



**UCLG – MEXICO CITY – CULTURE 21**

7th EDITION – INTERNATIONAL AWARD

# REPORT OF THE JURY



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### MEXICO CITY 7th EDITION CULTURE 21 INTERNATIONAL AWARD

## CONTEXT

The 7th edition of the **International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21** aims to recognise cities, local or regional governments, and leading individuals who have excelled in the promotion of innovative practices linked to the exercise of cultural rights, citizenship and sustainable development. The Award reaffirms the leadership of Mexico City in the relationship between culture and sustainable development, and the commitment of UCLG to place culture as a fundamental dimension of sustainable cities. The Award has two categories: “City, Local or Regional Government” and “Individual”.

### CATEGORY:

## CITY, LOCAL OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

This category will award a city, local or regional government whose policy, programme or project has significantly contributed to the promotion of the exercise of cultural rights in local sustainable development.

The Award is given to the local or regional government that wins the competitive call process, which is open to direct and indirect UCLG members, as well as to any local or regional governments collaborating with UCLG partner organisations. Indirect members of UCLG include local or regional governments that are members of an association or federation of local or regional governments that is, in turn, a member of UCLG.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, the Award recognises two thematic subcategories, designed to recognise innovative policies, programmes or projects, reward the performance of local and regional governments and promote the replicability of cultural practices in favour of people, the government and our planet. The aforementioned subcategories are based on the following axes:

### a) Cultural rights and care

Care, understood as the collective organization of life and the relationships that sustain it, is increasingly permeating local cultural policies. From this perspective, culture is conceived as a space for reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature, generating new forms of coexistence, well-being, and justice.

Cultural policies, programmes, and projects based on cultural rights and care recognize the value of creativity, diversity, and heritage as resources for regenerating communal life. Linked to local strategies on health, inclusion, and well-being, they address social, economic, and



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environmental justice in an integrated manner and repair the legacies of discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, these cultural policies, programmes, and projects can be understood as a care infrastructure when they materialize the relationships that sustain community life.

#### b) Cultural policies and gender equality

Gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach in municipal competences and actions. Cultural policies, programmes, and projects can contribute to revising gender narratives from a feminist perspective and integrating an intersectional perspective that guarantees equity. These cultural policies, programmes, and projects contribute to creatively transforming the narrative and imagery of cities and territories, so that they reflect the history, identity, and values of the populations that inhabit them, in a diverse, inclusive, plural, and representative manner.

Considering cultural factors and how they facilitate or impede the exercise of human rights is essential to understanding that cultural representations, and, in turn, social norms and behaviours can be at the root of gender inequalities and the inability of women and girls to fully exercise their rights.

The Jury decided that the winners of the Award (in alphabetical order) were the candidatures: **“Living Heritage for a Resilient Future”**, submitted by Ramallah (Palestine), and “VAI Program (Valorization of Cultural Initiatives)” submitted by São Paulo (Brazil):



**Ramallah. “Living Heritage for a Resilient Future”** is a long-term municipal policy that aims to safeguard and activate cultural heritage as a living urban resource. Facing a context of ongoing occupation, this citywide initiative reflects the city’s strategic commitment to preserve, revitalize, document and make accessible cultural heritage as a core element of identity, memory, belonging and social cohesion. The initiative brings together local communities, cultural practitioners, educational institutions and national stakeholders, to put in place targeted interventions, including local protection legislations, inclusive annual awareness programmes, and the preservation of the city’s archives and museum. The Jury highlighted this initiative as a remarkable example of a wide and solid local policy based on cultural rights and with a gender perspective that values and ensures continuity of collective memory and heritage across generations.



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**São Paulo. “VAI Program (Valorization of Cultural Initiatives)”** is an initiative that recognizes young people as creators and producers of actions relevant to society, across a wide variety of artistic and cultural expressions. VAI Program provides financial support for artistic and cultural activities, primarily those developed by low-income youth from areas lacking resources and cultural facilities in the city of São Paulo. It is based on the acknowledgement of culture as a fundamental right, and on the understanding that it is the responsibility of the public sector to promote and encourage such practices, especially in the city's peripheral areas. The Jury emphasizes the positive impact that this initiative has had over the years, including the promotion of civic participation of youth in the implementation and evaluation of cultural policies, and its recognition as an important public tool for social inclusion and gender equality.

