



CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

CIUDAD PILOTO • CULTURA 21

Pilot City for Agenda 21 for culture,
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

CULTURAL POLICY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

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MÉXICO CITY: PILOT CITY OF THE NEW AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE

The growth and complexity of life in Mexico City, one of the world's largest cities, demands reconsideration of the role of Local Government, through the Secretariat for Culture, in the context of sustainable development and coexistence. This merits reflection upon its role, objectives, and strategies as an institution responsible for promoting the practice of cultural rights in diverse, multicultural communities framed within a context of inequality.

The inclusion of the Mexico City as a pilot-city in the new Agenda 21 for culture in 2014 has given us the opportunity to deepen our insight into this role. It has developed to the extent that it has forced us to rethink the course for local public policy. Specifically, this includes the role of the Secretariat of Culture. Furthermore, it implies a strategic processes we must implement in order to achieve a balance in public policy between what is laid out our 2014-2018 Cultural Promotion and Development Program, and the practices, realities, problems, and needs of communities, towns, and sectors. This balance relies on the actors leading local cultural development. Above all, this has helped to define concrete actions geared toward sustainability in cultural life and strengthening cultural democracy.

The enormity of Mexico City, both geographically and in terms of population, can be framed within an era of new technologies and expanding citizen activism. As such, it brings into question the notion of territoriality. This is even more significant given the city's growth, population density, cultural and linguistic diversities, the presence of indigenous communities, urban cultural expressions, technological networks, and overwhelming cultural heritage. It is a city with 8 million inhabitants and 6 million more people who commute in from surrounding areas every day. The local and regional merge in this hub of activity, creating tension between new and conventional approaches to cultural rights and development.

We can conclude that in Mexico City, local areas acquire unique dimensions that we must take into account in creating public policy with regard to culture and development. These areas take on a new role in public action, empowering citizens' and networking as becoming fundamental strategies for revitalising social participation in these policies.

Within the framework of the pilot-city program of the new Agenda 21 for culture, Mexico City's contribution was the idea of drawing upon culture as both a civic right and a substantive component of development. They recommend that we place attention on communities' cultural development as a backbone for action. There is a prevailing need to favour substantial change in the types of interaction among various community actors (collectives, groups, artists, cultural activists, youth sectors, civil society). The idea is to establish relationships formed by a dialogue of creating processes that are truly participatory. All of these must be based on a perspective of cultural democracy and sustainability. The challenge is in building a new plan for governance where a cultural institution is able to form a part of, and contribute to, transversal community development processes. This must also occur from local perspectives, placing citizenship at the centre of the process.

Another element developed upon during this time has been transversality. It is the relationship we must establish between the cultural sector and government entities. The most important are those responsible for developing public policy in the areas of employment, as well as economic and social development, among others. This interaction has shown us how necessary it is for

culture to engage in dialogue with other areas. Not only does such cooperation strengthen its own cultural processes, but it also helps those that develop in other institutions, in their respective fields. An overall view for development is perhaps a lot better understood from the position of citizens groups dedicated to community cultural development. Their viewpoint is fundamental in creating new forms of governance, lending a deeper significance to sustainable development.

We must strengthen internal government processes dealing with programs that may need to be adapted to new participation schemes. Plans like these must engage in dialogue with communities on territorial, virtual, and metropolitan levels. The goal is to recover and lend visibility to the best citizen initiatives working toward diversity, creativity, social inclusion, and cultural production from a human rights perspective.

The four pillars defined for Mexico City as a pilot-city for the new Agenda 21 for culture program are: its recognition as an Indigenous city, Community Cultural Development, Cultural Businesses, and Arts and Crafts facilities. Subsequently, the city will share in the experience of businesses and cultural entrepreneurialism. Doing so reflects a kind of synthesis mentioned above. It also contributes to shaping a perspective based on culture and sustainable development.

CULTURAL BUSINESSES AND ENTERPRISES

Imagination in Motion, Cultural Businesses is a program of Mexico City's Department of Culture. It was created in 2007 for the purpose of strengthening the development of new entrepreneurial skills in the cultural, artistic, and heritage sectors of Mexico City. Additionally, the program supports consolidating businesses. This includes collective, or other sustainable and independent management methods involved in cultural processes. In this way, the program contributes specific and viable support for local governments. The aim is to fortify bases for artistic and cultural production, heritage management, and to generate new forms of collaboration between governments and civil society.

