



# MEXICO CITY

Leading City • culture 21

Leading City of Agenda 21 for culture  
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

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## GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH **TRANSVERSALITY** **GOVERNANCE FOR CULTURE** CREATIVITY **JOBS CULTURAL POLICIES** **CULTURAL INDUSTRIES** KNOWLEDGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## **MEXICO CITY, POLITICAL TRANSITION AND GOVERNANCE**

Mexico City, a Leading City on Agenda 21 for culture, is going through a crucial political period. In 2016, new constitutional reforms turned Mexico City into the country's 32<sup>nd</sup> state. Previously, the capital was the Federal District and the seat of federal authorities, where citizens could not choose their local leaders. This stripped around 9 million people of their electoral rights. Just two decades ago, Mexico City exercised its electoral vote and elected the engineer Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the historic post-revolution leader Lázaro Cárdenas, as the first Head of Government as voted by citizens.

The Mexico City Constitution that is currently being drafted shall establish citizens' rights, as well as ways to coordinate government and civil society actions. Its starting point will be the democracy building effort that has taken place over the last two decades. Around the world, Mexico City is considered a refuge city; a city of rights where citizens' freedoms are based on human rights, the search for social inclusion, and, while there is still much room for improvement, on the recognition of cultural, sexual, and gender diversity.

The new constitution shall establish guidelines for a new form of governance through the City of Mexico, with 16 Delegations. These current political administrative boundaries will become boroughs: Alvaro Obregón, Azcapotzalco, Benito Juárez, Coyoacán, Cuauhtémoc, Gustavo A. Madero, Iztapalapa, Ixtacalco, Magdalena Contreras, Miguel Hidalgo, Milpa Alta, Tláhuac, Tlalpan, Venustiano Carranza, and Xochimilco. Under this framework, which brings together political and urban governance, one of the most significant challenges will be to establish culture as one of the basic components of sustainable human development in city policies.

The complexity of the governance of the city has also undergone a change. There is a new range of political guidelines for the governing parties in each Delegation (future boroughs). These have contributed to demographic and budgetary inequality, as well as to institutional complexity that places strain upon governance frameworks across a number of areas under urban development. They have influenced the ways various social groups live in, and take ownership of, their city by meeting in public spaces. This has resulted in coexistence among a diverse and heterogeneous citizen population. Here is where culture intersects with the effects of migration and the presence of Indigenous settlements, neighbourhoods, and communities where a multiplicity of Indigenous languages is important. Mexico City has world-renowned tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, there still lacks a city-wide policy, as implemented through territorial and intersectoral governance, with an essential focus on culture and sustainable urban development.

Part of this challenge was the difficulty for previous administrations in forming the Federal District Cultural Promotion and Development System in 2003<sup>1</sup>. This requires strategic content and the defining of specific programmes that would lend strength to this initiative and seek to oversee urban governance. Furthermore, the 16 boroughs, private companies, and civil society must participate in outlining the fundamental issues facing Mexico City's cultural policy.

As a result it may be vitally important to residents of a megalopolis such as Mexico City that it establish public policies focused on culture and sustainable development in the coming years. Specifically, such policies should apply to the Valley of Mexico Metropolitan Area, given its size as one of the most populated cities on the planet, the third largest in the OECD, and the largest in the world outside of Asia.<sup>2</sup>

## **LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MEXICO CITY**

As a Leading City on Agenda 21 for culture, coupled with its political transition, Mexico City took up the challenge of structuring its governance over culture and sustainable development. Similarly, it also strove to outline strategic content for the Cultural Promotion and Development System. This was achieved through a democratic process based on institutional capacity building for local development, as well as by building a bank of public policy projects. The latter were collectively defined by the Ministry of Culture and the 16 boroughs, after analysing the progress made in each of the 9 commitments to Culture 21 Actions. The document was approved by the United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Culture in March of 2015, as an operational manual or guide to Agenda 21 for culture. Culture 21 Actions proposes a set of 9 commitments and 100 actions that outline the role of culture in sustainable local development. Culture 21 Actions draws on the work of Agenda 21 for culture (approved in 2014), and UCLG's ongoing work on the relationship between culture and sustainable development. This is embodied in the "Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development" Declaration adopted by UCLG during the UCLG World Congress held in Mexico City in November of 2010. Furthermore, it integrates culture into the Global Working Group of Local and Regional Governments.