The Jury also decided to make special mention of the following projects (in alphabetical order):



**Munich** (Germany), for “**#FemaleHeritage**”. The project acknowledges that collective memory, narratives and imaginaries are fundamental cultural elements in open and vibrant cities, and focuses on addressing historic inequalities, specifically those related to the underrepresentation of women in literature, knowledge and science communication. Archivists, curators, educators and librarians in the municipal archive of Monacensia are helping to bring digital this curation and networking initiative beyond Munich.



**Pichincha** (Ecuador), for “**The Pichincha Urban Art Festival**”. The purpose of this public festival is two-fold: it promotes urban visual art through the participation of national and international artists with experience and expertise in graffiti and muralism; and it develops creative proposals centred on the prevention and elimination of violence against women. The festival, which organises artistic educational activities for children and young people, constitutes an illustrative example of how culture contributes significantly to fostering dialogue, reflection and positive transformation through art.



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**Recife** (Brazil), for “**Free Play: Recife for Women’s Right to a Carnival without Violence**”. This project addresses structural inequalities existing in a massive cultural event such as the Recife Carnival. Acknowledging that the festive period is a time of vulnerability for women, who are exposed to harassment and gender-based violence in public space, Free Play coordinates prevention, assistance, and care and guidance interdepartmental services to ensure the enjoyment of public spaces with freedom, dignity, and safety, and to guarantee cultural rights for all.



**Salvador** (Brazil), for “**The Salvador Capital Afro Movement**”. This initiative is a strategic public policy that connects culture, tourism, and the Black creative economy as a strategy for inclusive, sustainable, and anti-racist development. It integrates public policy, cultural identity, and economic development through an Afrocentered and historically reparative approach, designed to address inequalities and provide equal opportunities through an innovative model in Brazil that is strengthening the international visibility of the city.

Winners and special mentions perfectly illustrate how local governments can address the integration of cultural rights and care systems, and the promotion of gender equality. The Jury wishes to emphasise the need for cities and local governments worldwide to prepare and implement a new generation of cultural policies that are shaped by a gender perspective. The winners and the special mentions are inspiring examples of these policies to come. Also, the Jury affirms winners and special mentions are examples of local implementation of **Culture 21 Plus**, through powerful actions at the local level focused on resilience and cultural rights in difficult contexts, youth and social cohesion, the promotion of gender equality and collective memory, as well as on intersectional policies, cultural participation and the enjoyment of public space for all.



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CATEGORY:

## INDIVIDUAL

This category will recognise an internationally renowned individual who has made a fundamental contribution to cultural rights, and to the relationship between culture and sustainable development. The Individual award will be designated by the Jury without an open competition process.

The Jury has decided that the Individual Award be shared ex-aequo by two people (in alphabetical order):



**Dr. Nancy Duxbury.** PhD. in Communication from Simon Fraser University in Canada. Nancy Duxbury is a leading scholar in the global conversation on culture in sustainability. She is a Principal Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, where she has worked since 2009. She leads the coordination of the interdisciplinary research group on “Urban Cultures, Sociabilities and Participation,” the CREATOUR Observatory on Culture and Tourism for Local Development, and co-coordinates the PhD programme “Cities and Urban Cultures.” The work of Nancy Duxbury focuses on policies for the integration of culture into sustainable local development, as well as on models of cultural development in small communities. She also investigates the interdisciplinary field of cultural mapping, which encompasses the fields of academic research, collective practice and art to understand and articulate meaningful cultural resources and how places hold culture.

Nancy Duxbury is the coordinator of a four-year Horizon Europe research project, entitled “IN SITU: Place-based innovation of cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas.” She was also the leader of a major three-year research project on creative tourism in Portugal called “CREATOUR: Creative tourism destination development in small cities and rural areas.” Her research is interdisciplinary in nature, and both the events she organises and her publications are meeting places that bring together academic and practical knowledge, as well as artistic approaches. She is an adjunct professor at the Simon Fraser University School of Communication and Thompson Rivers University’s Department of Journalism, Communication, and New Media. She is also a co-founder of the Creative Cities Network of Canada.



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**Prof. Dr. Amareswar Galla.** Salzburg Global Fellow (2019 & 2025); Emeritus Faculty, Australian National University, Canberra is the Founding Executive Director of the International Institute for the Inclusive Museum (iiiM). Distinguished Professor of Indigeneity and Inclusive Museum & Heritage Studies (KISS & KIIT), Galla is a globally renowned expert in sustainable heritage development, inclusive museum management, cultural democracy, intangible heritage, the role of culture in poverty alleviation, and the integration of community voices with heritage conservation. He has provided strategic cultural leadership, serving as Australia's first Professor of Museum Studies and as Chief Curator in Amaravathi Heritage Town. Throughout his career, Galla has contributed to advancing inclusive museums and sustainable heritage development and establishing regional observatories and programs in partnership with bodies including UNESCO.

