



# culture 21

Agenda 21 for culture

Education, culture and  
citizenship

**LUCINA JIMÉNEZ**

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The Committee on culture of the world association of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the platform of cities, organizations and networks that foster the relation between local cultural policies and sustainable development. It uses the Agenda 21 for culture as its founding document. It promotes the exchange of experiences and improves mutual learning. It conveys the messages of cities and local governments on global cultural issues. The Committee on culture is chaired by Lille-Métropole, co-chaired by Buenos Aires, Montréal and México and vice-chaired by Angers, Barcelona and Milano.

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## Education, culture and citizenship

### LUCINA JIMÉNEZ

*PhD in Anthropological Sciences. Consultant in cultural policies, education and culture in Latin American, European and African cities. Member of the UNESCO Pool of Experts for strengthening the Governance of Culture in Developing Countries, the OEI Latin American Group of Specialists in Artistic Education, Culture and Citizenship, and the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policies and International Cooperation at Girona University. She directed the National Arts Centre in Mexico. She coordinated the Portfolio of Education Initiatives in the Arts and Media for Democratic Citizenship of the OEA. She is the director of the Consorcio Internacional Arte y Escuela A.C. and author of books and essays.*

One of the contemporary challenges for the sustainable present and future of cities is the creation of new ways of coexistence in diversity and citizen co-responsibility in the management of public and private life. It is not an overstatement to say that the possibility of seeing a promising future depends on the ability of our cities to create healthy environments for learning, coexistence and a culture of peace, and for social participation in areas of common interest.

In this twenty-first century, cities experience new realities which challenge us to create innovative and inclusive settings with public policies for local management of education and culture, oriented toward the search for sustainable development. We are the main characters and witnesses of new tensions and contradictions in coexistence, the rise of many forms of intolerance, social violence, racism, and even xenophobia in several communities, which consequently result in problems with integration, inclusion of native peoples, ethnic minorities and migrant populations in general, as well as the possible weakening of the shared use of public space, creation of school environments subject to different tensions or critical situations inside or between neighborhoods or colonies.




### A promising future for the cities depends on our ability to create healthy environments for learning, coexistence, participation and a culture of peace

The new cultural connections that the inhabitants of cities experience in an interdependent world, highly influenced by migration, technology and social networks, express a major transformation in all the orders of life. To address these situations it is necessary to create new policies which promote exercising cultural rights and a renewed awareness of participation in public issues among citizens.

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Education and culture in environments of diversities, ambiguity and uncertainty, of short-lived aesthetic preferences or multimedia cultural practices, require development of new citizen capabilities where education acquires a firm basis and cultural orientation, and where culture is not only a promoter of connections between producers and consumers of cultural goods and services, but of new ethical values and participation in cultural life.

Many cities already have significant advances, achieved under the direction of the Educating Cities or Cities of Knowledge programs. They have developed democratic practices of access to cultural goods and services and also the creation of spaces or infrastructures which promote creativity among different communities. There has also been progress in the training of cultural managers who are aware of the importance of sustainability of the processes in which they are involved. However, many initiatives have not gone beyond considering the citizen part of a public that is assiduous or sensitive to the cultural offer, but that is still perceived as a minority, as confirmed by the majority of cultural consumption studies that many local governments have conducted.



## **Culture cannot only promote connections between producers and consumers. Culture promotes new ethical values and participation in urban life**

Nowadays we must go beyond this in order to obtain greater citizen participation in these infrastructures. This is where the promotion of policies, programs and processes which link education and culture, in regards to citizenship, makes sense for Agenda 21 for culture in the years to come.

Democratic citizenship training is part of a social need of our cities for the creation of environments for shared, responsible learning, to promote greater involvement of citizens in cultural life, but also to stimulate new styles, ways of thinking, and forms of social participation in common issues of urban coexistence, management of school environments, environmental awareness and care for natural resources, as well as management of cultural heritage resources which may be, besides a wealth of symbolism, a source of wellbeing subject to being managed with a viable future perspective, that is, with intense social participation, through the promotion of innovation, a perspective of caring for the environment and without compromising the cultural resources of a growing urban population.

