, music videos and plays, in order to inform and raise awareness on the **growth of violence rates, especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns** in Bolivia, towards women and towards the LGBTI + population.

**THE EXHIBIT "DIALOGUES FOR EQUITY"** — in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, offers a **free program of performances, films and debates on gender topics and the daily challenges and struggles of women** from different backgrounds and stories. "Dialogues for Equity" has been created in accordance with the Belo Horizonte Municipal Gender Equity Plan (2019). The initiative aims at contributing to the promotion of women's rights, adding efforts to the construction of female political participation, empowerment, inclusion and citizenship. The project is promoted through the Municipal Secretariat of Culture (SMC), the Municipal Foundation of Culture (FMC) and the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance, Food Security and Citizenship (SMASAC), in partnership with the Centre for Interchange and Cultural Reference, within the Municipal Circuit of Culture programme.

---

## 3.2. Responding to Specific Issues or Situations

**DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA** — To highlight migrant women’s specific experiences and perspectives and their **vitality in the creation of responsive and inclusive policy frameworks** in Durban, the Migration and the Inclusive City initiative of the Cities Alliance –a collaboration between the Democratic Program, African Solidarity Network and Urban Futures Centre at Durban University of Technology – produced *Last Country*, a new type of theatre by **Empatheatre**.<sup>88</sup> Based in South Africa, Empatheatre sculpts **new social spaces as amphitheatres for reflexive deep listening and empathy around issues of public concern**, that contribute to participatory justice in decision-making, meaning making and solidarity building across societal spheres. It runs courses for anyone interested in using theatre to address social justice concerns and those interested in exploring theatricalizing as a way of making accessible the results of academic research.

This novel theatre-making methodology involves close **collaboration and solidarity between artists, academic researchers and responsive citizens** as a way of publicly interrogating the way we think about things, democratising the way in which knowledge is surfaced and co-created. Starting with extensive action-based research in which co-participants and key partners identify a pressing central question through active listening to diverse people, the script is first validated through a performance before participants and partners, then rolled out to **strategic audiences of different levels of agency, power and privilege** in relation to the issue. The audience is invited from amongst those **who hold diverse, even conflicting, views** on the issue presented in the play. Post-play facilitated dialogues with the audience then enable further reflexivity on the issue. Performances have been held in jails and football stadiums, streets, homeless shelters, rehab centres and aquariums on issues communities identify as being of critical concern – from street violence to gentrification and public housing.

For the *Last Country*, 30 oral histories were triangulated with interviews and dialogue sessions in the city and a network of partners developed to inform an **inclusive city-led response to migration** in Durban. The project built a multi-tiered educational and awareness strategy from the research including radio shows and theatre. *Last Country* went on to tour the province of KwaZulu-Natal for 3 years, playing to audiences in **community halls for municipal and local government officials** as well as hostels, theatres, schools, universities.

**PUEBLA, MEXICO** — **58 state municipalities of Puebla decreed a Gender Alert and restricted recreational public spaces** to address rising violence against women that was heightening insecurity, risk and social fragmentation, but left a gap in people’s cultural lives. Therefore, to **guarantee the cultural rights of girls, boys and adolescents, the ‘Secretaría de Cultura’** introduced the Children’s Cultural

---

<sup>88</sup> See also the video ‘Empatheatre (Short documentary)’.



---

Development Program, in which **gender equality and inclusion is fundamental**. Hand in hand with artists and specialized workshops, activities promote safe spaces for the **participation and empowerment of girls and adolescents**. Enabling **creativity and self-expression**, actions aim to eliminate the causes of gender oppression and thereby contribute to the eradication of violence against women through two specific initiatives: (a) Collaboration with the **Feminist Festival for Girls**, on International Day of the Girl Child, creates spaces for feminist reflection between girls and women, generating dialogues, popular artistic creations and construction of new knowledge. These feed into proposals for actions that impact and transform the current reality; (b) In tandem, a **Podcast for girls and adolescents** will invite **various artists and specialists** to create content that recognises and promotes girls and female adolescents as protagonists of cultural experiences.

**PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA** — Port Harcourt’s informal waterfront settlements, home to 480,000 people, and among the densest and fastest growing neighbourhoods in Rivers State, had been slated for demolition. The *Makeshift constructions of trust* initiative developed a programme involving university students and some 40 young waterfront residents. Together, the residents and students designed an **immersive, interactive online media platform to enable the community to be seen and heard**. This started with an immersive, interactive online media space, *Chicoco Radio*, which was launched to facilitate community voices and allow the city’s most marginalised people to make themselves seen and heard. The radio was complemented by designing and constructing a performance-cum-gathering space for the online platform and host community. Internationally acclaimed Venezuelan architect, Alejandro Haiek, helped explore potential participatory design strategies (using case studies from Caracas and other sites) with more than 60 participants, 40 percent of who were women.

The project **empowered young residents, especially women**, and galvanised the **recognition of residents as people who participate actively in the shaping of the city, despite their precarious situation**. The project increased the visibility of socially marginalised slum communities and their capacity to voice their vision of an inclusive city through digital, physical and organisational platforms to project self-representation – from music to maps, architecture to litigation – thus contributing in a meaningful way to the social, spatial, technological and political changes involved in the next urban transformations.<sup>89</sup>

**BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA** — The **Secretariat of Culture, Recreation and Sport** of Bogotá took the innovative step of creating a **District Board for the Cultural Transformation of Machismo**. Addressing stereotypes, beliefs and social norms about gender roles and the way relationships are built, in particular masculinities, the Board seeks to **transform the fundamental basis of socio-cultural constructs** about what it means to be a man and the normative rules and thinking these impose on men. To overturn

---

<sup>89</sup> The programme is part of the Culture at Work Africa initiative, developed by the Committee on Culture of UCLG, together with a consortium of eight African, European and international partners. The final publication is available [here](#).

---

justifications for gender-based violence the initiative includes reflections on how love is expressed in a macho society. Following a citizen culture strategy to generate **a creative process for cultural and behavioural change** based on quantitative, qualitative and experimental research processes, the Directorate of Citizen Culture launched **Línea Calma**, a telephone helpline and re-education programme. The helpline is not exclusively for gender related matters, but most calls do relate to this and the *Línea Calma* is run in close coordination with the Secretariat for Women, the Secretariat for Security, security and emergency Helpline 123, the Family Police Stations of the Ministry of Social Integration, the Ministry of Health, etc.

**CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA — Catalysing new concepts of masculinities, gender parameters and concepts of fatherhood** was also on the agenda of the 19th ASSITEJ World Congress in 2017 hosted in Cape Town, with the participation of many local governments, different partners and sites. Many national centres participated. Conversations were stimulated around gender and art education through stories of girls, women and persons of non-binary identity, leading to a significant shift in thinking. While, children and young people are generally seen as women's domain, a significant number of male artists want to shift what masculinity is and projected male role models. An **innovative approach** was by Magnet Theatre based in Observatory, Cape Town. A community theatre, dedicated to training actors from local communities, Magnet Theatre ran *SCOOP: Kitchen play for Carers and Babes*<sup>90</sup> a "**baby theatre**" it developed after it had hosted Replay Theatre from Northern Ireland, which specializes in theatre for the very young. This first ever South African baby play for care-givers and babies between the ages of 2 weeks – 12 months is performed in a contained and relaxing tailor-made tent and accommodates six carers and babies at a time. At the heart of the project is a drive to create awareness of the crucial importance of strong emotional attachments in infants' lives and the direct effect it has on the development of their brains. Subsequent research found that Baby Theatre stimulates fathers' involvement with their infants, catalysing an important shift regarding their role as fathers<sup>91</sup> who described the experience as both educational and enjoyable, and as instilling greater self-confidence in coping with their babies on their own.

**RÂMNICU SĂRAT, ROMANIA —** In Râmnicu Sărat, authorities learned that **municipal sports facilities were disproportionately used by men**. A series of **consultations with women** enabled the city to **take inexpensive measures** — such as **changing the way they advertised** the services and **providing women-only sessions** — to make the facilities more inclusive and thereby increase their use by women.

