

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

NOVEMBER 2015



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In the framework of its participation in the Agenda 21 for culture's Leading Cities programme in 2015, the City of Bogotá conducted a self-assessment exercise of its policies in the areas of culture and sustainable development last October. The exercise is based on Culture 21 Actions, the document adopted by the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in March 2015, which provides a common template for cities across the world to examine their strengths and weaknesses in this area. The exercise also enables cities to compare their assessment with the average ratings provided by a global panel of experts.

The exercise conducted in Bogotá involved staff of the local Secretariat of Culture, Leisure and Sports, the department of local government which is mainly in charge of cultural affairs.

This document, produced by the Secretariat of UCLG's Committee on Culture, summarises and analyses the assessment made by the City of Bogotá, compares it with elements from the global average and identifies a set of topics which may deserve follow-up.



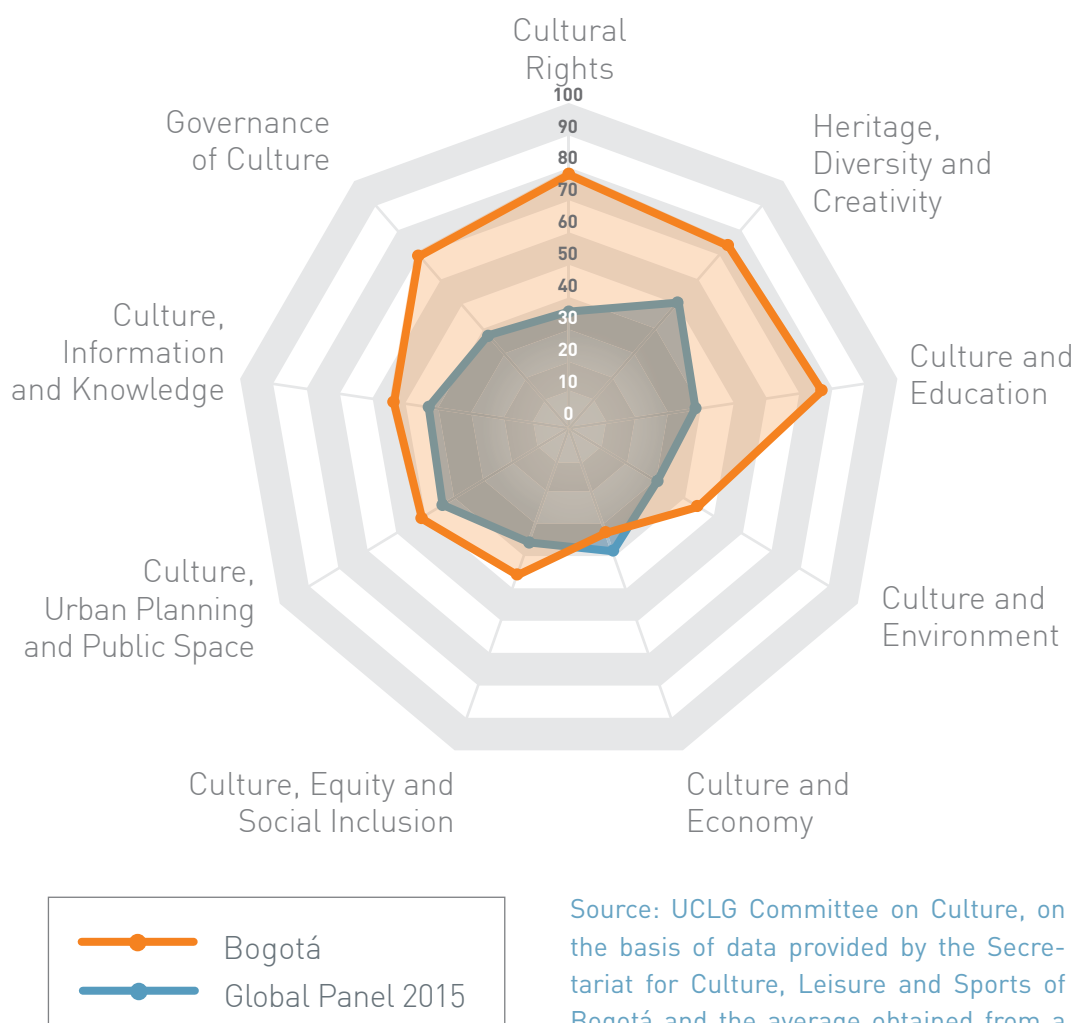
SELF
ASSESSMENT



GENERAL OVERVIEW

The City of Bogotá has achieved high scores in most of the commitments that make up Culture 21 Actions. As shown in Figure 1, this is exemplified by the fact that, whereas in the Global Panel assessment conducted in September 2015 a mark over 50/100 was achieved in one theme only (namely, “Heritage, Diversity and Creativity”), Bogotá ranks above this mark in six out of nine areas. The three commitments where Bogotá has obtained an average below 50 are “Culture and Economy” (32), “Culture, Equality and Social Inclusion” (45) and “Culture and Environment” (45).