His engagement has been visible across Australia, Europe, and the Pacific Asia region, developing strong networks of collaboration at the international level. Among other positions, he has been the UNESCO Chair on Inclusive Museums and Sustainable Heritage Development; he was also the first Australian elected as the President of the Asia Pacific Alliance Executive Board, Vice President of the International Executive Council, and Chairperson of the Cross-Cultural Task Force of the International Council of Museums. He was the founder of the National Affirmative Action Programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management at the University of Canberra, in the 1980's and 90's and is a Senior Founding Trustee of the Pacific Islands Museums Association and founding Editor-in-Chief of academic journals dealing with Sustainable Heritage Development.

The Jury acknowledged the quality of the nominations received and highlighted the inspiring impact of the two ex-aequo winners in this category, whose contributions have shaped both cultural rights and sustainable development. Whilst celebrating the legacies of the two winners, the Jury also recognised the intrinsic challenge of comparing lifelong professional careers with those in their early stages during the Award's deliberation process. In this regard, the members of the Jury strongly encouraged the submission of further future nominations of emerging professionals, as a career in its early stages can also bring exceptional innovation and drive. For this reason, the Jury invites future Juries of this Award to recognise the momentum of young generations, who will ultimately be the ones shaping the future of our cities.



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## JURY

The Jury of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21 is made up of the following five members, all of whom are prestigious international experts with impeccable trajectories and a proven track record in the cultural world, ensuring in this way the notoriety and relevance of the Award:

- I **Iseult Dunne** (President of the Jury) is chief Executive of Dublin City Council Culture Company (City winners ex aequo of the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21). She is Project Director and Producer focusing on activating cultural audiences and participation, and Leader of the 2015 team for Dublin's European Capital of Culture 2020 bid process, which resulted as its legacy in creating the Culture Company specialising in cultural participation and audience development citywide.
- I **Yarri Kamara** is an independent cultural policy researcher, writer and translator. She provides research and policy advice to institutions and governments supporting cultural sector development, particularly in Africa. A member of the UNESCO 2005 Convention Expert Facility, she authored the chapter "Culture and Sustainable Development" in UNESCO's 2022 report Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity and co-authored UNESCO's flagship 2023 report on the African fashion sector. As an advisor she has worked with cultural policymakers in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, and with institutions covering the African region such as Africalia and the Creative Economy Practice at CCHub.
- I **Dwinita (Tita) Larasati** co-founded Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF) in 2008. She is the Focal Point of Bandung City of Design, UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN); member of the Global Creative Economy Council (GCEC); research fellow of Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC); and the Executive Committee at Indonesia Creative Cities Network (ICCN). She is the Head of Master in Design Program at the Faculty of Art & Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). In her spare time, she creates and publishes her graphic diary.
- I **Ana Francis López Bayghen Patiño** is the Secretary of Culture for Mexico City since October 2024. She is a cultural promoter, activist, feminist, actress and theatre director. She is a co-founder of the Mexican League of Women in Theatre, the National Association of Stage Directors and the National Network of Independent Venues in Mexico City. In 2011, she received the Omecihuatl Award from the Mexico City Institute for Women. She served as a local councillor and chair of the Equality Committee of the Mexico City Congress from 2021 to 2024, where she worked for the recognition of the cultural rights of those involved in art and culture.



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I **Rocío Lombera** is the General Coordinator for International Affairs at the Mexico City Government. An architect and community educator, she has over four decades of experience in the field of urban and social management, with a perspective centred on full rights, social and territorial justice, and collective well-being. At the Iztapalapa Mayor's Office, she played a leading role in flagship socio-urban transformation projects, particularly the UTOPIAS (Units for Transformation and Organisation for Inclusion and Social Harmony). At the international level, she coordinated the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Popular Education and Local Power and served as Regional Advisor for the UN-Habitat Urban Management Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Jury analysed the applications presented in the two categories in May 2026, and held its final meeting on 12 June 2026.