**REPÚBLICA DE EL SALVADOR — A growing trend is to sell companies the right to select names for prominent buildings, streets and sports halls.** The impact this has

---

<sup>90</sup> See the video "**Magnet Theatre's: Scoop: Kitchen Play for Carers and Babies (Documentary)**" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vQ5GV55DU>.

<sup>91</sup> See the article "**I Know That It's Something That's Creating a Bond: Fathers' Experiences of Participating in Baby Theatre with Their Infants in South Africa**".

---

on the symbolic landscape of cities and people's perceptions should be considered, and public discussion and the participation of local residents in decision-making ensured. **Some states**, including El Salvador, have adopted **laws to impede this trend**.

**THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MONUMENTS AND SITES (ICOMOS)** ICOMOS is party to the 2018 Brussels Declaration which acknowledges the **essential role women play in the intergenerational transmission and renewal of many forms of intangible cultural heritage in local contexts**, as well as in the promotion of cultural diversity. In 2021, on the International Day of Monuments and Sites, the network held a Brainstorming and Sharing Session and discussed LGBTQ+ heritage and indigenous people, among other issues. Other developments include the report 'Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals. Policy guidance for heritage and development actors', which seeks to "harness **the potential of heritage to achieve gender equality, eradicate bias and violence based on sexual orientation, and empower all genders**, recognising that heritage is constantly changing and evolving".<sup>92</sup>

**THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF COALITIONS FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY (IFCCD)** coordinated the 2019 Regional Conference 'Pan-African Perspectives for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions'. The network discussed the current and future challenges for the diversity of cultural expressions in Africa, focusing on women's empowerment in the cultural sector, and addressing gender roles, working conditions, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and women's exclusion from the fields of arts and creative industries. Zimbabwe Musicians' Union and Women in the Arts Festival presented their efforts to establishing mentoring system to strengthen women's capacities, advocating against gender-based violence, regulating sexual harassment, and redefining and transforming imposed and expected roles of women as artists and interpreters.

**VOICES OF CULTURE, EUROPEAN COMMISSION** — The UCLG Culture Committee participated in the 2019 edition of 'Voices of Culture', a platform aimed at promoting a structured dialogue between the European Commission and civil society representatives of cultural and creative sectors. In 2019, VoC addressed 'Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors'.<sup>93</sup> As a result of this collaboration, the report 'Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors. Brainstorming Report Reflecting Group Discussions During Voices of Culture Session, Prague, 4-5 September 2019' was published in February 2020. The initiative gathered 33 representatives (30 women) from cultural networks and organisations, who jointly discussed (a) **equal access** for women to the labour market and leadership positions; (b) **gender stereotypes, representation and role models in education and training**; (c) **sexual violence**, and (d) **systemic change for systemic discrimination**, providing many resources and best practices for each area.

---

<sup>92</sup> See ICOMOS' report: '**Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals. Policy guidance for heritage and development actors**' (2021).

<sup>93</sup> '**Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors**. Brainstorming Report Reflecting Group Discussions During Voices of Culture Session, Prague, 4-5 September 2019' (news about the initiative on the UCLG Culture Committee's website).

---

#### OMC WORKING GROUP OF MEMBER STATES' EXPERTS, EUROPEAN UNION —

The OMC (open method of coordination) working group of Member States' experts deepened the key elements of **gender equality and the fight against gender discrimination as twin goals of the EU, including in culture**. Following a mandate that covers areas such as: audio-visual, architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts, books and publishing, radio, and visual arts, 'Towards Gender Equality in the Culture and Creative Sectors'<sup>94</sup> (2021) provides evidence on the fact that "arts, culture and media, in all the richness of the **cultural expressions, have a powerful and unquestioned capacity to promote tolerance, equality, diversity and social inclusion**." The report presents the main obstacles and specific challenges faced by women, including stereotypes, sexual harassment, access to resources, women's participation in decision-making positions and their position in the labour market (e.g., segregation of the labour market, social rights related to pregnancy, and maternity pay and pensions), and identifies promising initiatives that aim to promote gender equality in the cultural sphere.