Figure 1: Bogotá’s Self Assessment and data from the Global Panel 2015



Source: UCLG Committee on Culture, on the basis of data provided by the Secretariat for Culture, Leisure and Sports of Bogotá and the average obtained from a world panel of 34 experts.

As the figure above shows, in most thematic areas Bogotá has obtained high marks and is visibly ahead of the global average. Results in four areas are particularly remarkable: “Cultural Rights” (75, whereas the global average is 35), “Culture and Education” (75, as compared to a global average of 38), “Governance of Culture” (67, visibly above a global mark of 37) and “Heritage, Diversity and Creativity” (72, which also ranks above the global average of 50). In addition, Bogotá is also ahead of the global average in the areas of “Culture, Urban Planning and Public Space”, “Culture, Equality and Social Inclusion” and “Culture and Environment”.

The sole commitment where Bogotá scores below the global average is “Culture and Economy”, which provides a mark of 32/100 in Bogotá as compared to a global average of 38/100.

A detailed analysis of the information provided by Bogotá in its self-assessment exercise, in each of Culture 21 Actions’ commitments, is presented hereafter.



CULTURAL RIGHTS

As pointed out above, this is one of the areas in which Bogotá proves particularly strong, as shown by the fact that scores corresponding to an “advanced stage” are obtained in seven out of ten actions examined, with the remaining three actions being self-assessed as in a “developing stage”¹.

Tools contributing to Bogotá’s strength in the field of cultural rights include the many strategic and operational documents in the area of cultural policy, as well as the availability of several spaces for participation and debate on policy design and implementation, including the Local Participatory System in Culture, Arts and Heritage and the Local Culture Councils. In addition, initiatives such as the design and implementation of specific policies as regards vulnerable groups, through a rights- and liberties-based approach, may be seen as good practices, which could inspire other cities.

On the other hand, Bogotá has identified the need to make progress in areas such as the setting-up within strategic planning of minimum standards to ensure basic cultural services, the implementation of specific tools to address obstacles to access to culture, the integration of a gender perspective in public cultural policies and the development of an integral, government-wide vision towards vulnerable groups and other priority topics.

¹ Culture 21 Actions’ Self-Assessment Guide requires cities to provide a score between 1 (where an action has not been implemented or only initial steps have been taken) and 9 (where an action has been fully implemented and is well-developed) for each of 100 actions that make up Culture 21 Actions, and provides a description to enable cities’ self-assessment. In each action, a score between 1 and 3 amounts to an “emerging stage”; a score between 4 and 6 to a “developing stage”; and a score between 7 and 9 places cities in an “advanced stage”.




HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY

Bogotá also obtains high marks in this commitment, where only three of the actions reviewed place it in a “developing stage”, whereas an “advanced stage” applies to most of the items assessed.

Among the main institutions and measures which contribute to Bogotá’s strength in this area are the existence of a Secretariat for Culture, Leisure and Sports, which is in charge of the formulation of public cultural policies; the existence of a dedicated culture budget that is in line with international standards; the availability of local cultural facilities across the city; the existence of many events and activities which reflect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions; and the availability of mechanisms and bodies to support the development of the arts and protect cultural heritage, particularly tangible heritage.

On the other hand, further attention may be necessary as regards research and innovation in culture, the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity and the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

Local government representatives have identified the programme “El Parqueadero”, launched by the Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño (a public body), as a possible good practice in this area. This interdisciplinary space for experimentation, project development, documentation and networking in a wide range of contemporary artistic practices operates as a laboratory for training, production, documentation and access to artistic creativity.



CULTURE AND EDUCATION

The overall mark obtained by Bogotá in this area is, again, very high (75/100). However, the accomplishment of individual actions is uneven: whereas eight of ten actions under review are “advanced”, the remaining two are either “emerging” or “developing”.

More specifically, Bogotá gives itself a low score in the action “Education and training strategies place appropriate value on local cultural resources,” further specifying in its report that no training strategies adopting this approach exist. On the other hand, city representatives believe that Bogotá needs further progress as regards the action “Artistic education... is provided in local schools at all levels, and is accessible to people regardless of age and social, economic or cultural backgrounds”: whereas a network of venues known as Centros Locales de Artes para la Niñez y la Juventud (CLAN) exists and fulfils this role for children and young people, opportunities for other age groups and across all city neighbourhoods still require further attention.

