

REVIEW OF CUENCA'S CULTURE 21: ACTIONS SELF-ASSESSMENT

FEBRUARY 2016



culture 21

Agenda 21 for culture

Within the framework of its participation as a pilot city for Agenda 21 for culture in 2016, the city of Cuenca, Ecuador carried out a self-assessment exercise on its cultural and sustainable development policies. This project was based upon the [Culture 21 Actions](#) document approved by the United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Culture in March of 2015. It allowed cities all over the world to examine their strengths and weaknesses with regards to these policies, based on common guidelines. Furthermore, the exercise compared the evaluation of each city with those opinions taken from a panel of experts on a global level.

The exercise was conducted in Cuenca and saw participation by officials from the Department of Culture, Education, and Sport of the Municipality of Cuenca. It also included members of the City's Department of Historical and Heritage Sites, the Politecnica Salesiana University, Cuenca's Council for the Protection of Rights, the University of Azuay, the Environmental Management Committee, Cuenca's chambers of commerce, the Municipal Public Enterprise for Economic Development in the Cuenca Canton (EDEC EP), the Alliance Française, the Municipal Tourism Foundation of Cuenca, and various representatives from civil society, organisations, groups, cultural centres, and citizens.

This document was written by Antoine Guibert, an expert in the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture, in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the UCLG Committee on Culture. It summarises and analyses the assessments made in the city of Cuenca, compares these with elements of the global average, and posits suggestions for some aspects that may warrant monitoring.

SELF
ASSESSMENT

A stylized white graphic consisting of three upward-pointing chevrons of varying heights, resembling a roofline or a mountain range, positioned on the right side of the page.