Indeed, "Culture 21 Actions" can be seen as a manual. It is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September of 2015, as well as with the New Urban Agenda adopted at the Habitat3 conference in October of 2016. However, "Culture 21 Actions" has a greater ambition in that it lends coherence, clarity, capacity, and agency to the role of culture in sustainable cities.

As a result, projects on local capacity building and governance of culture and sustainable development in Mexico City are focused on designing and carrying out a workshop/seminar on cultural policies and governance for sustainable development. This resulted in the one held on Agenda 21 for culture, which took place throughout 2016. This workshop had two stages. The

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<sup>1</sup> Law on Cultural Promotion in the Federal District Available at: <http://sic.conaculta.gob.mx/documentos/1659.pdf> (Visited on 27 November 2016)

<sup>2</sup> OECD Territorial Study, Greater Mexico City; Study overview. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/valle-de-mexico-highlights-spanish.pdf>. (Visited on 25 November 2016)

first worked with staff from the Ministry of Culture, while the second collaborated with leaders in the areas of culture, social development, public space, and the environment from the 16 boroughs. In both cases, the goal was to provide theoretical and practical tools for building regional public policies, as well as to develop policies that are jointly defined by the whole city.

In order to improve the practicality of the workshop/seminar results, it was designed based on the 9 commitments of Culture 21 Actions. This was evident through its public policy guidelines, which are set out in the current 2014-2018 Cultural Promotion and Development Programme. These nine commitments from Culture 21 Actions first became an interaction platform inside the Ministry of Culture, and subsequently between the Ministry and representatives from throughout the 16 boroughs in the areas of culture, social development, environment, and public space.

The workshop/seminar was developed to include stimuli for integrating diversity. The aim was to generate a space of trust, as well as to recognise the political, professional, sectoral, and territorial identity of each participant, while also establishing a commitment to the common good of the city and its citizens. This would also create a platform for collective learning, as well as dialogue and discussion capable of overcoming political differences. Together these may strengthen the public regard for government action under Mexico City's new political and administrative organisation.

The workshop/seminar involved the use of tools for analysing and outlining public policy objectives by the participants. It prioritised recognising current examples of central and regional public policy that could be reconfigured or reassessed from a Culture 21 Actions perspective. One core aspect was the feedback by the boroughs that they had never before come together in search of a new city-wide policy based on an approach to cultural or sustainable urban development.

Another equally important factor was the identification of cultural practices or territory-wide civil society initiatives. This included emphasising the enormous diversity of the city's cultural resources that could be focused on cultural rights, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

Methodologically speaking, the workshop/seminar was based on (a) the Culture 21 Actions document, (b) the *Self-assessment Guide*, (c) an adaptation of the Logical Framework Approach with creative strategies for cultural managers, as well as (d) the use of intercultural tools, created by ConArte A.C., for coexistence in diversity that are geared towards promoting active listening and dialogue, in addition to applying tools for the co-production of knowledge to the design of public policy.

## **PRIORITIES FOR CITY PUBLIC POLICY ON CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Four priority areas were jointly identified as the focus for both Mexico City's Ministry of Culture and the boroughs. These emerged after arranging and analysing the results from each pillar of Culture 21 Actions, which were addressed consistently throughout the workshop/seminar.

The four areas were also seen as priorities for strengthening cultural sustainability and its capacity for generating well-being, democratic ideals, and active citizenship throughout the city. These areas shall guide some of the joint actions in regional and city policies. Furthermore, they will play a defining role in establishing the Cultural Promotion and Development System, which will help to design a new model for Mexico City's governance of culture and sustainable development.