In any case, Bogotá obtains remarkable scores in most actions in the field of culture and education. Among the activities that should be stressed in this area are the integration of cultural activities in public education centres through the “jornada única” and early childhood programmes, the joint reflection and work among different agents in the areas of education and culture, the provision of educational activities by cultural institutions that receive public support, the existence of mechanisms to enable access to creativity by citizens and the availability of public and private postgraduate courses on cultural management.



CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

As in the case of the analysis conducted by the Global Panel, the commitment regarding the relation between culture and the environment receives one of the lowest scores in the self-assessment exercise undertaken in Bogotá, although the mark obtained by this city (45/100) remains significantly above the global average (30/100).

Bogotá rates itself as being in a “developing stage” (that is, between 4 and 6 out of a maximum mark of 9) in nine of ten actions under review, and gives itself a mark of 3 (that is, an “emerging stage”) in one, namely “There are platforms that link public and private civil society organizations that work in the areas of culture and the environment”.

The “developing” nature of most actions results from the existence of some relevant measures which are however not systematically implemented or which should be widened to encompass other issues or groups. For instance, Bogotá has adopted environmental sustainability strategies and has included water as a priority in its Local Development Strategy “Bogotá Humana”; however, cultural factors need further integration in environmental strategies. As regards the main cultural policy documents, only the “Bases de Política Cultural” explicitly recognise the connection with environmental sustainability.

Among the relevant initiatives, the provision of grants to creative communities for the management of risks and adaptation to climate change in priority areas should be highlighted. In several other actions, the need to further the reflection and design of specific activities is identified. Therefore, this area may deserve particular attention by the local government in the coming years.



CULTURE AND ECONOMY

As pointed out above, and as already indicated in the internal report produced after the visit to Bogotá as a Pilot City of the Agenda 21 for culture in 2014, the relation between culture and the economy is identified as a weakness in the self-assessment exercise. The score obtained by Bogotá (32/100) places the city below the average provided by the Global Panel in this area (38/100).

Among the twelve actions under review, Bogotá finds itself in an “emerging stage” in six, a “developing stage” in five and an “advanced stage” in one, namely “Local business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, have specific cultural policies and programs”. In this respect, respondents suggest that the platform to support the cultural and creative industries designed by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce may be seen as a good practice and inspire other cities.

On the other hand, needs and weaknesses identified include the lack of development strategies for cultural businesses and for employability in the cultural sector, as well as the lack of measurement tools on the role of culture in local economic development; the difficulties found to effectively implement existing legislation on authors’ rights, labour rights and social security for cultural professionals (which mainly relate to national competences); and the scarcity of innovative and public-private financing mechanisms in culture. There are some schemes to support traditional local trades and to develop tourism in Bogotá, but an integrated perspective on the range of public policies and factors which are relevant in these areas is generally missing.

As a conclusion in this chapter, the local government has stated its interest in designing and implementing long-term public strategies, in collaboration with the private sector, academia and the national government, to strengthen business capacities among small and informal cultural agents and organisations, in areas including access to finance, technology use, market analysis and the export of cultural goods and services. Therefore, this may be another area in which Bogotá could further deepen its work in the coming years.



CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Bogotá has obtained an intermediate rating in the commitment regarding the relation between culture, equality and social inclusion (45/100). This is however ahead of the global average (35/100). Nevertheless, Bogotá's average in this area results from a rather diverse range of marks: the city has placed itself in an "emerging stage" in three out of twelve actions under analysis, in a "developing stage" in five and in an "advanced stage" in the remaining four actions.

The areas which, according to this analysis, require particular attention include the need to regularly analyse the relationship between personal welfare, health and cultural practices; the recognition of cultural factors in local conflict resolution strategies; and the establishment of programmes to promote inter-generational cooperation.

Actions in which Bogotá gives itself an intermediate mark include the inclusion of culture in local social strategies (some integral strategies exist, but collaboration between public authorities and civil society organisations and citizens should be strengthened); capacity-building of social service professionals as regards cultural factors (although some relevant activities in this area exist); the promotion of women's participation in cultural life; the involvement of cultural institutions receiving public support in programmes aimed at vulnerable groups and disadvantaged areas; and the promotion of cooperation among third sector organisations which bring together work in the areas of culture, equality and social inclusion.

Finally, Bogotá has obtained higher marks in areas including the identification of vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals and groups as regards their access to and participation in culture; the availability of a legal framework and the adoption of measures to foster access to culture for people with disabilities; the existence of a programme of "Youth Citizenship" which fosters cultural innovation among young people; and the existence of civil society organisations that carry out awareness-raising and affirmative campaigns and actions with regard to cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and anti-racism (particularly concerning Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities). City representatives have suggested that the "Youth Citizenship" programme may be seen as a good practice and inspire other cities.