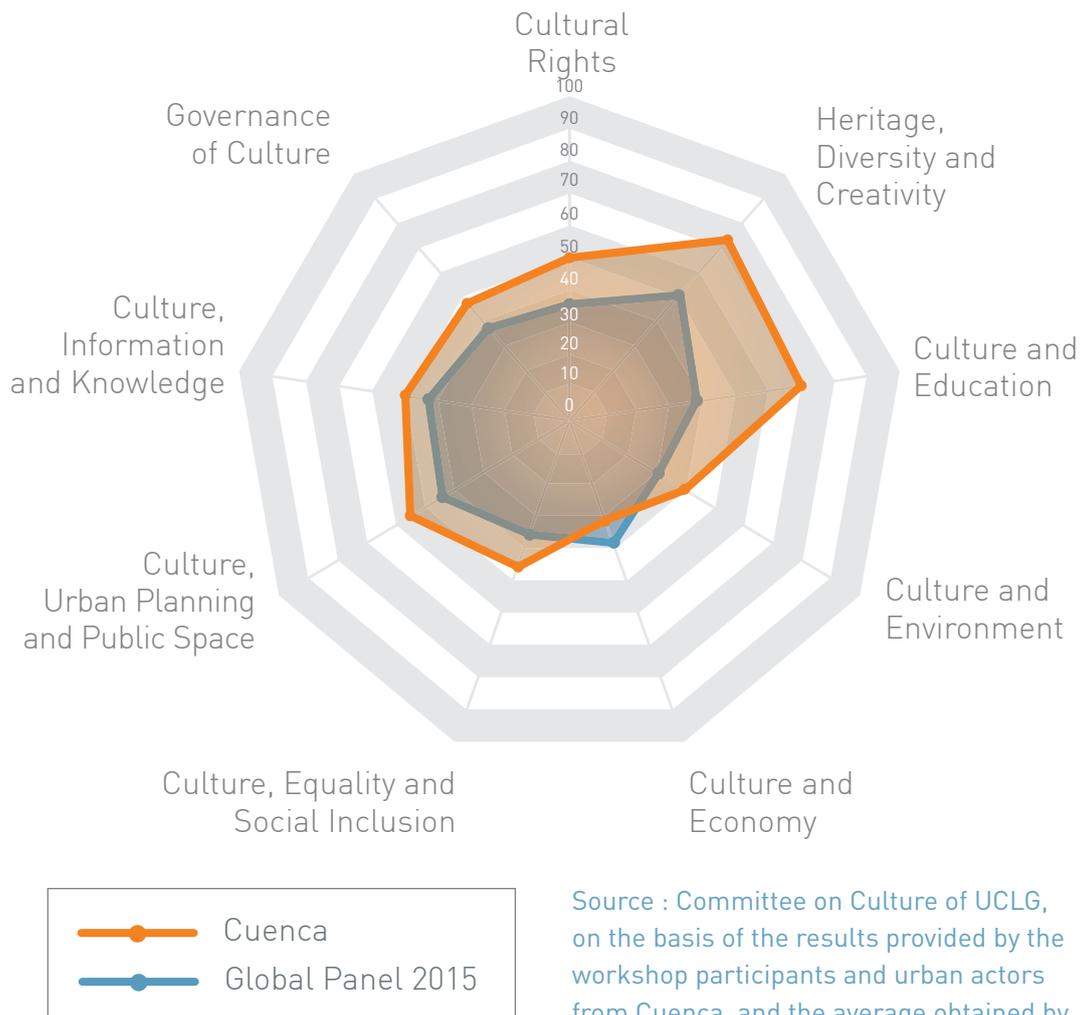


GENERAL OVERVIEW

Overall, Cuenca sits above the averages established by the 2015 global panel of experts. In fact, the city scored above the worldwide average in eight out of the nine categories of Culture 21: Actions. As figure 1 demonstrates, Cuenca is particularly noteworthy in the areas of “2. *Heritage, diversity, and creativity*” (with an average score of 74%, above a global mean of 50); “3. *Culture and education*” (70%, with a global average of 38); “7. *Culture, urban planning, and public space*” (56.25%, above the 44 average). The city was awarded grades equal to or higher than 50 in “1. *Cultural Rights*” (50%, higher than the global mean of 35); and “8. *Culture, information, and knowledge*” (50%, with a 43 worldwide). Despite receiving lower marks, Cuenca remained above the world average in “9. *Governance of culture*” (48.9%, with a 37 worldwide); “6. *Culture, equity, and social inclusion*” (46.9%, with a worldwide average of 35); and “4. *Culture and environment*” (40%, with a 30 worldwide). On the other hand, Cuenca remained below the global average in “5. *Culture and economy*” (31.25%, with a 38 worldwide)¹.

¹ The Culture 21 Actions Self-assessment Guide asks cities to provide a score between 1 (undeveloped action or at the embryonic stage) and 9 (action in full development) for each of the 100 actions that conforms to Culture 21 Actions, as well as to offer an indicative description in order to establish the cities' positions. For each action, a score between 1 and 3 corresponds to an “embryonic stage”; a score from 4 to 6 indicates a “development stage”; and an evaluation between 7 and 9 established the city at a “well developed stage”. The percentage figures accompanying each of the areas of commitment from Agenda 21 Actions are derived from those scores between 1 and 9 issued to every action that has been analysed.

Figure 1: Self-assessment of Cuenca and the 2015 Global Panel data



Source : Committee on Culture of UCLG, on the basis of the results provided by the workshop participants and urban actors from Cuenca, and the average obtained by a global panel mondial composed by 34 experts.



CULTURAL RIGHTS

In this area, Cuenca scored a 50%, ahead of a worldwide average of 35. Of the ten actions assessed, two of Cuenca's initiatives were classified within the "well developed stage", six in the "development stage", and two in the "embryonic stage".