- 1) **Sustainability in heritage management, knowledge, and cultural diversity**, is related to the importance of recognising traditional knowledge, the contributions of traditional festivals, and local holidays. This is all reflected in a city's living cultural communities, and in the support and management mechanisms for its sustainability. Other important focuses include the contribution of migrant communities, the promotion of initiatives related to culture and food sustainability, urban garden programmes, as well as the analysis of the environmental footprint of certain cultural practices and policies, such as the Zócalo Book Fair.
- 2) **The cultural use and social appropriation of the city's important public spaces**, involves creating new models for artistic training and for the management and funding of cultural centres. This extends to developing a catalogue of public spaces, promoting both the usage, as well as the social and cultural appropriation of these spaces through networks for coexistence. Furthermore, governance models must be designed so as to facilitate citizen participation in cultural life in public spaces, including areas that are symbolically important to inhabitants.
- 3) **Governance of culture and sustainable development throughout the region and city** is vital in order to lend structure to public policy instruments so that they can promote funding, collaboration, and co-production of city-wide programmes alongside the boroughs and the Ministry of Culture. This is important for strengthening capacity building across the region and fostering public debate on crucial issues for the city's cultural policy.
- 4) **Culture and Economy**. The goal is to promote the sustainability of cultural and artistic practices in Mexico City by strengthening the incubator for cultural projects. It also involves developing a solidarity-based economy section within currently ongoing strategies, and establishing specific mechanisms that encourage boroughs' participation in entrepreneurial capacity building for artistic cultures and communities.

These will be areas to take into account both collectively and independently. Other important focuses should be on the Ministry of Culture and, where appropriate, the Cultural Promotion and Development System, as well as on regional authorities catering to culture across the boroughs. However, there is a critical need to strengthen and allocate specific budgets for territorial cultural development due to the fact that it is currently inconsistent. Only five out of the 16 boroughs have bodies able to make cultural decisions, with the adequate resources for cultural policies within their jurisdiction.

It should be mentioned that the workshop/seminar was very highly regarded by all those involved as an example of building democratic governance. Subsequently, participants suggested that the UCLG Committee on Culture should use Mexico City as an example of a good practice, and that the process be proposed to other large cities which may be inspired to work with Agenda 21 for culture.

## GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE AND ECONOMY

From its Pilot City stage until its current status as a Leading City, the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture has helped to reassess and restructure the *Culture in Motion* programme. Today, this is considered a good practice by the Agenda 21 for culture committee. The programme was started in 2008 by the Ministry of Culture with the aim of strengthening the independent management of cultural and artistic initiatives throughout the city. It succeeded in fostering capacity building for management and entrepreneurship in the areas of arts and culture, as well as in securing the legal status of various citizen initiatives.

The restructuring also partially included combining this initiative with the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Culture's focus on the size of the sector, as well as with hosting the first SMEs Expo dedicated entirely to creative businesses.

During its time as a Leading City on Agenda 21 for culture, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economic Development both solidified a model for governance of culture and economy. This was achieved by signing a partnership agreement between the Ministry of Culture and *Mexico City's Economic and Social Council*, the latter of which is the highest authority in creating public policies for the Government of Mexico City. Additionally, a budget was approved for the *Current Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Artistic, Cultural, and Creative Community of Mexico City* project. The goal of this programme is to develop a means of assessing the contributions of the artistic and cultural sectors to the economy, as well as to detail their strengths and weaknesses.

As a result, Mexico City was the first city in the country to carry out a census on artists and the creative sector in order to determine their contribution to well-being, creativity, creating value, and social coexistence. This will require new public policy tools that facilitate the sustainability of culture, and boost the creative economy.

Governance is therefore a matter of institutional capacity building. It is a specific, coordinated action on public policy by Mexico City's Ministry of Culture, and a step toward making culture a cross-cutting sector in the economic and social development of the city.

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