### 3.3. Promoting Women & Non-binary Culture Creators

**MUJERES POR LA CULTURA** ('Women x Culture') is an initiative carried out in collaboration with universities and cultural authorities in Latin America, **as co-producers in culture to influence the gender approach of public policies** within the framework of Agenda 21 for Culture – to which many Ibero-American cities are committed. The network consists of diverse women from the cultural field in 13 countries of Latin America,<sup>95</sup> Spain, and Spanish-speakers in other countries.<sup>96</sup> Starting in Chile, it was catalysed by the need and desire of women engaged in cultural activities to **build their own narratives**. The ultimate aim is to guarantee equal opportunities so all can participate in **cultural life as a human right**. Annual events **co-organized with local and national public administrations of culture** bring together cultural managers, artists, activists, academics, community promoters, academics and civil servants. In the past this has included: the Municipal Culture Secretariat of Coquimbo, the Municipality of Andacollo, in Chile (2013); the Secretariat of Culture of Cuernavaca, State of Morelos, the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico, in Mexico (2014); the Secretariat of Culture of Quito, Ecuador (2015); the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina (2016); the Ministry of Culture of the Dominican Republic (2017), the House of Culture of Cancun, State of Quintana Roo, Mexico (2018) and the Centre for Plurinational Culture of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia (2019), amongst others.

---

<sup>94</sup> 'Towards gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors' (2021).

<sup>95</sup> Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Panama, Chile and Paraguay.

<sup>96</sup> Currently: Australia, Malta, Denmark, Portugal, Finland and Ireland.

---

Open to all women, gatherings are gestated by women in cultural field who generate new scenarios, promote the historical and contemporary contributions of women. The network **helps cultural managers recognize women's right to cultural rights; makes visible and promotes women's experiences, creations and productions in the cultural sector and in the daily construction of societies** beyond the situation of women in the cultural sector. Networkers gather in different locations each year, live in the territory, and work to recognize themselves and get to know local culture women. Important bonds of resonance enable a broadening of views and learning about different activisms emerge in artistic performances open to the local community, and in conferences, workshops, roundtables, talks, and interventions amongst women in the cultural field. Feminist culture activists **analyse, debate and mobilize on issues that fall outside the formal cultural agenda**, such as women's rights in a historical context of inequality; cultural, social, political and labour empowerment; and **violence against women**. For example, La NaNa Factory of Arts and Crafts launched the #AlertaVioleta ('Purple Alert') campaign through the network so that cultural institutions take a position against gender violence. Support is extended to women's struggles: artists, creators, actresses, puppeteers, directors, educators, managers, producers, thinkers, in various social movements.

**THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF CINEMAS (UNIC)** strongly believes that gender balanced leadership is an imperative for business growth, better governance and more equity in the cinema industry. Women comprise more than half of cinema audiences in many European territories but remain underrepresented in senior positions in cinema exhibition, lack mentoring opportunities, role models and support mechanisms. To redress the imbalance, in 2017, UNIC launched the **Women's Cinema Leadership Programme** to reinforce the commitment of cinema exhibitors towards gender-balanced leadership, and to create a community of action and a network of women leaders who drive positive change by attracting, retaining and stimulating the growth of a diverse talent pool.

A one-year mentoring scheme provides up-and-coming women in Europe's cinema industry an opportunity to network with, be mentored by and learn from outstanding women executives. This highly successful initiative is in its fourth edition involving 18 participants representing 14 territories; the fifth edition kicked off in June 2021. UNIC provides guidance, assistance and recommendations through monthly mentoring calls and other activities over the year while allowing each pair enough room to tailor things to their own needs. This flexibility is greatly appreciated as are networking opportunities and workshops, enabling the whole group to share their experiences, learn from each other and listen to inspirational speakers from across or outside the industry. These empowering, sometimes emotional, exercises boost a sense of togetherness in which both mentors and mentees sharpen their skills and enhance their leadership presence. UNIC believes that in challenging times like 2020, communities that support each other are more important than ever.