Schools and other environments reflect the different ways of understanding the reading and writing of the world, the weight of audiovisual cultures, the new forms of learning and creating knowledge from science, art and technology, besides the training which is proposed by basic education. The crisis which is experienced by schools in many cities where teenagers and youth understand the world through cultures which are radically different from those of their teachers and parents is not unjustified.

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Incorporating a cultural dimension in education in cities is essential. Educational systems with millions of boys, girls, teenagers and young people face serious challenges, from decentralization and formulation of contents which respond to the cultural characteristics of each region, to the need for encouraging linguistic policies of diversity, for considering the children's and youth's cultures which come together in the classrooms, encouraging the sense of belonging and building an identity open to the world, to obtain permanence and school success.

Expanding the possibilities of citizens to draw near and participate in education and arts, in audiovisual and digital culture and in issues of social appropriation of cultural and natural heritage, will be key for a culture open to change, capable of promoting participation in contemporary culture and also of breaking down barriers that create new forms of cultural exclusion today. In particular, education in arts today is a key entry point for exercising cultural rights, especially when this has an educational and promotional aspect of awareness and respect of cultural and aesthetic diversity of children, youth and adults. However, this must be accompanied by a strong dose of intercultural education for peace.

## **Urban policies need to go beyond infrastructures. The promotion of policies, programmes and processes which link education and culture is essential**

Placing special attention on sensitive training and the emotions of the current and new generations of boys, girls, youth and adults, through arts and intercultural education, is a task which holds significant achievements for us in the affirmation of identities, the construction of new social spaces of creativity and inclusion, not only for those who wish to be artists, but also for all the population, including those with different disabilities. Art in regard to other cross-cutting issues of development, without distorting its aesthetic and artistic sense, opens up a field of opportunities which cities should make the most of.

The new fields of promotion of Agenda 21 for culture open the door to policies, programs and projects which generate experience and learning to accept and even to encourage different expressions of diversities, through giving cultural significance to educational processes or to the management of public spaces and services.

Emphasizing the link of culture and education programs for citizenship training can contribute to opening up spaces to encourage the constant or intermittent presence of youth and ethnic movements which are fruit of aesthetic diversity, to positively unleash intergenerational conflicts between those who maintain cultural matrices which are more attached to values of the twentieth century or those who have traveled naturally toward the paradigms of the Internet era and their awareness of cultural practices and new ways of understanding encounters between people through technology. It can also create new ways of connecting from the perspective of gender and for the purpose of configuring new identities which are sometimes in conflict.

This creates a need to incorporate the cultural dimension into the educational processes, whether inside or outside of schools, as well as promoting strategies of social and cultural inclusion. This involves a change in the ways of understanding cultural policies at the local level, in order to place a new cultural dimension at the center of many of the programs for development, social prevention and education, so that the cultural and educational effect of the actions extends in a direction of viable development.

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Governability and the changes required by social participation in terms of co-responsibility between civil society and local governments entail a new awareness that goes beyond civil voting rights, but rather as citizenship awareness based on the affirmation of a new sense of belonging and commitment to communities, cities, public space and peace, through self-responsibility, the awareness that all cities can be better if the population assumes its rights and duties.

## All cities can be better if the population assumes its rights and duties

The link between education and culture in this sense constitutes one of the topics of Agenda 21 for culture, which needs to be promoted as a basis for local development, considering education in a broad sense rather than just schooling, and also considering culture from a viewpoint which involves extending the connections of meanings and forms of association between people and with the environment.

These new fields may include, among other proposals from the cities in dialogue themselves: a) promotion of the cultural dimension of basic education, b) education in arts in school and in community life, c) education in heritage for viable development, d) education in the use of digital tools, e) educational use of public space, f) educational use of media, g) formation of social capital for the management of culture and education in community settings, h) promotion of culture and education in areas of social development, violence prevention, care for the environment and other cross-cutting issues.

