



# BOGOTÁ: PILOT CITY FOR THE NEW AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE

**Jordi Baltà**

Consultant et expert de la Commission Culture de CGLU

November 2014

[jordibalta@hotmail.com](mailto:jordibalta@hotmail.com)

In 2014 Bogotá, capital of Colombia, took part in the 2014 "[Pilot-cities](#)" program of the Agenda 21 of the culture. In this context, we visited the city between the 25th of November and the 1st of December. The visit helped us learn more about their cultural policies and the role they play in the vision of local sustainable development. It also showed us different perspectives from public and civil society actors who contribute to the ongoing [process of developing "Culture 21: Actions"](#). In 2015, this document will complement and update Agenda 21 for culture.

For years, Bogotá has adopted different strategies and policies, significant for their cultural aspects as representative of a vision of their city's development. They focus on building citizenship, coexistence, democratic life, and combating segregation. The current [2012-2016 Development Plan: A Humane Bogotá](#) is a good example of this. It explores the intersections between cultural policies and other pillars for public action in the fields of education, mobility, helping victims of conflict or those who are vulnerable, or empowering the use of public spaces. Similarly, various strategic documents regarding cultural policy, such as the [Ten-Year Cultural Plan 2012-2021](#), reflect a profound insight into the interrelation between the city's cultural and developmental factors.

This translates to concrete initiatives like the [40x40 Day Project](#) which seeks to lengthen the standard school day and improve quality of teaching by strengthening artistic and cultural practices. Other examples include [promoting civil society's cultural practices](#) in target neighbourhoods, the decentralisation of cultural infrastructure, and the [promotion of democratic culture and cultural transformations](#). The latter involve creative actions, mediation efforts, and public education in areas of urban mobility, the proper use and care of public space, or waste management.

The active participation of Bogotá in developing "Culture 21: Actions" has taken shape through the creation of several proposals and suggestions for the initial first drafts of the document. These applied both to public administration, as well as civil society. Bogotá's principal contributions are summarised below.

---

There is a **need to recognize rural dimensions that exist in some cities**, including the cultural practices of rural citizens.

---

Coexistence is instrumental **in helping reflect upon the notion of "access to culture"**. It can be assumed that the presence of an existing culture, around which the role of public authority would be centred, must favour its diffusion, having been built in conjunction with one another.

---

**Strengthening the link between culture and democracy**, helps to understand democracy as it encompasses everyday life. It underlines the idea that "always living democracy" is a condition for its own potential, resulting in the need to collectively build "democratic culture".

---

Greater **attention must be paid to the virtues and potential of arts and culture in the process of peace-building**. This can be achieved by challenging societal norms. We must acknowledge the potential of arts and culture in dealing with conflict without the use of violence, as well as the

value of aesthetic-cultural projects in expressing emotion and sensitivity. We must also promote the role of collective participation in respecting diversity, in the problematisation of identities, and in empowering human creativity.

---

The city reaffirms **governance as a cross-cutting sector**, working in conjunction with the pillars of "Culture 21: Actions", which translates into fostering decentralisation, as the planning, participation, strengthening, and education of actors contributing to democracy and a social state governed by the rule of law.

---

Another necessary element is the incorporation of **research and evaluation mechanisms for cultural practices**. Such mechanisms allow for the analysis of how different segments of the population express themselves, build their identities, and participate in cultural life, including those obstacles that may complicate certain groups' cultural participation.

The contributions made in Bogotá were integrated into the development of "Culture 21: Actions" and were to be approved at the UCLG Culture Summit in Bilbao, organised in conjunction with the City Council between the 18th and 20th of March, 2015.