



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

CONCEPT NOTE

Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development

Within the framework of the discussion on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, UNESCO has been engaged in supporting the full **recognition of the role of culture in sustainable development**. This is reflected in several resolutions and substantive United Nations reports and is also advocated by several UNESCO partners, active in the field of culture.

In the recent decades, **cities have become prominent actors** in the promotion of sustainable development policies. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in an urban environment and it is expected that the exponential population growth and urbanization of the world will mean that 70% of humanity will live in cities in 30 years. Cities already play a major role within the broader international development framework: this will increase in the future as a large number of metropolises and of intermediate cities are developing at an unprecedented rate.

Culture is a key tool for promoting sustainable urban development, by preserving urban, environmental and cultural identity, attracting activities and visitors, fostering the development of the creative economy and of the quality of life. This is why, in consideration of the main entry point for culture in the negotiations of the Post-2015 Agenda, UNESCO has launched the elaboration of a **Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development**.

The elaboration of such a global report will be particularly timely as the General Assembly of the United Nations mandated UN-Habitat to lead the UN action on the issue of the world's urbanization and by its Resolution 66/207, decided to convene a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (**Habitat III**) in 2016. The objective of this conference is to "reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization that should focus on the implementation of a **"New Urban Agenda"**, in the context of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Report intends to present an up-to-date picture of the current policies and practices of urban regeneration and sustainable development that have put culture at their core. By providing an assessment of the experiences conducted in all regions of the world, the Report will provide **Guidelines and Recommendations** aimed to foster culture-based urban sustainable development initiatives at the international, national, regional and local levels.

The background: A "New Urban Agenda"

One of the main outcomes of Habitat I Conference, in 1976, was the decision to create the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Habitat II, in 1996, acknowledged the difficulty to reverse the exponential urban development processes at the global scale and the need, for the UN system, to elaborate a common response to this major issue. In 2001, the UN General Assembly adopted the **Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements** in the New Millennium. This declaration reaffirmed the fundamentals of the Habitat Agenda and renewed the commitments made during the Habitat II conference in Istanbul.

Habitat III Conference is expected to **review the actions undertaken** during the last twenty years, notably on the basis of key figures: the world's urban population represented around 2% of humanity in the beginning of the 19th century, 10% in the beginning of the 20th century, 50% in the beginning of the 21st century and should reach 70% after 30 years from now, for a total of 9,5 billion people in 2050.

The evolution of the approaches since **Habitat II** (Istanbul, 1996) makes it essential to focus, nowadays, on the notion of sustainable urban development. From UN-Habitat's point of view, the new approaches can be summarized as follows: integrated national urban policies; compact and efficient cities through urban planning and city extensions; institutional and legal reforms; and partnership – mobilizing all stakeholders.

The **Seventh World Urban Forum** (Medellin, Colombia, April 2014) confirmed the need for a paradigm shift on urban development processes, the urbanization model used since World War II having reached

its limits and needing to be rethought. It also reiterated the fact that in the 21st Century, the challenge of sustainable development will be gained or lost in cities and notably in Africa, expected to become the most urbanized continent by 2050. Finally, it acknowledged that the success of key development strategies, such as poverty reduction, gender equality, social justice, risk reduction and quality of life will depend largely on the capacity of cities to integrate the social and economic changes and to enhance their resilience.

Habitat III will be the **first major UN Conference** following the approval by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. It will therefore be a strategic forum where UNESCO's Culture and Development approach is expected to play a major role.

UNESCO's contribution to the definition of a Post-2015 New Urban Agenda

UNESCO has been addressing the issue of human settlements for several decades via its different programmes and normative instruments and did so for the first time in 1976 in Nairobi, Kenya, with the adoption of the *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas*. In 2011 when UNESCO's General Conference adopted the ***Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape***, the Organization reaffirmed the urging necessity to focus on human settlements and culture by adopting an instrument on the historic environment and the need to reaffirm the links with development.

Since 2010, four Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) dedicated to culture and development acknowledged the important role of culture in sustainable development. Culture, as an **enabler and driver** of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through heritage and creativity, has its full legitimacy in the sustainable urban agenda.

The theme of Cities is at the heart of UNESCO's mission. The two priorities of the Organization, **Gender Equality and Africa**, are directly concerned as well as the overarching objectives of Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development. The urban framework is the most challenging one in terms of gender equality (one of the sessions at the 7th World Urban Forum addressed this issue) and Africa holds today the largest number of slums in the world, in addition to the fact that it is expected to become the most urbanized continent by 2050.

Concerning the normative instruments dealing with culture, the UNESCO Culture Conventions on cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries¹ are directly linked to the "urban context". Cities and urban ensembles in general are the most represented category on the **World Heritage List** and most of the critical cases in terms of conservation concern World Heritage cities or urban ensembles.

