



11 July 2016

POSITION DOCUMENT ON “SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE”. COMMENTS TO THE ZERO-DRAFT OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

BACKGROUND

In October 2016, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development ([Habitat III](#)), to be held in Quito, will adopt the [New Urban Agenda](#), a document which is expected to provide guidance on the development of urban policies around the world for the next 20 years. The process of discussion and consultation leading to Habitat III is now coming to an end, with a ‘zero draft’ of the New Urban Agenda released on 6 May 2016 and [a revised version published on 18 June 2016](#).

The Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments ([UCLG](#)) has drafted this Position Document on behalf of the signatories below, which have later contributed to and enriched it. The Committee on Culture of UCLG works in this area since 2004, when the [Agenda 21 for culture](#) was adopted.

In 2013-2015 the [#culture2015goal campaign](#) promoted the integration of cultural aspects in the UN’s [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), under the motto “The Future We Want Includes Culture”. The resulting 2030 Agenda included some references to culture, including: the need for education to foster an appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (target 4.7); the encouragement of creativity and innovation in development-oriented policies (target 8.3), the promotion of sustainable tourism, including through culture and local products (targets 8.9 and 12.b); the strengthening of efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage (target 11.4); the need to strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets (target 16.4); and the guarantee of public access to information (target 16.10).

In its final document [“Culture in the SDG Outcome Document: Progress Made but Important Steps Remain Ahead”](#), the leaders of this campaign stated that “a global initiative such as this will continue to be necessary, in order to advocate for the inclusion of culture in development frameworks and strategies” and called “for the inclusion of truly operational references to culture in the major international conferences where the implications of the SDG framework will be discussed, including (...) the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III, Quito, October 2016).”

The signatories of this paper have closely followed the development of the New Urban Agenda and would like to comment on its revised ‘zero draft’.

General observations and achievements

1. We welcome the integration of several cultural aspects into the ‘zero draft’, which demonstrates a sound understanding of the ways in which culture is a core element in sustainable cities. The acknowledgement that urbanisation in the 21st century faces ‘economic, social, environmental and cultural challenges and opportunities’ (paragraph 12) recognises **the fundamental cultural dimension of sustainable urban development**.
2. This builds on the **effective inclusion of culture throughout the consultation process** leading to the New Urban Agenda – including the elaboration of an ‘[issue paper](#)’ on [Urban Culture and Heritage](#) in May 2015 and the establishment of a [Policy Unit on the Socio-Cultural Urban Framework](#) of the New Urban Agenda in late 2015, integrated by 20 experts in the field, who elaborated a [Policy Paper on Socio-Cultural Urban Frameworks](#), as well as the emphatic recognition of the role of culture in urban processes in the “[Hangzhou Outcomes](#)” emerging from UNESCO’s Conference on Culture for Sustainable Cities in Hangzhou in December 2015, and in the forthcoming UNESCO Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development. These steps enrich both the process and the results of the New Urban Agenda and **should become a model to follow** in the future.
3. Among the most remarkable references to the cultural dimension of sustainable urban development are the **commitments** to:
 - ▶ ‘[promoting] culture and respect for diversity as key elements in the humanization of our cities’ (para 36);
 - ▶ ‘[leveraging] natural and cultural heritage in cities through integrated urban policies and adequate investments’ as well as promoting cultural infrastructures and sites, traditional knowledge and the arts and highlighting their contribution to social participation and the exercise of citizenship (para 47);
 - ▶ ‘[making] urban culture a priority component of urban plans and strategies through the adoption of planning instruments...’ (para 105); and
 - ▶ ‘leveraging cultural heritage for sustainable urban development, and [recognizing] its role in stimulating participation and responsibility...’ (para 106).
4. **Several other aspects are worth noting**, including
 - ▶ the importance of modern infrastructure and cultural heritage for inclusive and sustainable urban economies (para 21);
 - ▶ the need for universal access to adequate and quality public services and infrastructures, including cultural facilities (para 30);
 - ▶ the contribution of the cultural and creative industries to the creation of qualified jobs (para 33);
 - ▶ the significant cultural contribution to urban life made by refugees, displaced persons and migrants (para 35);
 - ▶ the need for equitable and affordable access to basic physical and social infrastructure for all, including culture (para 45);
 - ▶ the importance of embracing diversity, strengthening intercultural understanding and promoting peaceful coexistence in diverse societies (para 46);
 - ▶ the need for national housing policies that should encompass participatory planning and be based on principles of cultural adequacy (para 76);
 - ▶ the preservation of cultural heritage in the context of planned urban extensions and regeneration (para 82);
 - ▶ the appreciation of diversity in urban planning strategies and housing (para 84); and

- ▶ the attention to be paid to vulnerability, cultural factors and the stigmatization of certain-groups when developing public security policies (para 87).