On a national level, the concept of human rights is mentioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador and in the National Plan for Well-Being. Furthermore, in the application of these higher standards at a local level, cultural rights are a part of the Land Management and Development Plan, and Cuenca's 2016 Annual Operative Plan for Culture. However, this concept does not appear as a central theme in local cultural policies, nor has it been adopted into a reference text on rights, liberties, and cultural responsibilities. Some specific actions have been carried out in the form of public debate around cultural policies. For the most part this has been within the context of the Land Management and Development Plan, but permanent spaces or mechanisms for citizen participation are not in place. While some initiatives have been conducted to strengthen active citizen participation in cultural life, they are not an ongoing focus. Despite the lack of standards for minimum basic cultural services, and the occasional analysis of factors impeding access to, and participation in, cultural life, there is a certain territorial distribution of cultural infrastructure in accordance with the number of residents that should be noted. Furthermore, particular attention is paid to more vulnerable persons and groups within cultural policies.



HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 74%, well above the global average of 50. Within the examined actions, six of the city's initiatives were classified as being in the "well developed stage", five in the "development stage", and only one in the "embryonic stage".

Cuenca is particularly noteworthy for its protection of all dimensions of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. There is a Department of Culture, Education, and Sport, and a Department of Historical and Heritage Sites, with adequate funding. There are highly effective policies in place for the protection and appreciation of cultural heritage, particularly immovable heritage. However, there is a marked difficulty in establishing a dialogue between heritage and modernity, and heritage and cultural life, as well as in implementing a balance between the conservation and dynamic use of heritage, which may include public-private strategies for financing.

Generally, Cuenca promotes very relevant activities and projects across a number of areas. However, it sometimes falls short in terms of structure and the establishment of permanent projects. This may include support for intercultural projects, scientific culture such as natural sciences museums, or specific cultural projects of proximity developed along with residents. There are training and support activities for artisans, which can be seen as an exemplary practice, since it fosters significant sociocultural development among actors in this sector, and in the general population. However, this lacks organisation within an established programme or policy.

Policies supporting the arts are in place that focus on specific disciplines, such as through competitive funding. However, there is a noticeable difficulty for private actors in meeting the formal organisation criteria required, as well as a need for training in order to adapt and respond to both public and private administrative and institutional formality. Additionally, there is a clear challenge to the recognition and support for private cultural centres, and for non-institutional cultural life. International cultural cooperation is an action requiring greater attention, such as by integrating culture into international cooperation agreements with other cities.



CULTURE AND EDUCATION

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 70%, well above the global average of 38. For the activities assessed, six of Cuenca's actions were classified within the "well developed stage" and four within the "development stage".

Given that the education sector is managed on a national level, the Municipality of Cuenca has focused its activities primarily on informal education, or complementary education, integrating a significant cultural dimension. In fact, both spheres of action are present within the Department of Culture, Education, and Sport. As a result, cultural institutions receiving public support allocate a significant part of their budget to their educational offering. Educational institutions like the Alliance Française or universities, conduct cultural activities themselves in spite of the fact that all educational institutions do not do so systematically. On the other hand, there is a wide range of artistic education at a local level.

There is also a platform for publicising cultural, artistic, and educational municipal activities. However, there is no method for uniting all educational cultural activities from all different actors working at a local level. In various localities this exists in the form of a cultural calendar, which the municipality normally published monthly.

Standing out in particular among actions requiring greater attention is the need to offer more information on management and cultural policies, and to establish permanent mechanisms and spaces for dialogue and collaboration among actors in the areas of culture, education and lifelong learning. Despite not being within municipal jurisdiction, it is also important to strive towards better integration of a cultural dimension into primary and secondary education curricula.



CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 40%, above the global average of 30. Overall, Cuenca's development with regards to the assessed activities showed one at the "well developed stage", six in the "development stage" and three in the "embryonic stage".

Cuenca is particularly noteworthy for its recognition of the cultural interest of natural spaces through revitalisation projects and valuing sacred Inca and Cañari geography with activities in Cuenca's sacred mountains, such as treks or traditional ceremonies, or in its management of the Macizo del Cajas biosphere reserve. However, generally, promotional strategies for environmental sustainability include few cultural elements, nor are they explicitly or systematically linked to actions in culture and environment. Similarly, there are few permanent mechanisms for coordination between both spheres of public action.

