



UCLG CONGRESS
WORLD SUMMIT OF LOCAL
AND REGIONAL LEADERS



MANIFESTO

The Future of Culture

#CitiesAreListening

UCLG Manifestos

MANIFESTO ON THE FUTURE OF CULTURE

CULTURAL POLICIES TO PLAY A KEY ROLE, LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

There is no path to peace. Peace is the path
Mahatma Gandhi

Culture has a vital role in our lives. This fact has become evident in the last decades and its articulation in global narratives relating culture and development has improved. Today, connections between culture and sustainable development are increasingly included in discourses and policies that will have to lead humanity during the next decades.

A good example can be found in the Statement of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments on the occasion of the recent Sustainable Development Goals Summit (New York, 24-25 September 2019), which we are pleased to reproduce because it is very clear: “We commit to promote culture as the fourth pillar of development and as a core component of local identity, and its role as a strand of global solidarity, and as a vector for peace and human rights. We further commit to foster locally relevant cultural policies and programmes on memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge which are key for local sustainable development.”

Today, in Durban, we would like to develop this statement further.

The crises we all suffer as one humanity are severe and difficult to overcome. Indeed, humanity suffers a climate crisis, and it is also the word “crisis” that better describes the severe social inequalities and breakdowns, the unbalanced economic realities and corruption or the forced migrations and expulsions... Besides, we notice the existence of discourses that threaten diversity, aim at dividing people and imposing identities, and neglect the rights of women, youth, indigenous peoples, minorities and vulnerable communities. We are aware that a hegemonic, global and commodified culture threatens cultural diversity, and that a relativism that violates fundamental human rights to maintain cultural characteristics by imposing intolerance, monolithic thinking, political or religious totalitarianism also exists. Yes, humanity also suffers a cultural crisis. In this context, we believe that culture should never serve as an instrument for ideological

indoctrination or political control, but should be the quintessential space for freedom, critical thinking, and even dissent.

We must meet, share, dialogue and create together the future we want.

We are convinced that culture is an unequivocal part of the solution to humanity's present day challenges.

We must move, and we must move together. In order to move, we need policies, yes, we need cultural policies to provide our societies with the tools for dialogue, coexistence and freedoms. This requires active participation of communities in public debates, and an open governance of culture, at local, national and international levels. This also requires respect for cultural diversity, as a source of knowledge, as a vital element of citizenship and as a component for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Cultural policies also include how we can imagine the future together, that is, promoting human creativity as an aspect of human experience and a source of progress and innovation. We need to reconnect culture and education to support the acquisition of cultural skills and knowledge. We all need to live in meaningful places, and thus the potential of cultural policies to promote a sense of place, identity and belonging that leaves no place behind is essential; therefore, the integration of heritage and culture in urban planning, needs to include appropriate cultural impact assessment methods.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the New Urban Agenda are global frames that we need to explore further. We invite all actors related to culture to become more active in national and local plans to implement the Agenda 2030 and the SDG, because the success of this global commitment also stands on the cultural dimension of sustainable development being explicit and operational. Therefore, we invite cultural sectors, institutions and organisations to strengthen their own efforts to the response to our common challenges as one humanity, and be bolder and more explicit in addressing human rights, gender equality, inequalities and climate change.

At the same time, we call global leaders to be bold and embrace a real global conversation on culture in sustainable development, which should unfold with truly ambitious programmes of international cultural cooperation. People needs to participate in cultural life. No progress can be achieved unless all places around the world are recognized with their dignity and their capacity to interact with others on an equal

basis, in a fair cultural globalization. Humanity will not progress, and crises will not be overcome unless cultural policies at a local, national and global scale become explicit and operational.

We are convinced that cultural development and the full exercise of cultural rights by peoples, communities, and individuals are fundamental acts of peace. While these may be fragile and subtle, they are also the most critical elements for human progress.

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