Overall, this commitment includes some aspects which could require particular attention by the City of Bogotá, alongside other areas in which Bogotá's experience could provide inspiration to other cities.



CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

As in the previous section, Bogotá has obtained an intermediate rating with regard to the relation between culture, urban planning and public space (50/100), whilst being above the global average (44/100). Bogotá's average results from a diverse set of marks among the twelve actions that make up this commitment, among which actions in a "developing stage" prevail (seven out of twelve actions under review).

Local government officials have identified weaknesses particularly as regards the coordination between cultural policies and those in the area of urban transport and mobility, as well as with regard to the use of traditional techniques and cultural criteria in architectural guidelines for the renovation of existing buildings and the planning of new ones.

In many other areas, relevant measures exist but fail to have a structural or integral nature: e.g. measures to assess the cultural impact of urban planning policies have been adopted, but a methodology to regularly evaluate their cultural impact does not exist; there is a partial inventory of cultural heritage, but no mechanisms or strategies for its regular updating; and the notion of "cultural landscape" has been considered in some contexts, including projects by the Local Cultural Heritage Institute and the Museum of Bogotá, but this does not amount to a city-wide approach.

Aspects in which the city is particularly strong, according to the analysis conducted, include the use of public space as a resource for cultural interaction and participation (e.g. through the "Cultural Corridors" programme implemented in 12 neighbourhoods); the inclusion of culture in the City Centre Regeneration Plan; and the availability of a Masterplan on Cultural Facilities (PLAMEC).



CULTURE, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The rating obtained through Bogotá's self-assessment in this area places the city significantly ahead of the global average (52/100, as compared to 43/100). In general terms, Bogotá is in a "developing stage" in this area but shows a number of "advanced" actions as well.

Among the main strengths identified is the existence of a national and local legal framework to ensure transparent access to information, and measures towards e-government and petition rights; and the availability of public (e.g. the Observatorio de Culturas) and independent mechanisms to monitor, research and analyse cultural developments. Local government officials suggest that initiatives such as the transformation of Canal Capital into a public TV channel focused on the promotion of human rights and culture of peace, as well as citizenship development, could be seen as a good practice.

As noted above, in most actions included in this commitment positive steps have been taken but these do not amount to an advanced stage. For instance, legislation as regards fundamental freedoms (expression, opinion, information, etc.) exists but still needs to be effectively enforced for everyone; the relationship between grassroots cultural processes and social innovation is analysed but needs to be deepened and systematically integrated; and measures to allow cultural agents to participate in international cooperation networks are available occasionally but a comprehensive policy is still due to be designed.

The weakest element in this area concerns debates connecting culture, information and knowledge: although some academic events exist, a shared understanding on the value of culture as a common good and further consistency between existing discourses and actual practices are still missing.

Bogotá suggests that particular attention should be paid in the near future to the adaptation of budgetary allocations, so as to ensure their being in line with the strategic importance of information, communication and knowledge processes, as well as the coordination and strengthening of cultural measurement, monitoring and evaluation systems.



GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

Bogotá has obtained one of its highest ratings in this area (67/100), which places the city well beyond the global average (37/100). This is in line with Bogotá's work in the field of cultural rights and its transfer to cultural policy decision-making, implementation and evaluation mechanisms and procedures. The eleven actions included in this commitment are all rated as being in a "developing" or "advanced" stage. In all but two of the actions, Bogotá has obtained a mark equal to or above 6.

The main strengths identified in this area include the availability of documents which connect the Agenda 21 for culture with local cultural policies (e.g. the Decennial Culture Plan 2012-2021); citizen participation in cultural planning through the Local Participatory System in Culture, Arts and Heritage; and transparency and accountability of cultural institutions and organisations in receipt of public funding.

There are also some relevant measures, which could however be improved, as regards collaboration between national and local authorities, support for the strengthening of civil society organisations in the cultural field and the continuity of citizen involvement in planning processes.

Bogotá's experience in the field of the governance of culture could, again, deserve its consideration as a good practice and become part of knowledge-transfer activities and learning methodologies benefitting other interested cities.



CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this observation, the following conclusions can be presented:

- » Bogotá has significant experience in the design and implementation of cultural policies committed to sustainable development, which place it generally above the average of global assessments.
- » Particularly relevant and potentially transferable initiatives are identified in areas including cultural rights, the governance of culture, the relation between culture and education, the relation between culture, equality and social inclusion and the relation between culture, urban planning and public space.
- » Among the issues which could deserve particular attention in the near future and in which Bogotá could take advantage of examples from other cities are the relation between culture and the economy, as well as some aspects of the relation between culture, equality and social inclusion.



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