---

**CAYEYE FILMS FOUNDATION** — A private, non-profit entity, generates new spaces for inclusion, equity and gender equality by developing educational projects, as well as undertaking audio-visual production and distribution in the Colombian Caribbean and Latin America. With **strategic alliances with the Ministry of Culture of Colombia and Barranquilla Secretariat of Culture**, the Foundation fosters **spaces for dialogue and debate** around the promotion and defence of human rights of women and girls. Between 2016 and 2020, the public training program, *Cayeye Film Forum*, **reached more than 1,200 women, young people and girls from the most remote rural areas, with audio-visual content with a gender perspective.**

*La Perla Lab* and *DocQuilla Lab* initiatives benefitted 70 young filmmakers in a process of mentoring, training and audiovisual co-creation of non-fiction content. In 2020, the Foundation created the Cayeye Centre to address the challenges caused by the gaps in gender equity and the lack of women in executive positions and in creative and economic decision-making in the audiovisual sector. This resulted in the **Diploma in Creation and Production of Non-Fiction Audio-visual Content of Women for Digital Media**, currently in its second edition. Full scholarships are provided to creators, producers and audio-visual communicators from Latin America aligned with the Foundation's objective and principles. The Foundation's work creates synergies and strengthens women's networks across the cultural civil society.

**ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA** — Increasing the voice of young women and persons of non-binary identities in cultural expression was the aim of *Adelaide City of Music's Equaliser* jointly executed by City of Adelaide, Music Development Office, Music SA, and Headspace Adelaide as part of the UNESCO global gender-equality music project, *Creative Cities of Music*. The *Adelaide Equaliser* supported 13 young women and non-binary people aged 18–25 for 6 weeks to write and record a song about equality, acceptance and unity. They created and starred in their own music video called 'Can't Keep Us Down'. Other cities involved in the UNESCO project were Auckland, Hannover and Norrköping.<sup>97</sup>

### 3.4. Documenting Her Stories & Stimulating Feminist Thinking

**Libraries are cultural institutions that house and share human creativity**; many also host documentation of the past — whether as archives, history books or other materials. **Always educational, libraries can be gateways to new thinking as well as a window to the past — a growing number are dedicated to women's creative works, historical contributions and struggles, and feminist thinking.** The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has a Women, Information and Libraries

---

<sup>97</sup> In Norrköping, Sweden, the programme engaged 25 young women from 17 countries.

---

Special Interest Group<sup>98</sup> that specifically promotes women rights, including protecting women's cultural rights.<sup>99</sup> The Group chooses diverse subjects, such supporting women in conflict situations in 2017, and made a submission to the United Nations on sexual and reproductive health.

**Across the globe, libraries dedicated to women offer access to feminist literature and celebrate the cultural influence of women throughout the ages** — many also serve as **centres for women to learn, engage, and mobilise** as illustrated by the following. The **Glasgow Women's Library**, the only accredited museum<sup>100</sup> in the UK, has both a lending library and archival collections. A nourishing, safe and supportive environment celebrating the lives and achievements of women, it has been providing learning activities since 1991. Women contribute by volunteering, donating books or by becoming involved in the library's many activities. The **Feminist Library in Beirut**, Lebanon, sees books and reading as tools for survival and liberation for women and oppressed individuals, or those who do not feel a sense of belonging to their community. It offers collections in Arabic, French and English, as well as Knowledge Workshops to promote more access to feminist knowledge as a way to improve women's rights. The **Free Black Women's Library**, based in the **Brooklyn** borough of **New York City**, USA, is a feminist mobile library which collects and celebrates the voices of black women. The mobile library pops up monthly throughout Brooklyn, but also travels to other cities such as Detroit, Chicago and Baltimore.