The Federal District's General Development Program for 2013-2018 highlights the need for reinforcing and driving transversal projects, based on the principles of Agenda 21 for culture, in all local public policies. It is also geared toward developing projects for social cohesion. This includes defending diversity through building tolerance, generating wealth by creating cultural employment, eliminating basic inequalities, and facilitating access to new technologies. Specifically, it signals a need to "Strengthen the creation and consolidation of cultural businesses that contribute to development in the cultural industry in Mexico City."

The program recognises that culture underlies the current environment. It represents an area for investment and innovation that can contribute to social wellbeing. It can also create employment and fortify the creative economy. Similarly, it can strengthen cultural diversity by creating a support base for creativity and weaving into value chains. As a result, the program will undertake the professionalisation of this sector as an indispensable element for creating employment and improving quality of life. This will benefit not only the artistic and cultural communities but for all those who inhabit the City.

The Federal District Government was the first government to create public policy in the field of culture and development. The Department of Culture designed the Imagination in Motion, Cultural Businesses Program with the aim of developing entrepreneurial skills and potential, as

well as management and social bonds. In this way, it helps enhance the creation of networks and alliances between artists, administrators, specialists, and craftspeople. In this context, the municipal government galvanises the creation of cultural goods and services, which are carriers of values and identity. Emphasis is placed upon their design and production within a framework of cultural rights and cultural democracy.

The Imagination in Motion, Cultural Businesses Program is an example of local public policy, established on a national level. It takes into account the value chains and production cycles in different cultural areas from a sustainability perspective. The result is the fortification of the capabilities of civil society. Through this program, mechanisms for the sustainability of the cultural sector have been established. They offer technical and administrative tools for the development and implementation of projects beneficial to both entrepreneurs and the city as a whole. The result creates niches for production, exhibition, diffusion, commercialisation and social appropriation, as well as networks that have a positive impact on the fabric of the city's society and community.

In its seven years of activity, the program has helped almost 5 thousand administrators, artists, artisans, and the legal incorporation of more than 200 cultural businesses. Furthermore, it has provided monitoring for over 50 businesses that are more than 4 years old. Each cultural business generates between 5 and 15 jobs. The program accounts for a base of over 100 projects that could become cultural businesses. It provides information on different forms of cultural management, jobs created, training requirements, and financing such as fiscal stimuli, venture capital, or seed money needs.

As a dimension of sustainable human development, culture requires an environment that boosts and consolidates these endeavours through stimuli, support mechanisms, and other supportive actions. As a result, there have been improvements in establishing new links for intersectorial and interinstitutional collaboration. This has been achieved within the framework of the pilot-city program of the new Agenda 21 for culture, and in harmony with the objectives of the 2014-2018 Cultural Promotion and Development Program. The purpose is to galvanise a cultural environment, which requires even more tools and processes. Ultimately, this will develop connections as part of a realignment of cultural policy that addresses a metropolitan sense of cultural life.

The support received from the local government permits the formation of a new governance in favour of culture and development. Presently, work is being done with Mexico City's Secretariat of Economic Development which organized the first Pymes Expo in 2014. The Expo was devoted to the creative and cultural businesses of Mexico City. They are developing soft loans for this sector, as well as recognising establishments dedicated to art and culture. The purpose is to differentiate this activity from purely commercial ones. Along with the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, alliances with cultural initiatives are being strengthened in order to create sustainable employment. Additionally, the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property (IMPI) and the National Copyright Institute (INDAUTOR), try to help artists understand their rights and obligations, as well as the value copyright adds to their work. This sense of horizontal work also impacts support for businesses and cultural groups that work toward preventing violence in Mexico City.

From a cultural policy point of view, the government must take on important areas of opportunity to strengthen as part of a vision of culture, sustainable development, and cultural rights. It seeks to reinforce financial mechanisms, seed capital, as well as stimuli for cultural businesses and endeavours, including both sunken costs soft credits. Given the differences in incubation times for businesses with regards to fiscal cycles of public administration, one challenge is to make

the budget for the program biannual. Another is to establish both quantitative and qualitative indicators of evaluation, as well as methodological tools to carry out other assessments.

Similarly, we must take advantage of local infrastructure, involve communities in processes of appropriation, and enjoy the artistic offerings of cultural businesses and entrepreneurialism. Doing so reinforces social and community capital, cooperation, and peace education in a city where a sense of belonging is strengthened by its diversity.

The cultural businesses and endeavours addressed through this program foster economic sustainability in the cultural and artistic community. Simultaneously, they are also driving forces of social profitability, understood through the lens of human rights. This focus stimulates the commitment of creators and artists to the challenges faced by the city's local communities. The result contributes to the improvement of coexistence and quality life, as well as to strengthening the citizens' creative and critical capacities.

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