One aspect deserving of greater attention is the value placed upon local products and their combined historical and cultural aspects. The evaluation of environmental impacts, and eco-responsibility of organisations and cultural activities, such as reduction in waste and carbon emissions, and establishing links with public, private, and civil society organisations working on the relationship between cultural and environmental areas.



CULTURE AND ECONOMY

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 31.25%, below the global average of 38. The area of “*Culture and Economy*” is one in which Cuenca obtained its lowest marks and the only area where it scored below the global average. Of the actions assessed, two of Cuenca’s initiatives were classified within the “well developed stage”, four in the “development stage”, and six in the “embryonic stage”.

Local economic development strategies identify culture as a pillar of development, but highlights a shortcomings in practical application. Generally, the primary challenge in this area is the difficulty for the cultural sector in responding to formal and administrative criteria, given that it is characterised in Cuenca by its informal nature. Its informality is an obstacle for the application of rights in this sector, including copyright, and impedes the implementation of economic incentives policies for the cultural sector, such as collaboration between economic actors and chambers of commerce. In this area, there is a noticeable need for training in the cultural sector in order to respond to the demands and formal criteria of economic incentive mechanisms. There is also a need to take into account, and adapt to the nuances of, the cultural sector, among other aspects of administrative formalism.

Alternatively, Cuenca is noteworthy for its recognition of the value in maintaining artisan crafts that are embedded in the regions, having established a socioeconomic training and support programme for local artisans. It should be noted that there is a vital need to establish a sustainable tourism plan, which integrates a cultural dimension and that is balanced within the territory, while also connecting with the local community and interacting with the local cultural ecosystem. Finally, there is a marked requirement for understanding and working with economic impact indicators in the cultural sector. This includes both the direct and indirect impact the creation of wealth and employment.



CULTURE, EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 46.9%, above the global average of 35. Of the actions assessed, five of Cuenca's initiatives were classified within the "well developed stage", three in the "development stage", and four in the "embryonic stage".

There are a number of social problems evident in Cuenca, where public intervention could be made a key priority in social development. Generally, links between social and cultural policies do not seem to be well established or organised in Cuenca. However, some cultural activities have been carried out that focus on social well-being and resolving local social issues. These actions are not part of any explicit, organised structured programme, and there is little communication and collaboration among the Municipal Department of Culture and the Municipal Department of Social and Economic Development, as well as other organisations engaged in the social sector. In the cultural sector, there is a particular lack of identification of more vulnerable groups and people within the region, as well as an absence of necessary programmes which are adequately and specifically geared towards these groups.



CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 56.25%, above the global average of 44. From the actions assessed, five were classified within the “well developed stage”, five in the “development stage”, and two in the “embryonic stage”.

Generally, urban planning takes into account aspects of culture and heritage. Cuenca is especially characterised by its management of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It has adopted good measures for the identification, protection, and appreciation of cultural heritage, including the analysis of the impacts urban projects have on heritage. The revitalisation policy for the historic centre appears to have incorporated culture, considers the notion of landscapes, and includes established architectural guidelines with regards to materials that form a part of the local identity. However, there remains a noticeable difficulty in the effective implementation of these initiatives.

There is a need to link the city’s historic centre and cultural heritage with cultural life and cultural participation by citizens and civil society. This can be achieved through more comprehensive and holistic management so that Cuenca is able to preserve its character as a “Living City”. In this sense, the city requires a reappropriation and reactivation of public spaces for its cultural life. In fact, cultural actions seem to be concentrated within the historic centre, yet there is a certain imbalance in the distribution of cultural resources among the centre, peripheral neighbourhoods, and rural parishes, such as mobility issues for accessing the centre and its cultural life. There is also room for progress in the planning of new cultural infrastructure, the identification of symbolic spaces, and the in the development of public art.



CULTURE, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 50%, above the global average of 43. Out of the actions assessed in this field, four were classified within the “well developed stage”, another four were in the “development stage”, and four more were in the “embryonic stage”.