In **Sydney**, Australia, the **Jessie Street National Women's Library**, named after an advocate dedicated to women's rights, peace movement and the elimination of discrimination against indigenous people, preserves Australian women's work, words and history. The **Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation**, founded in **Istanbul** in 1989, is Turkey's first library with a women-only collection that gives access to credible extensive information about women, that in turn contributes to the preservation of women's history in Turkey. The library undertakes a wide range of activities, such as the recent one-day symposium on violence against women, followed by several workshops. In **Barcelona**, Spain, the **Biblioteca Francesca Bonnemaison** pioneered women's libraries in Europe in 1909 as the Instituto de Cultura y Biblioteca Popular para la Mujer ('Cultural Institute and Popular Library for Women'). Founded by Francesca Bonnemaison, a well-respected figure of Barcelona's early 20th century cultural and intellectual circles, the library used to offer women training in scientific, manual and artistic skills to support careers; today, it is a reference library of feminist literature. The **Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand**, in **Paris**, France, is the only French library dedicated to women. Created from the personal collection of Marguerite Durand – an activist also known for her feminist newspaper *La Fronde* – who started gathering feminist texts and documents in 1897, and handed over her entire collection to the city of Paris in 1931. The **Women's Library** in **London**, UK, has its origins in the Suffragette

---

<sup>98</sup> **Women, Information and Libraries Special Interest Group** (IFLA).

<sup>99</sup> **'Libraries and the Cultural Rights of Women. Lessons from the Women, Information and Libraries Special Interest Group Satellite Conference**, 16 August 2017, Bratislava, Slovakia' (IFLA, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> **Glasgow Women's Library**.

---

movement and the 1866 women's suffrage petition. It started in a converted pub with two goals: to provide a resource for newly enfranchised women to enter public life and to preserve the history of women's movement.<sup>101</sup> The **Biblioteca delle Donne** in **Bologna** is Italy's main library of documents dedicated to women, feminism and gender studies. Founded as an initiative of an independent feminist organisation, **Associazione Orlando**, in the late 1970s, it is now run in partnership with the city of Bologna and has a dedicated collection of literature for young girls. In **São Paulo**, Brazil, the Biblioteca Cora Coralina specialises in feminist literature. A brand-new feminist library has been created in **Abidjan**, Ivory Coast.<sup>102</sup> 1949 is the brainchild of Edwige-Renee Dro, an Ivorian writer and literary translator who created it as space for community interaction and learning around gender issues and women's lives and histories in Yopougon, one of the most populous neighbourhoods of Abidjan, with over one million people. The independent self-funded library focuses on women's writings from Africa and the black world/Diaspora. Schoolgirls aged 14 to 18 are engaged in book readings, English book chats and a monthly *Inspiration'Elles* ('Inspirational') sessions where a slightly older girl or woman (aged 16 to 32) doing creative positive things in society is invited to inspire teenagers.

---

<sup>101</sup> The Library has eight documents which have been recognised by **UNESCO** in their **Memory of the World Register** and more than 1,000 rare books.

<sup>102</sup> **Libraries Delivering Gender Equality. How Libraries Feature in National Reports on the Beijing Declaration** (2020); **Feminist Library in Abidjan Challenges the Erasure of Women from Africa's Political History** (Ainehi Edoro, 2020).



---

## 4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Across the globe, wide-ranging exciting initiatives in the cultural field are contributing to making Women's Rights to the City a living reality for all in highly diverse urban municipalities and territories.** From grassroots initiatives to local government policy innovation, the right to the city provides a meaningful framework to bring together and scale-up local feminist mobilization and impact in city-making. A profound cultural transformation is required to effectuate sustainable meaningful change in the urban gender lexicon. The multiplicity of interventions toward this ranges from how children learn about gender roles in school and play, to promoting new narratives in museums, tours and creative engagements; from rethinking masculinity to altering iconic events reflecting deep-seated cultural normative practices. Cities inevitably feel more like home to women, girls, non-binary and other identities and when their voices, creativity and struggles are evident in libraries, museums, performances, exhibitions, festivals, city tours and neighbourhood activities; when their achievements are broadcast in awards and public events; when streets and buildings mirror the diversity of its residents; when all public spaces are safe to traverse or congregate in at all hours of the day and night. Indeed, public spaces as a whole – the dynamics, gendered usage of, messages displayed and conveyed – were emphasised as crucial areas for local government interventions towards a more responsible and democratic use of public space.