Encouraging this and other types of programs which promote education, culture and citizenship training includes the possibility of facing the current challenges of governability experienced by cities in a more creative way, as they create favorable environments for establishing new settings for collaboration between society and government at the local level. Promoting the sense of belonging and identity of different social groups with their natural, school, urban, etc. environments may be essential to promoting the recovery of coexistence, promoting different uses for certain infrastructures or promoting the collective recovery of certain neighborhoods or public spaces.

## The link between education and culture (both, in a broad sense) constitutes one of the key topics to promote a truly sustainable local development

Several cities have progressed in this direction and their experience may be recovered, systematized and shared. In several cities, the local governments have promoted education and culture programs for citizenship training, adding to the efforts of civil society organizations which have become involved in an effective way in programs or projects with this orientation. The identification of good practices in this regard may be essential to enriching local processes, but also to promoting cooperation and dialogue between cities.

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Attaining the promotion of this focus in Agenda 21 for culture also requires the creation of new frameworks of governance at a local level. If culture came almost exclusively from ministries or departments of culture before, it is now possible for leadership to come from other sectors with which there must be intercultural dialogue to search for institutional regulation which promotes collaboration, co-production and co-financing of programs.

### **New frameworks of governance at a local level are needed. If culture came almost exclusively from ministries or departments of culture before, it is now possible for leadership to come from civil society**

Thus, we can find cities interested in creating processes of education and culture linked to the recovery of the environment, healthy coexistence, fighting crime and many other fields of development. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the importance of creating shared conceptual regulations on which the creation of common protocols is based, in which culture and education build citizenship, but in which the cultural dimension maintains its sense of innovation and capability of educating for life.

Likewise, in the areas where education for heritage or education in arts are called to promote new settings of coexistence and intercultural dialogue, it will be necessary for local governments to learn about international experiences that have been set up in cities in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Canada and even South Africa, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and other countries.

There is no doubt that although Agenda 21 for culture operates in settings with a higher complexity, the progress of different cities, civil society and different social groups also facilitates advancing in a significant way toward this focus. New technological resources allow us to socialize, teach and share in a much more effective way than in the past.

In the context of globalization, these new forms of action of local governments, of citizens, of civil society organizations and of different social groups, among which the new role of artists, educators, managers and teachers is highlighted, set us face to face with the challenge of strengthening citizen competencies of participation, intercultural dialogue skills, and a new perspective of exercising cultural rights in a view of recognition of cultural diversity and social inclusion.

### **We have the challenge of strengthening citizen competences of participation, intercultural dialogue skills, and a new perspective of exercising cultural rights**

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## Proposals

- 1.** Promote the creation of new capabilities in areas of education, culture and social development of local governments to identify and promote inclusive training programs in education and culture, in fields of territorial proximity.
- 2.** Promote new education and culture programs in infrastructures that are being underused or where it is possible to turn the direction of the cultural offer in an educational direction.
- 3.** Promote the participation of boys, girls, teenagers and youth in creativity and intercultural learning programs which have an educational direction and not only an approach to the artistic and cultural offer as recipients.
- 4.** Identify and promote good practices which are conducted locally, nationally and internationally for education, culture and democratic citizenship training.
- 5.** Promote the development of cultural projects and programs with an educational and training direction in areas where healthy coexistence and intercultural dialogue require stimulation.
- 6.** Promote programs of education in arts for coexistence and citizenship training at a territorial level, especially in public schools for boys, girls, teenagers and youth, community and civic centers, spaces dedicated to social development, among others.
- 7.** Develop new classroom and distance training in intercultural skills, coexistence in diversity and education for peace with managers, teachers, artists and technicians, programmers and directors of local and municipal infrastructures.
- 8.** Promote the use of public space through cultural environments and actions and education in arts to favor processes of social inclusion, healthy coexistence and intercultural or intergenerational encounters.
- 9.** Promote the creation of new forms of artistic creation, production and interaction that involve urban communities, youth, schools and other types of spaces, in order to generate new forms of dialogue between the artistic offer and the population.
- 10.** Develop programs of international cooperation and co-production, as well as collaborative networks by promoting the mobility of managers, teachers, artists and learning communities in this type of education and culture projects at the local level.





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