

FINAL REPORT CUENCA

EXECUTIVE REPORT

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culture 21

UCLG Committee

In line with its participation as a pilot city for Agenda 21 for culture since 2015, the city of Cuenca, Ecuador carried out a self-assessment exercise on its cultural and sustainable development policies. The Pilot City programme was carried out in Cuenca from 2015 to 2018, beginning with a first **self-assessment exercise in February 2016**. This was followed by the design and implementation of a **work programme** with various pilot measures, as well as a series of learning and exchange activities with other cities, citizen participation, and evaluations. These were outlined in the programme and took place throughout the initiative. The self-assessment exercise carried out in July 2018 marked the end of the pilot city process and was an opportunity to analyse the changes that were implemented since the first self-assessment in 2016.

The self-assessment activity was based on the **Culture 21 Actions** document approved by the United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Culture in March of 2015. It allows 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 global experts.

The self-assessment of Cuenca involved the participation of people from specific areas in the municipality, including representatives from civil society, organisations, groups, cultural centres, and citizens. This document was written by Antoine Guibert, an expert on Agenda 21 for culture, in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the UCLG Committee on Culture. It describes the work carried out during the process, 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 follow-up.

This document is a summary of the **complete report** which is only available in Spanish.

FINAL
REPORT



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 the nine categories of Culture 21: Actions. The city showed progress in every area compared to the 2016 data.

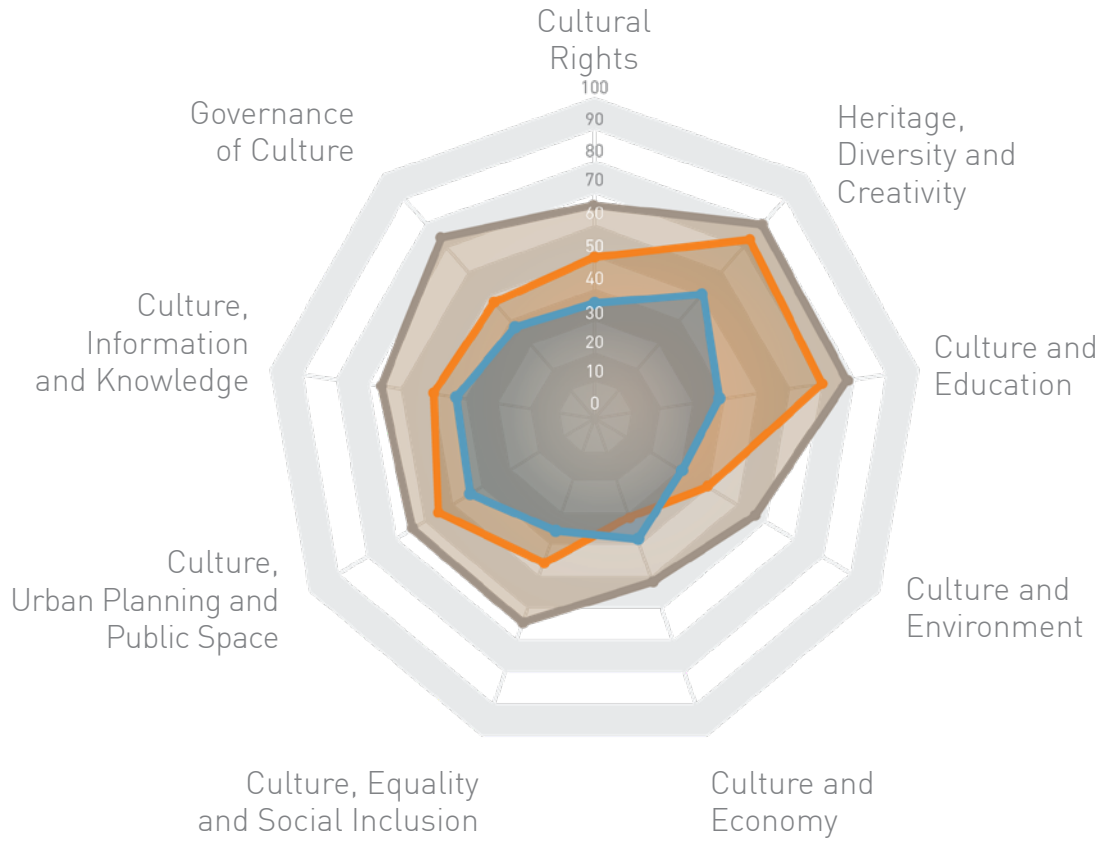
As figure 1 demonstrates, Cuenca is particularly noteworthy in the areas of “2. *Heritage, Diversity, and Creativity*” (with an average score of 80.20%, significantly higher than the worldwide average of 50%, and higher than the 74% obtained in 2016); “3. *Culture and Education*” (with an average score of 78%, significantly higher than the worldwide average of 38%, and above the 74% obtained in 2016); and “9. *Governance of Culture*” (with an average score of 74.50%, well above the worldwide average of 37%, and where the city showed its greatest progress compared to the 48.9% obtained in 2016 when this area was seen as one of the city’s weaknesses).