The Jury acknowledged how cities worldwide are taking actions in line with the two axes of the Award, recognising their fundamental role in advancing sustainable development by placing cultural rights, care and gender equality at the heart of public policy. In this light, the Jury also expressed its most sincere gratitude to cities and local governments that are supporting cultural policies, programmes and infrastructure, encouraging collective reflection and decisive action upon the relationship between freedoms, cultural rights, inclusion and gender equality, democracy and peace, care and wellbeing, public commons, community building, and the promotion of international cooperation and solidarity, with initiatives that make evident that culture is “a” driver if not “the” driver of development, and central in the just transitions we, the humanity, are needing today.

The Jury would also like to express their gratitude to all candidate cities for their effort and dedication, and for the resources and enthusiasm they invested in presenting their candidacies. The Jury wishes to commend the involvement of the thousands of people associated to UCLG and Mexico City who have worked on the candidacies and the nominations.



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## PREVIOUS EDITIONS (FROM 2014 TO 2024)

The **first edition** of the Award was held between 2013 and 2014. The “City, Local or Regional Government” category was won by the programme “Arena da Cultura” presented by Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais, Brazil), and the “individual” category by Manuel Castells and Farida Shaheed.

The **second edition** of the Award was held in 2015-2016. The Jury granted the Award to the project “Cultural heritage and reinvigoration of socio-economic activities in Timbuktu”, from the City of Timbuktu (Mali), and to the project “I AM... / The adventure of one community in the middle of a transformation”, presented by Vaudreuil-Dorion (Quebec, Canada), in the “City” category. In the “Individual” category, the Award was also given jointly to Jon Hawkes and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.

The **third edition** of the Award was held in 2017-2018. The cities of Lyon (France), and its cultural policy “The Sustainable City of Lyon: the Charter of Cultural Cooperation” and Seongbuk (Seoul, Republic of Korea), with the programme “Common Seongbuk Artist Roundtable: Local Culture Governance” were recognized by the International Jury as winners in the category “Cities”. In the category “Individuals”, the Jury decided to award jointly Basma El Hussein, and Patrice Meyer-Bisch.

The **fourth edition** of the Award was held in 2019-2020. The winners in the “City” category were Medellín (Colombia) with the project “Network of Artistic and Cultural Practices”, and Ségou (Mali) with the project “Ségou: A Creative City”. In the “Individual” category, the Award was given to Eusebio Leal and Vandana Shiva.

The **fifth edition** of the Award was held in 2021-2022, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and post-pandemic recovery; the winners in the “City” category were Buenos Aires (Argentina) with the project “Abasto Cultural neighbourhood: Economic Boost and Urban Regeneration”, and Dublin (Ireland) with the project “AWE - Cultural Engagement through Accessibility, Wellbeing and Evidence”. In the “Individual” category, the Award was given to Lourdes Arizpe and Daisy Fancourt.

The **sixth edition** of the Award was held in 2024, focusing on cultural rights as a key driver of local sustainable development. The winning cities were Gwanak-gu (Republic of Korea) and La Paz (Bolivia) in the category “City / Local or Regional Governments” for their initiatives “Capital of Youth Culture” and “Traditional Medicine Information and Guidance Centres – Qullañ Uta,” respectively. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Alfons Martinell Sempere were awarded ex-aequo in the “Individual” category.



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## PARTICIPANT CITIES IN 2026

This edition of the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 received **59 submissions** from **cities and local and regional governments** from all corners of the world:

**Akyurt** (Ankara, Turkey), **Amadora** (Portugal), **Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Barranquilla** (Colombia), **Beit-Jann** (Israel), **Bishkek** (Kyrgyz Republic), **Bogotá** (Colombia), **Caguas Autonomous Municipality** (Puerto Rico), **Canary Islands Government** (Spain), **Cartagena de Indias** (Colombia), **Cologne** (Germany), **Concepción** (Chile), **Cuenca** (Ecuador), **Cundinamarca** (Colombia), **Dubai** (United Arab Emirates), **Gangwon Province** (Republic of Korea), **Goyang** (Republic of Korea), **Guadalajara** (Mexico), **Guimarães** (Portugal), **Herzliya** (Israel), **Hidalgo State** (Mexico), **Horta** (Azores, Portugal), **Izmir Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **La Falda** (Córdoba, Argentina), **Lamu** (Republic of Kenya), **Lisbon** (Portugal), **Ludwigsburg** (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), **Maricá** (RJ, Brazil), **Mersin Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Munich** (Bavaria, Germany), **Nairobi** (Republic of Kenya), **Nantes** (France), **Niterói** (Brazil), **North Minahasa** (North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia), **Nuevo León** (Mexico), **Ofaqim** (Israel), **Olot** (Catalonia, Spain), **Oulu** (Finland), **Pardes Hanna-Karkur** (Israel), **Parshuram** (Nepal), **Pichincha** (Ecuador), **Puebla** (Mexico), **Ramallah** (Palestine), **Recife** (Pernambuco, Brazil), **Reconquista** (Province of Santa Fe, Argentina), **Rehovot** (Israel), **Rennes Métropole** in partnership with the City of Rennes (France), **Rosario** (Argentina), **Salvador** (Brazil), **Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **São Paulo** (Brazil), **Seoul** (Republic of Korea), **Strasbourg** (France), **Tel Aviv-Yafo** (Israel), **Terrassa** (Catalonia, Spain), **Toluca** (Mexico), **Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality** (Turkey), **Yakutsk** (Russian Federation), and **Yerba Buena** (Argentina).