The starting point for the development of sustainable urban development strategies is the **conservation and safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage**. Without an effective safeguarding action, the legacy of the past can rapidly be lost, as it is happening in many urban contexts characterised by intensive and rapid development processes, with the loss of connection between communities and the built environment in which they live. Promoting the regeneration of downtowns and the conservation and adaptive reuse of their cultural heritage assets can improve the liveability and living conditions for poor communities. **Culture-led redevelopment** of urban areas and public spaces helps to preserve the social fabric, improve economic returns and increase competitiveness, giving impetus to a diversity of intangible cultural heritage practices as well as other creative expressions, thereby creating sustainable urban spaces. In addition, a **vibrant urban life** can differentiate a city from competing locations, branding it nationally and internationally, thus helping it attract investments. The **cultural and creative industries**,

¹ 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict; 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage; 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

as well as heritage-based urban revitalization and sustainable tourism, are powerful economic sectors that can generate green employment, stimulate local development and foster creativity. **Cultural infrastructure**, such as museums and other cultural facilities, should be used as civic spaces for dialogue and social inclusion, helping to reduce violence and foster cohesion and promote a culture of peace as well as economic development for cities. Finally, the proper understanding of traditional cultural practices can be a powerful tool to enhance **resilience** of cities facing threats linked to natural phenomena and climate change.

The Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development

The Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development is intended as a **contribution to the common UN action towards a New Urban Agenda**, in line with the main entry point for culture in the Post-2015 framework which is under the sustainable development goal on sustainable cities. The Report will analyse the situation, trends, threats and existing opportunities in the different regional contexts and include a global picture of urban tangible and intangible heritage conservation and safeguarding (policies, legislation, practices and challenges), with the aim to assess its potential role in social inclusion and development. This assessment will also include the review of policies based on the promotion of the cultural and creative industries and the creative economy as a basis for sustainable urban development. The two dimensions of UNESCO'S cultural policies, Heritage and Creativity, will be linked to define an innovative approach to urban regeneration and development. The Report will also propose a reflection on managing change in cities with cultural heritage as a lever for development, as well as methodologies to improve monitoring and reporting processes, with the aim to support communities, planners and legislators involved in conservation policies and heritage focused urban development.

The process of preparation of the Report will be coordinated by UNESCO and implemented in close cooperation with its partners. The Report will contain a set of policy papers reflecting the vision of UNESCO and its partners on the future of urban heritage and cultural and creative industries, and a set of regional surveys outlining the current situation, challenges and best practices in the area of urban heritage preservation and regeneration.

Preliminary summary of the Report

Policy papers

- Introduction: Culture, a sustainable resource for cities.
- Urban heritage: a tool for inclusive social and sustainable economic development, a factor of cultural identity and environmental protection.
- Culture and creativity as drivers of sustainable urban development.
- A vision for the future

Regional surveys

- East Asia and the Pacific
- South and Central Asia
- Europe (including South-East Europe)
- Central and Eastern Europe & Central Asia and Caucasus
- Arab States Region
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- North America
- Latin America and the Caribbean

Conference on “Culture for Sustainable Cities”

An International Conference on “Culture for Sustainable Cities” will be organised by UNESCO in cooperation with the City of Hangzhou at the end of 2015, to present and discuss the draft Global Report. This Conference will gather Heads of United Nations Agencies, Ministers and high-level representatives of United Nations Member States, keynote speakers with longstanding experience in the

field of culture and sustainable urban development, international experts, representatives of the private sector, of Universities and of NGOs, mayors and city managers from all regions of the world to discuss and expand the themes presented in the Report.

Partners

Institutional Partners

- UNESCO
- UN-HABITAT
- ALECSO
- UCLG
- ICOMOS
- ICCROM
- ISOCARP
- OVPM
- Other Institutions (universities, research centres, academic institutions....)

Donor Partner

The City of Hangzhou

Organisational framework

A ***Steering Committee*** will be formed, with the task of reviewing periodically the progress of the Report and the related activities. The Steering Committee will include the key UNESCO officials and representatives of the Partner Institutions.

A ***Scientific Committee*** will be appointed, with the task to advise UNESCO on the preparation of the Report, identify sources of information, support the validation of materials. Experts representative of the different regions and professional backgrounds will form the Scientific Committee.

Timeframe

Overall duration: from October 2014 to December 2016

Key steps:

- June/July 2015: Presentation of the Draft Reports on the Regional Surveys to the technical meeting organised by UNESCO
- September/October 2015: Final Reports on the Regional Surveys to be submitted as part of the preparation of the Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development
- December 2015: Presentation of the Draft Global Report to the International Conference to be organised in Hangzhou, China.
- Fall 2016: Launch of the Final Global Report as a contribution to the Habitat III Conference, Quito, Ecuador.