ASPECTS THAT DESERVE FURTHER ATTENTION AND IMPROVEMENT

5. Whereas, as noted above, culture is listed as one of the key dimensions in which challenges and opportunities for urban areas exist, and several references to culture are integrated throughout the document, we believe that a **more explicit recognition of culture as a fundamental pillar or dimension of sustainable development would be necessary**. This could take the form of a specific section in the New Urban Agenda (possibly by grouping together several of the culture-related items now listed under ‘Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Poverty Eradication’ and in other sections), in addition to the multiple connections identified with other themes of the document.
6. Similarly, when the importance of cultural aspects of sustainable urban development is introduced, **cultural rights should be recognized as a fundamental principle** inspiring the framework of policies and measures that cities and local governments can adopt in the field of culture.
7. While welcoming references to the **Right to the City** (para 7), this should be pursued in a more far-reaching manner in the action, operational part of the New Urban Agenda.
8. We believe that the **connections between the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, including Goal 11 of the SDGs, **should be more explicitly made**, while acknowledging that sustainable urban development very often needs to go beyond the commitments established in the 2030 Agenda.
9. We would like to **suggest that the following aspects be taken into consideration or reinforced** in the final version of the New Urban Agenda:
 - ▶ When addressing culture, the ‘zero draft’ hardly addresses the **value of creativity, as a fundamental component of human expression**. More attention to the availability of facilities and programmes for individual and collective creativity, including arts education centres, creative hubs and participatory arts programmes, would be welcome. As elsewhere in the New Urban Agenda, references to creativity should not focus primarily on its potential contribution to economic development, but rather on its understanding as an essential aspect of human dignity and expression, as well as its relevance for social cohesion.
 - ▶ While the emphasis placed on the availability of accessible and affordable cultural services and facilities is welcome, it would improve the document to **make more explicit a definition of ‘basic urban services’ in the cultural field** – including some that are already listed elsewhere in the ‘zero draft’ (e.g. performing arts, heritage) and adding others (libraries, visual arts, arts education or the local media).
 - ▶ The focus on services and facilities should ideally go hand-in-hand with a **commitment to fostering active participation in cultural life for everyone**, including through the analysis of existing obstacles and the adoption of policies and programmes promoting active citizen participation in cultural life.
 - ▶ The **connections and interlinkages between nature and culture**, including natural and cultural heritage, should be made more explicit.
 - ▶ We believe that the ‘zero draft’ does not sufficiently acknowledge the **role of cities and human settlements as educating, learning spaces, as places of co-creation where knowledge is generated and exchanged**. In this respect, the New Urban Agenda should recognize the importance of education, lifelong learning and knowledge and particularly actively integrate cultural aspects in educational policies – including through the promotion of cultural diversity

and intercultural dialogue, the availability of and access to formal and informal arts education, the inclusion of cultural heritage and memory in educational programmes, the recognition of culture as a source of knowledge, the establishment of partnerships between cultural and educational centres, as well as partnerships with other cities in this area.

- Elsewhere, some existing elements could be strengthened: e.g. when suggesting that urban planning and regeneration should take into account culture and heritage (para 82 and others), **the need for mechanisms of ‘cultural impact assessment’** could be mentioned. Likewise, in para. 105, the current text could be amended as follows: ‘We will make the safeguarding of urban culture and heritage a priority component of urban plans and strategies...’. References to the creation of qualified jobs through cultural and creative industries and tourism (para 33) could further refer to ‘sustainable tourism that promotes local culture and products’, in line with the text of target 8.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- In a few instances, the New Urban Agenda could **include more references to cultural aspects when addressing other policy issues**. For instance, the section devoted to ‘Environmentally Sound and Resilient Urban Development’ (paras. 50-65) should refer to traditional knowledge as a potential source of learning that can contribute towards sustainable forms of living. The principles guiding urban and territorial planning (para 83) could include paying attention to historic areas and traditional settlement patterns. Likewise, when addressing sustainable urban mobility and transport systems (para 95), their role in facilitating access to public services, including cultural facilities and activities, should be recognized. Finally, it would be convenient for cultural aspects to be included in national urban policies, enhancing a multi-level governance framework in this area.
- Reflections on the need to improve monitoring and knowledge-sharing systems among local governments and other stakeholders are welcome and should lead to strengthening work in this area in the coming years. However, we recommend that the document **acknowledge the need for qualitative, as well as quantitative data**.

The signatories of this Position Document are committed to the integration of cultural aspects into sustainable urban development. They want the New Urban Agenda to be approved in Quito in October 2016, and to become a successful and operational document in all countries of the world. The signatories of this Position Document are also committed to closely following and supporting the subsequent implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

SIGNATORIES

- | International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies – IFACCA – <http://ifacca.org/>
- | Agenda 21 for culture – UCLG – <http://agenda21culture.net/>
- | International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity – IFCCD – <http://ficdc.org/>
- | Culture Action Europe – <http://cultureactioneurope.org/>
- | International Music Council – IMC – <http://www.imc-cim.org/>
- | Arterial Network (Africa) – <http://www.arterialnetwork.org/>
- | International Council on Monuments and Sites – ICOMOS – <http://www.icomos.org/>
- | Red Latinoamericana de Arte para la Transformación Social – <https://www.facebook.com/RedLA.AYTS/>