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## COMMENTS

The Jury extends their most sincere gratitude for the participation of numerous, very diverse and exceptional projects in the 7th edition of the “International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21”.

A number of these policies, programmes and projects have also been identified by the Jury as “good practices”. As such, they will be included in the “**OBS**”, the database of good practices of the UCLG Culture Committee, and will be disseminated worldwide in English, French and Spanish. This process will be carried out in the last months of 2026.

Given the outstanding quality of submissions received and the importance of highlighting and disseminating successful cultural practices connected to sustainable development, the Jury would like to acknowledge the projects submitted in the ‘City’ category and selected as good practices with the following words:

By recognising the importance of cultural participation from birth, **From Early Childhood to Cultural Maturity: the Baby Library in Akyurt** provides an inclusive public cultural service that strengthens early childhood learning and family interaction. Its free, safe and accessible environment is particularly valuable for children and families, including persons with disabilities.

In **Amadora, Zambujal** 360 turns a public housing neighbourhood into an open-air gallery devoted to the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative successfully brings together urban art, community participation and education on sustainable development, while making residents’ experiences visible and reinforcing local identity and social cohesion.

Through **the Mod10 Youth Orchestra, Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality** invests in the cultural, social and personal development of children and young people. High-quality musical education nurtures creativity, discipline and confidence, while the orchestra’s diverse repertoire and collective practice strengthen social bonds and cultural participation.

Culture-led urban regeneration is at the heart of **Barranquilla’s Open-Air Museum**. By recovering public spaces through murals, community participation and local memory, the project reinforces neighbourhood identity, supports artists and cultural tourism, and places cultural rights within a broader process of sustainable urban transformation.



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**Beit-Jann** demonstrates through **Kan Zaman – Community Culture as a Driver of Social Resilience and Sustainable Development** how living heritage can support community resilience and sustainable local development. The festival and its wider year-round cultural ecosystem connect creativity, civic participation and intergenerational transmission, while opening economic opportunities for women and other local cultural actors.

Neighbourhoods and their everyday cultural vitality become the starting point for public action in **Living Neighbourhoods: cultural co-creation labs in Bogotá**, presented by **Bogotá**. Its participatory laboratories strengthen cultural democracy, community cooperation and local cultural economies, and help bridge territorial divides across the city.

The recovery of the Cagüitas River banks is enriched by **Concrete Sculpture Biennial**, an initiative of **Caguas Autonomous Municipality** that connects sustainable contemporary art with environmental regeneration. By opening the creative process to the public and establishing an accessible sculpture corridor, it encourages education of youth, participation and community ownership of public space.

With **the Cultural Dimension in the Canary Islands 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**, the **Canary Islands Government** has undertaken a pioneering effort to incorporate culture into a regional sustainable development framework through dedicated targets and indicators. The resulting methodology offers a valuable and transferable reference for administrations seeking to recognise and monitor culture as an essential dimension of sustainability.

**Cartagena de Indias** broadens the exercise of cultural rights through its **System for Artistic and Cultural Education (SIFAC)**, a structural policy for accessible arts education. Its life-cycle approach, Afro-Caribbean perspective and combination of creative training with psychosocial support strengthen cultural citizenship and participation among children and young people.

A significant structural shift in municipal cultural policy is embodied by **the Cultural Participation Framework** in **Cologne**. By combining funding, qualification, advisory services and accessibility measures, the programme strengthens the participation and visibility of artists and audiences with disabilities and structurally embeds inclusive artistic practice within the city's cultural ecosystem.