Women's right to the city can never be realised without an explicit commitment to gender equality and all-inclusive diversity of public institutions in both internal dynamics and external processes. Gender equality/women's empowerment unit with a seat at the central decision-making table have greatly facilitated this, often in close collaboration with gender experts, academics and specialized civil society groups, such as UCLG. Experts and practitioners have stressed and successful examples illustrate that "the link with academia is fundamental" as is partnering with individual artists and creators' groups as well as the private sector in the cultural domain. Equally vital are collaborations amongst authorities responsible for culture, gender and diversity as well as other sectors of administration. The elaboration of comprehensive frameworks and plans of actions to make cities gender-equal require the inputs of many diverse actors and institutions.

Effectuating sustainable change often requires revising administrative structures and decision-making processes; instilling gender equality as a desired goal amongst all staff and creating robust coordination amongst various government departments and institutions. This requires dedicated personnel and may also require overcoming administrative hierarchies.<sup>103</sup> Policies must be revised to be receptive and more supportive of female and non-binary creations and regulations must be less onerous

---

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Lisa Sidambe.

---

and aim to ease and facilitate participation of everyone. Protocols and guidelines are useful tools to ensure compliance and progress. Women in particular may need to be trained, equipped and supported seeking to participate fully as co-creators of the city's cultural life.

Too frequently, policy-makers merely presume to know gender issues.<sup>104</sup> Academic institutions can help to generate data and provide insights for strong evidence-based appropriate policies. It is crucial that gender policies are not limited to programming alone but are truly transversal and have a macro perspective. Without comprehensive transversal municipal plans, small-scale and standalone can be useful but cannot hope to realign city life – they risk becoming more tokens of intent than catalysts of change. However, the policy and authority framework is always context-specific. Each municipality has to review its particular situation to identify necessary synergies and alignments.

Cities cannot be reshaped by authorities and institutions alone, however. Sustainable transformation necessitates the full participation and ownership of all residents, not merely those involved in its administration or cultural and creative sectors. Regular pro-active engagements with citizens and their organisations and an open-door policy are crucial for this. In many cities, transformation has been catalysed by as well as supported by popular feminist and social justice movements joining hands with local authorities. Authorities must engage with feminist groups from different spheres and diverse communities, “**look for ‘excuses’ to open the conversation**”,<sup>105</sup> and encourage discussions, including around difficult topics, to arrive at the most doable solutions to obstacles. Such engagements may help compensate people's reluctance – especially of women – to approach formal complaint mechanism for various reasons, such as a lack of knowledge that it exists or where it is located, an inability to make the time or spend scarce resources to approach the authority, or because they fear they will not be heard or a solution will not be found. Special efforts are always required to include women who may want different things from men in planning process because “the participation of women in the planning process is a big challenge” even when mandated by the constitution.<sup>106</sup>

Even when policies exist, there is a need to consider how to make these come to life for people for which community-based conversations are pivotal as people rarely read policy documents.<sup>107</sup> The process of **cultural transformation also means transforming the** – sometimes tension-ridden – **relationships amongst the city's diverse residents, and between residents and the authorities**. The concept of ‘accompanying social change’ adopted by Buenos Aires, for example, tried to “ensure that the actions are in full conversation with civil society and in collaboration with other

---

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Yvette Hardie, theatre director, producer, educator and advocate.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Luciana Blasco, Director Vice Secretary of Cultural Policies, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Bernadía Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG-ASPAC.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Yvette Hardie, theatre director, producer, educator and advocate.

---

areas of government.”<sup>108</sup> A pre-condition for transformation is that municipalities are accountable to the people who inhabit and work in the city and be inclusive of people of all backgrounds— a process that always requires dedicated efforts.

Cultural interventions are only part of the equation — women’s rights to the city can only be completed when the city truly reflects not only their past and current realities but their aspirations for the city itself. In the cultural domain, an essential first step is recognising and documenting the gender imbalance in the entire gamut of cultural activities — from classical music performances to everyday cultural life — by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the problems. This will provide the evidence base for establishing priorities and designing policies to overcome obstacles.<sup>109</sup> Promoting the cultural rights of all has to be balanced with supporting cultural actors who have been especially impacted by COVID-19 pandemic and negotiating change with more established actors of the cultural scene.