Generally, freedom of expression and access to free and pluralistic information seems to be guaranteed in Cuenca. There is a need for citizens’ participation in media, given the existence of little community information, specifically in the canton’s rural zones. However, overall Cuenca was awarded very high marks in actions related to freedom of expression and media diversity.

Cuenca received intermediate scores in actions pertaining to the observation, research, and analysis of its cultural reality. These grades also reflected the analysis and use of information and communication technologies with a cultural objective, as well as forms of creativity, production, or digital distribution that are focused on residents. Furthermore, such scores reflected the participation of cultural actors in international cooperation networks. There is also room for improvement in areas such as the relationship between cultural-based processes and social innovation, debates on knowledge and information, and in educating or raising awareness about current or emerging ways to access and reproduce culture.



GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

In this area, Cuenca received a score of 48.9%, above the global average of 37. From the actions assessed, two were classified within the “well developed stage”, six in the “development stage”, and three in the “embryonic stage”.

While there is planning for cultural activities, there is a need to establish a cultural policy that defines a vision of the future and a cultural project for Cuenca. There is a need to establish a development project to respond to local challenges and one which outlines the role of culture in such a comprehensive project.

In addition, there has been active promotion of citizen participation in a number of exercises, including in the development of Cuenca’s 2016 Annual Operative Plan for Culture. However, there are permanent mechanisms for citizen participation that should be implemented in both the Municipality and the cultural institutions of Cuenca. Subsequently, all private and public local actors, including other levels of government, should be involved in a collaborative joint project, and in the development of further cooperation.



CONCLUSIONS

» The city of Cuenca has significant experience in the design and implementation of cultural policies and actions related to heritage and creativity, as well as to the relationship between culture and education. The city is also notable for its relationship between culture, urban planning, and public spaces. Specifically, the reactivation and management of cultural heritage in Cuenca, should be highlighted. In this area, two projects have set an example and can act as models for other cities:

- Cuenca's training and reactivation of its heritage of artisan knowledge, and socioeconomic development in this sector, with a strong potential for contribution to local development ;
- The revitalisation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and carrying out inclusive activities related to the sacred mountains and cultural geography of the Inca and Cañari, are other noteworthy exemplary practices.

» Among the aspects requiring more immediate attention, and in which Cuenca could benefit from the examples set by other cities, is the area of governance of culture, in particular. There is a need to promote spaces for coordination and participation among all local actors and citizens. This extends to the relationship between culture and the economy, specifically with regards to support and training in the cultural sector, and the sustainable integration of a cultural dimension into tourism development. Another vital element is the promotion of the relationship between culture and equity and social inclusion, with specific cultural action programmes as a driver of social development. Finally, there is room to improve upon the relationship between culture and the environment through better integration and recognition of culture in the city's environmental management.

ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS TO THE PROCESS

ACTORS IN THE 'PILOT CITY' PROCESS

NAME	POSITION
'Pilot City' Introduction Meeting	
Carlos Rodríguez	Environment Control and Management
Wendy Aguilar Hermida	CINEC
Piotr Zalamea Zielinski	Barojo Theater
Boris Banegas Abad	The Mandragora
Jennifer Monsalve S.	Freelancer
José Cáceres A.	ETAPA EP
Andrés Valdivieso	EDEC EP
Cristina Padilla Cardoso	EDEC EP
Audrey Lurean	French Alliance
Alcivar Vega Luna	SONVA
Diana Quinde	Biennial Foundation of Cuenca
Eduardo Moscoso	Centro Cultural Prohibido
Galo Escudero	Avispero
Geovanny Mendieta	Lutin Gallery
Sandra Washima	General direction on Historic Areas
Tamara Landivar	Ministry of Culture and Heritage
Pablo Durán Andrade	Tourism Foundation of Cuenca
Working tables	
Javier Andrade	National Association of Performing Artists
Diana Quinde	Biennial Foundation of Cuenca
Cristina Padilla Cardoso	EDEC EP
Angélica Dubert	Commerce Chamber of Cuenca
Jaime Moreno	Commerce Chamber of Cuenca
Pablo Durán Andrade	Tourism Foundation of Cuenca
Wendy Aguilar Hermida	CINEC
Galo Escudero	Avispero