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**DeclarAction: Practices for Cultural Rights and Sustainable Development** enables **Concepción** to translate cultural rights into practical and accessible tools rooted in community life. Its South-South cooperation, participatory assessment and careful use of technology provide a noteworthy model for knowledge-sharing and evidence-based cultural policy.

By expanding the visibility of women artists and recognising women's knowledge as living cultural heritage, **Voices of Equality: Women, Culture and Knowledge that are Transforming Cuenca** advances a more representative local cultural narrative in **Cuenca**. Exhibitions, encounters and cultural programming contribute to gender equality while broadening participation in the city's cultural life.

Community-led cultural action becomes a tool for peacebuilding in **Initiatives that Transform**, promoted by **Cundinamarca**. Through dialogue, memory, identity and the recognition of diversity, the strategy helps transform conflict, rebuild trust and reinforce citizenship and the social fabric throughout the territory.

**Gangwon Cultural Care Policy for Cultural Rights** in **Gangwon State** offers a comprehensive rights-based approach to cultural inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities and communities with limited cultural infrastructure. Its coordinated programmes connect access, artistic creation, education and outreach, positioning culture as an integral dimension of social care.

Former public facilities have been transformed by **Goyang** through **From Idle Public Assets to a Visual Arts Commons: Haeum and Saedeul, Goyang** into complementary spaces for artistic creation, research and citizen participation. The initiative effectively links cultural policy and urban regeneration, while establishing a sustainable city-level ecosystem for artists and shared cultural life.

Moving beyond event-based cultural management, **Guadalajara** has developed **Cultural Rights Strategy** as a long-term, participatory and regulatory framework. Building on Culture 21 Plus, the strategy reinforces cultural democracy, territorial justice and the sustainability of the local cultural ecosystem across successive administrations.

In **Guimarães, District C: Creative Hub for Zero-Carbon Policies/Actions** functions as an ambitious living laboratory connecting culture and creativity with ecological transition. Its collaborative governance and experimental actions place citizens at the centre of change, encouraging innovation, behavioural transformation, social inclusion and a more sustainable local economy.



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**Hidalgo State** addresses territorial inequalities in cultural access through **Living Fabric. Cultural Decentralisation for Transformation**. A network of regional centres and travelling programmes expands artistic education beyond the capital, professionalises cultural agents and strengthens social cohesion in rural and semi-urban communities.

The **Musical Season of the Teachers of the Regional Conservatory of Horta** recognizes and promotes their pedagogical and artistic work, while providing the community with free access to high-quality concerts featuring diverse instrumental ensembles, musical styles, and historical periods. This initiative contributes to the democratization of culture and the strengthening of local identity.

Public libraries are reimagined as inclusive community learning hubs through **Colorful Letters**, developed by **Izmir Metropolitan Municipality**. Bringing together children, families and volunteer teachers, the initiative responds to literacy barriers, supports well-being and enables children to participate more fully in cultural and public life.

Direct dialogue with artists and cultural institutions shapes **Municipal Programme for Encouraging the Arts (PEA)** in **La Falda**. Its forums and grant scheme meet the locally identified needs, sustain artistic creation and generate useful evidence for more relevant and participatory municipal cultural policies.

Within municipal housing neighbourhoods, **Living Lands Programme** allows **Lisbon** to combine artistic practice, cultural mediation and collaborative management. The programme values local knowledge, encourages residents to appropriate shared spaces and strengthens cultural rights, belonging and social cohesion.

Public remembrance and collective action against violence against women are brought together in **Memorial Day for Women who Suffer(ed) Gender-Based Violence**, established by **Ludwigsburg**. Supported by civic and institutional partnerships, the initiative has evolved from a community mobilisation into an annual memorial practice with potential for wider advocacy.

**Culture of Rights** is a far-reaching territorial programme through which **Maricá** connects free cultural activities with human rights, social support and access to public services. Community hubs and sustained outreach strengthen citizenship and participation while also generating evidence for more responsive municipal planning.



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Participatory cultural governance is given a permanent structure through **MEDEKA (Mersin Community Culture Platform)**, created by **Mersin Metropolitan Municipality**. By involving citizens and cultural communities in decision-making, the platform reinforces democratic cultural governance, social cohesion and the protection of local memory and heritage, while guiding long-term cultural policy and positioning culture as a driver of sustainable local development.