Cultural interventions and a gender-perspective have economic dividends for the city — a number of which have not been fully analysed and used yet, such as lower health costs when snow is cleared using a gender lens or domestic violence is reduced. There is a need to think more creatively about policies and plans and be prepared for challenges.

Across the world, local government authorities have fashioned a rich compendium of demonstrable but diverse pathways to more gender-equal, diversity-inclusive sustainable cities – many are executed in partnership with civil society actors, cultural actors, academics and gender experts as well as the private sector. Only a few of the innumerable initiatives of civil society associations and cultural activists have been shared here, all underpinned by feminist thinkers, groups and movements. A number of transnational gender equality initiatives in the cultural domain have organised by governments, United Nations agencies such as UNESCO, or civil society. The pathways for smaller cities may not be suitable for larger ones and vice-versa. Given that cultural transformation has to be context-specific, cities and local authorities can select and adapt what seems most suitable and doable in their own context. Some recommended actions are suggested below.

---

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Luciana Blasco, Director Vice Secretary of Cultural Policies, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Anna Villarroya, cultural policy expert, Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends.

---

## Actions for Local and Regional Governments to Consider

### 1. ENSURE THERE IS A GENDER-EQUALITY / WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT UNIT IN THE MUNICIPAL STRUCTURE SUFFICIENTLY EMPOWERED WITH HUMAN RESOURCES, BUDGETS AND DECISION-MAKING

- a. Establish coordination mechanisms between the gender equality unit, cultural critical decision-making apparatus and other departments
- b. Set up protocols to eliminate all aspects of gender stereotyping and discrimination
- c. Ensure high level decision-makers hold public engagements with women and specific communities to hear their ideas and get their inputs
- d. Ensure the budget for culture has allocations for women/communities for self-expression as co-creators of meaning and knowledge

### 2. PREPARE A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSVERSAL GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY. FOR THIS,

- a. Collect data, starting by simply counting how many women compared to men are projected in festivals, museums, local guide books, public symbolic/ iconic events; and how many women win municipal contests
- b. Undertake research with academic institutions to identify issues, such as the gendered use of public spaces and institutions
- c. Hold consultative meetings with women and persons of non-binary identities from diverse neighbourhoods and background, to inform the policy design, implementation and monitoring processes through continuous feedback loops
- d. Consult and brainstorm with women's organisations, women's/gender studies departments and rights oriented cultural groups for innovative ideas

### 3. IDENTIFY ONE OR MORE KEY ICONIC/ SYMBOLIC EVENT OF THE CITY AND TRANSFORM THESE TO BE GENDER INCLUSIVE BOTH IN TERMS OF PHYSICAL PRESENCE AND THEMES

### 4. SUPPORT THE CREATION OF NEW GENDER NARRATIVES

- a. Research her-stories from the city and project these in museums, schools, and in public events
- b. Initiate projects to support the creation on new narratives in writings, arts and performances, the re-envisioning of old tales and feminist libraries and museums and their activities

### 5. PROMOTE WOMEN'S CREATIVITY AND GENDER EQUALITY DISCOURSES

- a. Establish creativity competitions for the public as well as professional artists
- b. Create and support spaces for women to congregate and discuss their priorities and formulate ideas for public events. These can start as intra-community meetings and build up across city sectors to be inclusive and give women an opportunity to interact with people they usually do not encounter
- c. Provide training and material support for creativity

### 6. SHIFT NOTIONS OF MASCULINITIES

- a. Transform the perception of "masculinity" in socio-cultural spheres through city-wide staff training courses, practices and workshops to generate discussion around patriarchy and gender-based power relations in culture.
- b. Encourage new masculinities through helplines, services and media programmes theatre and performances.

## UCLG Committee on Culture

United Cities and Local Governments - UCLG

C/ Avinyó, 15  
08002 Barcelona

+34 93 342 87 56  
culture@uclg.org  
@agenda21culture

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

### Supported by



The European Union

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union



Sweden  
Sverige

This document has been financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. Sida does not necessarily share the views expressed in this material. Responsibility for its content rests entirely with the author.



**culture 21**  
UCLG Committee



**UCLG**  
United Cities  
and Local Governments