The city received intermediate scores in the areas of: “1. *Cultural Rights*” (with an average score of 66.25%, above the global average of 35%, and the city’s 2016 result of 50%); “8. *Culture, Information, and Knowledge*” (with an average of 66% compared to the worldwide 35% and the previous score of 50%); “6. *Culture, Equity, and Social Inclusion*” (with an average score of 64%, above the global mean of 35%, and the average 2016 grade of 46.90%, marking a significant improvement); and “7. *Heritage, Urban Planning, and Public Space*” (with an average score of 63.50%, above the worldwide average of 44%, and higher than the 56.25% obtained in 2016).

Despite receiving lower marks, Cuenca remained above the world average in the areas of “4. *Culture and Environment*” (with an average score of 56.25% above the global mean of 30% and its previous 40% in 2016); and “5. *Culture and Economy*” (with an average of 52%, higher than the worldwide 38%, which made it one of more significant improvements since 2016, when the city was below the global mean with 31.25%)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 an intermediate stage; and an evaluation between 7 and 9 established the town at a “well-developed stage”. The percentage figures accompanying each of the commitments from Culture 21 Actions are derived from scores between 1 and 9 issued to every action that has been analysed

Culture 21: Actions - Cuenca 2016 - 2018 and the 2015 Global Panel



Source : UCLG Committee on culture, on the basis of the results provided by the participants to the first and second workshop of urban actors from Cuenca and the average of the global panel composed by 34 experts.



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

Based on the [self-assessment from February 2016](#), Cuenca developed a [work programme](#) with various pilot measures during the Pilot City process. The activities carried out within the framework of this work plan are summarised below.

Cuenca developed pilot measure 1 in the area of “**Governance of Culture**” in order to: *Create a canton-wide cultural policy based on “Agenda 21 for culture” and “Culture 21 Actions” that involves the participation of civil society, as well as the public and private sectors.* This measure was implemented for projects focused on establishing a: 1. 2030 Canton Strategic Cultural Plan; and 2. Canton System for Culture and Heritage. The following were some noteworthy initiatives in this area:

- A citizen participation process for creating the 2030 Canton Strategic Cultural Plan
- Developing cultural plans for outlying neighbourhoods in conjunction with the 2030 Plan.
- Assessing the functions of the Department of Culture and the Department of Historical and Heritage Sites with respect to cultural heritage.
- Participative creation of an ordinance that would establish the Canton System for Culture and Heritage.
- Declaration of June 2017 to June 2018 as the Year of Culture, making culture an institutional priority.
- Adopting a Bill of Cultural Rights and Commitments in Cuenca in 2018.

Cuenca developed pilot measure 2 in the area of “**Culture and Economy**” to: *Strengthen the role of cultural projects as economic activities that generate entrepreneurship, employment, and both financial and social resources in order to regions’ appeal, spur sustainable development, and promote responsible tourism.* This measure was implemented for projects focused on: 1. Retracing Pre-Columbian Routes and Sacred Geography in Cumbe and other rural communities; and 2. Establishing a Programme for Developing Creative and Cultural Economies. The following were some noteworthy initiatives in this area:

- Diagnosing the current status of natural, tangible, and intangible heritage in Cumbe.
- Tours in the area that is home to part of the Great Inca Road. (Qhapaq Ñan)
- Workshops and education for community residents for their economic development through culture.
- Development of tours in rural communities, ancestral mountain regions, and



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

urban spaces in Cuenca.

- Education and training for the cultural sector on financial mechanisms for cultural projects, copyright, and innovation, among others.
- Creating a directory for the canton's cultural goods and services, business conferences, and fairs in order to promote creative industries.
- Survey of the Satellite Culture Account of Cuenca that highlights investments in culture and the impact on the local economy.