Through **Culture, Public Space and Opportunity**, **Nairobi City County** advances a people-centred approach to city-making that combines cultural policy, public-space activation and support for the creative economy. The initiative expands opportunities for young people, strengthens cultural governance and turns streets and neighbourhoods into platforms for creativity and civic life.

Citizens are placed at the centre of documenting and interpreting local heritage through **Nantes Patrimonia**, developed by **Nantes**. By bringing together professional knowledge, residents' memories and accessible digital tools, the platform advances cultural rights, education and shared ownership of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Cultural participation is decentralised across **Niterói** through **BROTAÍ Programme – Community Culture Network**. Free workshops, training, local mobilisation and the engagement of neighbourhood cultural practitioners strengthen diversity, citizenship, income generation and the community cultural ecosystem, particularly in vulnerable territories.

**North Minahasa Regency** has established a strong regulatory and community-based framework through **the Preservation of Tonsea Minahasa Indigenous Culture** to safeguard living Indigenous heritage. The policy supports traditional music, dance and language, reinforces intergenerational transmission and formally recognises customary institutions as strategic partners in local governance.

Art, play and collective life are combined in **Cultural Spheres**, an innovative community-centred model promoted by **Nuevo León State**. Located in underserved territories, its inclusive cultural infrastructure encourages creativity, free access, social cohesion and lasting community ownership of cultural spaces.



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**Ofaqim** mobilises cultural expression, memory and community solidarity through **Follow the Events of October 7: Culture and Art as a Basis for Resilience and Rehabilitation**.

The initiative honours loss and resilience while supporting collective care, recovery, social cohesion and the rebuilding of everyday life.

**Sismògraf Festival** in **Olot** is distinguished by the way it connects performing arts, landscape and community engagement through an ecofeminist ethic. Its site-specific and socially conscious approach promotes accessibility, ecological responsibility, artistic cooperation and reflection on more sustainable ways of living.

The capacity of cultural organisations and municipal teams to advance equality, accessibility and non-discrimination has been significantly strengthened by **Equal Oulu2026 - Fostering Diversity and Participation** in **Oulu**. Extensive training, inclusive programming and practical guidance provide a lasting foundation for a more representative cultural life.

Cultural mapping, artistic hosting and participatory planning are brought together by **Pardes Hanna-Karkur in ResidentCities - Participatory cultural mapping and planning project**. The project generates deep local knowledge, builds structures of care and informs long-term urban development, while strengthening resilience, democratic governance and cross-departmental cooperation.

**From Education to Empowerment: Cultural Policy Advancing Gender Equality** shows how **Parshuram** uses education to challenge discriminatory norms and expand the rights and opportunities of girls and daughters-in-law. The programme connects gender equality with community care, livelihoods and participatory local governance, turning educational support into a long-term cultural strategy.

A distributed network of community cultural spaces forms the basis of **Cultural Nodes: Territorial Cultural System for Cultural Democracy**, through which **Puebla** advances cultural decentralisation. Participatory mapping, collaborative governance and locally rooted programming expand cultural rights, reinforce neighbourhood ecosystems and offer a replicable territorial model.

For more than three decades, **Students' Olympics: a model of cultural participation** has provided **Reconquista** with a sustained platform for youth participation. Cultural, sporting and educational activities are combined with democratic student decision-making, strengthening cultural citizenship, regional integration and intergenerational dialogue.



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An innovative bridge between cultural policy, health and well-being is created through **Museum Prescriptions**, presented by **Rennes Métropole (in partnership with the City of Rennes)**. By enabling healthcare professionals to prescribe free and adapted museum visits, the initiative advances cultural rights, empowerment and inclusive approaches to care.

Reading, creativity and care come together in **City Pages: Approaches to literature with vulnerable children**, developed by **Rosario** in neighbourhoods facing social vulnerability. Collaboration with authors and illustrators enables children to become active cultural producers, strengthening literacy, self-expression, participation and community bonds.

Restored heritage areas become living spaces of production, participation and dignity through **Cultural Heritage, Women's Empowerment and the Care Economy Model**, presented by **Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality**. Training and market opportunities empower women, revitalise historic public spaces and connect the safeguarding of heritage with the local care economy.

Major public spaces are transformed into free and accessible cultural commons through **The Seoul Outdoor Library: Expanding Cultural Rights and Urban Care**, developed by **Seoul** without constructing new buildings. Reading, cultural exchange and community participation are combined to address isolation, support climate-conscious urban practice and integrate culture into everyday life.