Fabián León	CCPD
Lenín Peláez	GAD Gualaceo
Blas Garzón Vera	Polytechnic University of Salesiana
Eliana Bojorque	General direction on Culture
Audrey Lurean	French Alliance
Favián Abad Palacios	General direction on Culture
Piotr Zalamea Zielinski	Barojo Theater
José Cáceres A.	ETAPA EP
Diego Proaño	University of Azuay
Alcivar Vega Luna	SONVA
Carlos Rodríguez	Environment Control and Management
Marcia León	Ministry of Culture and Heritage
Tamara Landivar	Ministry of Culture and Heritage
David Achig Balarezo	University of Cuenca
Hernán Rodríguez G.	Ministry of Culture and Heritage
Eduardo Moscoso	Centro Cultural Prohibido
Marcelo Guiracocha	Ministry of Culture and Heritage
Sandra Washima	General direction on Historic Areas
Rosi Toledo	Freelancer
Lolita Bojorque	Cultural Manager (Freelancer)

Final workshop. Phase 1 - Diagnostic

Eduardo Moscoso	Centro Cultural Prohibido
Galo Escudero	Avispero
Carlos Rodríguez	Environment Control and Management
Javier Andrade	National Association of Performing Artists
Piotr Zalamea Zielinski	Barojo Theater
José Cáceres A.	ETAPA EP
Rosi Toledo	Freelancer
David Achig Balarezo	University of Cuenca
Eliana Bojorque	General direction on Culture
Audrey Lurean	French Alliance
Geovanny Mendieta	Avispero
Pablo Palacio Polo	City of Cuenca
Fabián León	CCPD
Sandra Washima	General direction on Historic Areas
Alcivar Vega Luna	SONVA
Favián Abad Palacios	General direction on Culture

Cantonal Assembly for culture

Jhoana Cruz	Citizen
Mario Montero	General direction on Culture
Jimena Riera	General direction on Culture
Xavier Domínguez	General direction on Culture
Alan Mendoza	University
Efraín Lucero	Casa de las Posadas
Lucía Quiroz	Pharmacy
Geovanny Mendieta	Avispero
Carlos Rodríguez	Environment Control and Management
Sonia Astudillo	General direction on Culture
Jorge Chalco	Artist
Mario Berrezueta	JAAP
Catalina Lazo	DASC
Antonio Quito	DASC
María Augusta Lloret	Cuenca Municipality
Eliécer Cárdenas	Cuenca Municipality
Galo Escudero	Avispero
Cristian Rojas	Cuenca Municipality
Lolita Bojorque	Cultural Manager (Freelancer)
Esteban Segarra	General direction on Culture
Mario Cando	Press
Esteban Montesdeoca	General direction on Culture
Cristina Padilla	EDEC EP
Diego Tenecota	Singular Mob
Rosi Toledo	Freelancer
Julio Peralta	General direction on Culture
Piotr Zalamea Zielinski	Barajo Theater
Ñusta Juliana Vega	Artist
Cristina Carrasco	Modern Art Municipal Museum
Javier Andrade	ANAE
José Cáceres A.	ETAPA EP
Audrey Lurean	French Alliance
Mario Calderón	General direction on Culture
Pablo Galindo A.	UNASUR Youths
Jorge Guartatanga	
Susana Vásconez G.	General direction on Culture
Eduardo Moscoso	Centro Cultural Prohibido
Mayra Liana Arias	Frente Cultural Independiente
Hernan Illescas	Artist
Edwin Daniel Pulgarin	Cuenca Municipality
Lucia Pachar Lazo	Women Policy Coordination



CONTACTS

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