In the area of “**Culture, Urban Planning, and Public Space**”, the city of Cuenca developed pilot measure 3: *Incorporating and promoting the role of culture in urban planning and recognising the importance of public space for cultural interaction and participation*. This pilot measure was implemented around projects focused on: 1. Creating Special Zones for Arts and Culture; 2. Establishing cultural indicators for the Cuenca Canton; and 3. Creating a Cultural Registry and Map of the Cuenca Canton. Within this pilot measure, the following activities stand out in particular:

- The delimitation and regulation of an open “special zone” for the use of artists and other cultural actors, following an assessment of the use of public space for arts and culture.
- An open call for artist residencies in the public spaces of rural communities, and artistic interventions in public spaces. The implementation of programmes for arts and culture activities in public spaces, including the Travelling Art and Native Guest initiatives.
- Participatory processes for developing cultural indicators.
- Workshops on the participatory creation of a cultural registry and map of the canton, incorporating information from the Canton Land Management and Development Plan (PDOT) and related tools.
- Implementation of a cultural approach into Cuenca's Urban Plan through cultural regions, art districts, and sacred geographical spaces.
- Survey of the Cultural Registry and Map of Cuenca.

In the area of “**Culture, Equality, and Social inclusion**”, the city developed pilot measure 4: *Culture and heritage initiatives in neighbourhoods and communities throughout the canton with a higher vulnerability index*. This pilot measure was implemented through a Neighbourhood Recovery Programme in the boroughs of El Vecino, Narancay, Tablón



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

de Miraflores, and Guzho. Within this pilot measure, the following activities stand out in particular:

- Outreach geared towards residents and leaders of each participating community and neighbourhood in order to diagnose their current realities.
- Developing neighbourhood cultural plans through citizen contribution (Mary Coryle House, Urban Art Gallery, Sombrero House Economuseum, open houses – built heritage).
- Monitoring and implementation of neighbourhood cultural plans with a series of activities, including: artist residencies; establishing cultural facilities; urban art through participatory mural painting; the Water Park in Tablón de Miraflores; historical gatherings; non-formal workshops to reinforce ancestral knowledge such as the publication of Rural Community Memories or the Sariri Huarie programme; exhibitions; e-learning programmes; traditional celebrations; and festivals, etc.
- Arts interventions in outlying and vulnerable neighbourhoods of Cuenca to promote social cohesion and demonstrate the resilience of its residents.

Finally, new cultural facilities were set up as part of all the pilot measures: the Performing Arts Centre, the House of the Artist, the House of Music, and the Canton Historical Archive.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

» It must be stressed that since 2016 the city of Cuenca has made significant efforts towards improvement. Participants in the workshop unanimously recognised the importance and quality of the work undertaken with respect to culture, including implementing various programmes and actions within the work plan, the high quality of facilities used, and the general dynamics of current cultural development. In fact, since 2016 the city has shown a lot of progress in all the evaluated sectors.

» The city has shown a major improvement in the field of the Governance of Culture. The 2030 Canton Strategic Culture Plan helps establish a vision for the future. It also lays out standards and guidelines that structure and direct both short- and long-term actions related to culture. This is very positive and addresses the shortcomings in this area identified in 2016. Of particular note is the participatory process for developing the 2030 Canton Strategic Culture Plan and the Ordinance for the Canton Culture System, which are undoubtedly exemplary practices. Included in this are all culture-related spaces for democracy and participation that are open to civil society. The Ministry of Culture has established a better relationship with civil society while also re-establishing a certain level of trust, which is a vital basic condition for fostering a dynamic of co-construction of public policies. The Ordinance for the Canton Culture System proposes the creation of a canton board, an Observatory on Culture, and an advisory committee to improve civil society participation, which will help establish mechanisms for stable, ongoing participation and dialogue. It is essential to continue reinforcing this institutional structuring, since it is still in its initial stages. It also seems necessary to continue reinforcing internal collaboration within the municipality as well as with other institutions. If this has led to significant advances since the beginning of the process, it does not appear to be reflected in specific collaboration strategies. Therefore, structuring could be aided by establishing one or several cross-cutting, interinstitutional, and multi-actor strategies that are broad and structured. These should bring all regional stakeholders together in a horizontal way to outline shared and coordinated actions across all areas of cultural policy. This may include, for example, culture and education, culture and social inclusion, or culture, urban planning, and the environment. The canton culture board could offer space to define any common strategies. Civil society could be a crucial interlocutor, and be involved with these intervention strategies as a full-fledged actor. As such, it is necessary to continue empowering cultural actors and strengthening their capacities for action, as well as trying to establish a relationship of collaboration and co-construction.



