



POLICY DIALOGUE: “CULTURE AS A DIMENSION IN URBAN TRANSFORMATION”

5TH UCLG World Congress
 Bogotá, 13 October 2016

This dialogue aimed to discuss how heritage, creativity, diversity, cultural participation and the transmission of knowledge are instrumental to building people-centred societies, in line with the emerging vision of culture as a pillar of sustainable development. It also explored the operational role played by cities and local governments within this context, and the need for them to be acknowledged in, and empowered by, the New Urban Agenda.

The session was opened by **Catherine Cullen**, Special Advisor on culture in sustainable cities at the UCLG Committee on Culture. She recalled how in recent years several actors had campaigned for the inclusion of culture in the paradigm of sustainable development, because humans are cultural beings and aspects such as heritage, creativity, participation and social inclusion needed to be included in human and sustainable development, including in the New Urban Agenda. The [Committee on Culture of UCLG](#) works actively to this end.

The Co-President of the UCLG Committee on Culture, **Eduardo Vázquez**, Culture Secretary of the City of Mexico, could not attend the Congress but sent a video message, which was broadcast next. He stressed the role of the Agenda 21 for culture and the Committee on Culture in providing a space for joint reflection and peer-learning among cities interested in integrating culture in sustainable development. As a result of this experience, [the City of Mexico is currently drafting its Constitution](#), which will include a section on cultural rights and highlight culture as a core component of sustainable development.

The next contribution was made by **María Claudia López**, Secretary for Culture, Leisure and Sports of the City of Bogotá. She described how culture has been integrated on a transversal basis in the several sections of the local government’s four-year [Development Plan](#), and illustrated this with a range of examples: arts education and reading promotion contribute to equality and quality of life; new cultural facilities and the preservation and promotion of urban heritage are part of the urban democracy agenda; and participatory neighbourhood projects contribute to the promotion of social cohesion among internally-displaced communities.

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Culture as a dimension in urban transformation is essential to building **people-centred societies and sustainable cities**

The Governor of the Special Province of Jeju and Chair of UCLG-ASPAC, **Won Hee-ryong**, spoke next. He described the context of Jeju as one where tradition and modernity meet, and where culture, nature and people are closely integrated. Several examples illustrated these links, including the [Olle Trail walk](#), and the adaptation of vacant houses as artist workshops. Jeju has undergone a significant regeneration process, with the city centre revived as a social and cultural hub, but is now facing new challenges, such as those posed by rapid economic growth and gentrification. He concluded his presentation by inviting all participants to attend the [2nd UCLG Culture Summit](#), due to be held in Jeju on 5-7 April 2017.

On behalf of UNESCO, **Karim Hendili**, Coordinator of the Cities Programme at the World Heritage Centre, opened by referring to the global process of urbanisation and to the importance of urban heritage assets – a study conducted in 2015 found that 53% of cultural sites in the World Heritage List were in urban areas. UNESCO's approach to the [Historic Urban Landscape](#) recognises this. Furthermore, the [2030 Agenda](#) provides unique opportunities, since cities have become the main entry point for culture in the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO's forthcoming [Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development](#) calls for culture to be further integrated in development frameworks and for local decision-makers to be better involved in this area.

Sun Kanglin, Vice Chairman of the [Standing Committee of Beijing](#), described Beijing's understanding of culture as the soul of a city and a driver of its development. This was exemplified in areas such as the strength of the cultural and creative industries, and the organisation of over 20,000 cultural activities per year, which provided opportunities for everyone to take part in cultural life and contributed to citizens' sense of belonging. He also highlighted the importance of cultural exchanges, including among cities in different countries as well as in other Chinese regions, which lead to learning and enable citizens to become familiar with diverse cultural expressions.

Lucina Jiménez, the Director of [ConArte – Education, Culture and Art](#), presented the work of this organisation, rooted in [UNESCO's Roadmap on Arts Education](#) and in the Agenda 21 for culture and active in Mexico and at international level. Placing culture at the centre of projects addressing security, inclusion and new forms of governance, the organisation's work involves

building citizen capacities and facilitating dialogue among different local stakeholders. ConArte understands that culture cannot be isolated from other dimensions of development and works across disciplines, aiming to strengthen the place of culture in policy agendas.

The final presentation was made by **Guy Pilon** and **Michel Vallée**, respectively the Mayor and the Director for the Arts and Culture of Vaudreuil-Dorion, winning city of the second edition of the [International Award 'UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21'](#). They presented the context of the city, marked by accelerated demographic and social change due to migration, which had generated a pressing need for social cohesion. Facing this context, over the past 6 years Vaudreuil-Dorion has seen arts projects as a key to foster citizen participation, intergenerational and intercultural encounters and ownership of the public space, as exemplified by the project [Je suis...](#)

The session closed with a set of questions from other participants, which addressed the place of women in cultural life, the understanding of culture within cultural policy as something broader than the arts and the difficulties in fostering inclusive approaches to culture in cities and regions with marked cultural and ethnic divisions.

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