**Strasbourg** demonstrates pioneering leadership in the localisation and assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals through **A Culture Goal to 'Read Our World'**. Building on the experience of World Book Capital, the initiative mobilises books and reading in support of social justice, ecological transition, empowerment and cultural rights.

Major cultural institutions have been encouraged by **Tel Aviv-Yafo** to rethink communication, programming and hospitality for young adults through **Devek - Cultivating young audiences in Culture**. Its matching-fund model and strategic support successfully transformed an experimental pilot into a sustained municipal policy for audience development.

Accessibility and cultural rights are embedded in the daily work of the public library network through **Accessible, Inclusive and Sustainable Library**, promoted by **Terrassa**. Broad local partnerships and numerous inclusive activities enable libraries to function as community spaces for autonomy, participation, knowledge and well-being.



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Free multidisciplinary festivals in central and peripheral public spaces allow **Toluca**, through **Collective Living Culture: Transformation in Toluca**, to democratise cultural access and recognise local creators. The policy reinforces public life and cultural identity, promotes women's leadership and supports the economic dignity of artistic and craft work.

Northern cultural identity is celebrated through children's creativity in '**We are Children of the North**': **International Ice and Snow Sculpture Contest**, organised by **Yakutsk**. The distinctive artistic use of ice and snow transforms public space, transmits local traditions and promotes intercultural dialogue and the city's cultural appeal.

Local histories, landscapes and symbols become visible in public space through **Living Identity**, a participatory urban art programme of **Yerba Buena**. Its institutionalised and expanding mural circuit strengthens belonging, supports local artists and connects community life, nature and cultural tourism.

This edition of the Award received a large number of applications from all over the world. In addition to the list above, the complete summaries of all the candidacies presented to the 7th edition of the International Award UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 can be found on the **interactive map** available on the website dedicated to the Award, as well as in the **document of abstracts** with the 59 candidacies received.



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## CONCLUSIONS

The Jury acknowledges the increase in the quality of applications relating cultural rights to care, and cultural policies and practices to gender equality. The winning projects in this 7th edition of the Award are fully inscribed in this perspective.

The candidacies to this edition are strongly reflect the promotion of cultural rights in local sustainable development, particularly with regard to cultural rights and care, and cultural policies and gender equality. Candidacies show that care is increasingly permeating local cultural policies, materializing the relationships that sustain community life and reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature. Candidacies also demonstrate that gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach in municipal cultural policies, and that they are creatively transforming the narrative and imagery of cities and territories, going to the root of inequalities, so that they reflect the history, identity, and values of populations in a diverse, inclusive, plural, and representative manner. They all are generating new forms of coexistence, well-being, solidarity and justice.

The Jury notes that, in these difficult times, applications to this Award show that many initiatives around the world are arising as beacons of human development with heritage, memories, diversity, knowledge, creativity and quality of life at the core, incorporating cultural rights as a building block of peace and wellbeing in all caring cities and regions. Cities and local governments are central for sustainable development because they localise and promote the right of all to participate in cultural life. The leadership of cities and local governments is a precondition to “leave no one and no place behind”. This is what UCLG enshrined in its Pact for the Future (Daejeon Declaration, October 2022), and continues to advocate for in its Local Social Covenant (Tangier, June 2026), with culture as one of its main axes.

The Jury also notes that local cultural policies, programmes and projects are essential to promote human rights and democracy. Unchaining the potential of heritage, creativity and diversity -that is, culture- and turning this potential into a reality (with a standalone Culture Goal in the SDGs) is an unequivocal part of the solution to humanity’s challenges.

The Jury encourages all cities to develop local projects and programmes that explicitly address locally meaningful processes that have people and the planet at the centre, and that are nationally and internationally connected, while pursuing further collaboration with the UCLG Culture Committee, through submitting candidacies for future editions of the Award or exploring other programmes within this global network to advance common goals.



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The Award Ceremony for both categories will take place on the 8 October 2026 in Mexico City. The event will be held alongside a Peer-learning exercise on cultural rights, care and gender equality. This important moment will bring together Award winners, Jury members, distinguished experts, and representatives of local governments from around the world, and will provide a unique opportunity to learn from one another, exchange experiences, explore innovative policy approaches and strengthen international cooperation. All UCLG members are cordially invited to attend and take part in these inspiring days of dialogue, learning and celebration.

**[www.agenda21culture.net/award](http://www.agenda21culture.net/award)**



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UCLG — Committee on Culture

Government of Mexico City — Secretariat on Culture



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