The work carried out in the field of culture and economy was particularly noteworthy and showed significant progress. The Programme for the Development of Creative and Cultural Economies seems to have yielded very positive results and addresses a crucial need in the cultural sector, particularly with respect to education and training. Pilot measures in this area have proven their significance, and should to be extended, reinforced, and established on an ongoing basis. Despite such advances, this area received the lowest score in the city and was one of its weaknesses. Participants recommended that Cuenca continue to monitor this sector, particularly because of the fact that the cultural economy can be a key resource in overall development for people and communities, and a crucial resource in the fight against poverty. The city was advised to continue developing the cultural economy by focusing on community and inclusiveness with the people, groups, or communities that need it most. It was also suggested that Cuenca take a comprehensive approach and establish links between strategies on economic development, combating poverty, and the overall development of neighbourhoods and communities. However, there was a marked need to improve administrative procedures, particularly with respect to compensation for artists and culture professionals. Some cities have decided to create public culture companies or corporations to reduce bureaucracy, facilitate administrative procedures, and subsequently benefit from a certain level of freedom of action. Cuenca must find its own way, but there is an urgent need to simplify and improve the institutional action. With respect to tourism, the actions taken to revitalise Sacred Pre-Hispanic Routes and Geographic Places has been very positive. While these projects need increased cooperation with the communities involved, and more time to obtain comprehensive results, the methodology used by the municipality seems appropriate. Focusing these actions on community tourism helps such projects benefit local communities, and remain committed to respecting their values. As highlighted in 2016, and emphasised again here, Cuenca does not seem to have undertaken actions on the gentrification of certain areas, along with the need to implement a model for tourism and attractiveness of a balanced city. It appears the city must not have been fully aware of the importance of the subsequent risks. Particular attention must be drawn to this area because some pilot measures aim to revitalise heritage areas that may be at high risk for gentrification.



In the sphere of “Culture, Equality, and Social Inclusion”, the Neighbourhood Rejuvenation Programme seems to have yielded very good results, and has been highly praised, especially the Native Guest project. Participants suggested extending this programme to all of the city’s neighbourhoods, as well as to rural communities. It is recommended that the city focus on the specific needs of each neighbourhood or community, with customised cultural plans that outline both the overall development objectives for each community, as well as their cultural nuances and unique goals. Additionally, it is necessary to develop policies focused on key issues or specified groups, such as people with disabilities, victims of

violence, or in the field of interculturality. By doing so, it is possible to achieve comprehensive, cross-cutting interventions.

» Of particular note related to “Culture, Urban Planning, and Public Space”, is the important work carried out on the use of public space, which was a strong point of tension with the city’s cultural groups. The current model for establishing open zones for the arts, and the organisation of activities in public spaces, seems to have had positive results. It was recommended that the city begin adopting strategies and actions that consider other spheres within the region, especially landscape, urban design, and architecture. These areas require urgent measures in order to encourage friendly living spaces that reflect the goals and values of citizens. The cultural registry should provide important information on undertaking comprehensive actions for cultural regulation in the territory.

» Cuenca obtained one of its lowest scores in the area of “Culture and Environment”, which requires special attention. Exemplary practices have been developed in Cuenca, with the Green Belt, sacred geographical regions, and Andean gastronomy, clearly demonstrating that this area has significant potential and deserves to be developed further going forward. Initiatives undertaken in this sphere must be linked to other work areas, such as interculturality, the preservation of ancestral knowledge, and Andean world views.

Ultimately, the Cuenca experience demonstrates that even in a short time culture can generate social and territorial transformation. It can also spark significant local changes when coherent, cross-cutting strategies are developed, institutional action is reinforced, and collaboration exists with other regional and civil society stakeholders. It is also worth noting that the city’s institutional commitment has helped make culture into a local priority. Cuenca is trailblazing new paths in the area of cultural policy and sustainable development. These experiences set benchmarks that can inspire other cities in South America and around the world.

ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS TO THE PROCESS

SECOND WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS (2018)

NAME	SURNAME
CULTURAL RIGHTS & CULTURE, EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION	
Fausto Ordóñez	CIDAP
Leticia Quintero	C.P.M.A - CJA
Carolina Martínez	Cuenca GAD
Fernanda Peñaloza	Cuenca GAD
Cristina Muñoz	Cuenca GAD
Belén Maldonado	
Karina Chumbi	University of Cuenca
Paúl Andrade Ríos	Ecuador Accessible Tourism Network
Gabriela Fernández	Ecuador Accessible Tourism Network
Antoine Guibert	UCLG Expert
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Sonia Astudillo	Directorate for Culture
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Luz Vilela	University of Azuay
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Carme Malo Ponce	CIDAP
Juan Contreras	
Gloria Guamán	Independent
María José Escandón	University of Cuenca
Johanna Muñoz Falcní	La Corporación/ Design
Esteban Torres Díaz	Faculty of Arts
Wendy Aguilar	Directorate for Culture
Tania Navarrete	Colectivo Central Dogma
Lucía Pachar	Citizens Observatory
Beatriz Deleg	UTPL
Marcia León	Pumapungo Museum
Gabriela Vázquez	Directorate for Culture

HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY & CULTURE AND ECONOMY

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Joaquín Tello Aguirre	Directorate for Culture
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Joaquín Tello	Directorate for Culture
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