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Creative Cities Network

CULTURE

**The key to unlocking local sustainable
development**

**UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK
Online Meeting Report**

23 October 2023

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Concept Note and Programme

At the height of Urban October 2023, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Online meeting will bring together more than 250 delegates from around 180 Creative Cities and provide a key opportunity to exchange good practices and further contribute to anchoring the Network in the implementation of UNESCO's culture programme, in line with the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration.

Open exchange on 'Culture: The key to unlocking local sustainable development'

Under the overarching theme "Culture: the key to unlocking local sustainable development", the Online meeting will allow representatives from Creative Cities around the world to take part in an open exchange, focusing on the following thematic priorities stemmed from the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration:

Theme 1: Boosting the Economic Potential of Creative Cities and Unleashing Creativity in the Digital Era

Moderated by: Andy Pratt, Director of the Centre of Culture and the Creative Industries, and Professor of Cultural Economy, City, University of London, and UNESCO Chair of Global Creative Economy

Despite the long-lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the precarity of the socio-economic conditions of artists and cultural professionals, the cultural and creative industries remain rapidly expanding sectors, accounting for 3.1% of global GDP¹, driving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Leveraging culture to boost the economic potential of cities is strategic to diversify the local economy, stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation, while also strengthening local employment and citizens' well-being. Furthermore, the digitalization of the culture sector has opened new avenues for cities to enhance their creative and economic potential, creating unprecedented opportunities to engage with a larger audience and explore new online means of creation. However, this digital transformation has also given rise to multiple challenges, including with regard to ensuring cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as equal access to digital content and promote digital literacy.

The dialogue around this theme will aim at exploring the key contribution of urban policies to the dynamism of their culture and creative industries, including by addressing the opportunities and challenges raised by the digital transformation of the culture sector. To this end, speakers shall reflect on means to enable effective cooperation between the public and private sectors to support investment in culture and creativity, reinforce the fair employment and remuneration of local artists and culture professionals, as well as their social protection, explore initiatives to sustainably support local creative entrepreneurs in their ventures, thus contributing to the boosting of the economic potential of cities.

1] Reshaping policies for creativity: addressing culture as a global public good (UNESCO, 2022)

Theme 2: Forging People-centered Urban Policies and Promoting Learning through Creativity

Moderated by: Valentina Montalto, independent researcher and consultant in policy design and data analysis for the cultural and creative sectors | UNESCO expert for UNESCO Culture | 2030 Indicators

Culture is at the heart of the very fabric of local communities, enabling citizens to express their identity and creativity. A sustainable society cannot be achieved without people-centered policies, especially on a local level. Urban settings provide an environment conducive to the respect and exercise of cultural rights, both individual and collective, which enhance the access and enjoyment of cultural heritage, while promoting cultural diversity, artistic freedom, and gender equality. Furthermore, integrating culture and creativity in local educational schemes is vital to equip learners of all ages with essential skills, such as critical-thinking or open-mindedness, enriching intercultural understanding and empowering citizens to fulfill their potential.

With a human-rights and people-centred approach to urban policies, the discussions around this second theme will start by delving deeper into the Creative Cities' actions to guarantee the respect of their citizens' cultural rights. More specifically, the speakers will elaborate on relevant urban policies which foster an inclusive access of all to cultural institutions or cultural life, notably by tailoring initiatives to the different needs and barriers faced by youth and vulnerable groups. The discussions will also underline the strategic role of culture and arts Education for creative cities, to embrace contemporary urban challenges and opportunities in a transversal and sustainable way, consolidating social cohesion on a local level.

Theme 3: Advancing the Role of Culture in Building Climate and Crisis Resilience and Recovery

Moderated by: Lázaro Israel Rodríguez, International and United Nations Cultural Consultant: UNESCO expert on culture and creativity governance and Indicators | UNDP consultant for culture in sustainable development | UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Advisory Board

It has never been timelier and more urgent for cities to take action to unleash the power of culture for post-crisis resilience, recovery, and reconciliation. Cultural heritage and diversity are facing a growing number of pressing threats, resulting from both natural and man-made crises. At a time where culture and cities are shaken by the devastating impact of climate change and natural hazards, cultural heritage also keeps suffering from damage and looting, in conflict situations across the world.

Culture has a cross-cutting power to craft resilient and peaceful societies, creating bridges between communities at times of emergencies, and thus particularly on a local scale. This is why it is essential for cities to further advance the role of culture in their crisis prevention, mitigation, and recovery strategies, in order to address global urban challenges, while building the sustainable and resilient cities of tomorrow.

Speakers will address how cities can leverage culture to tackle the adverse effects of climate change, while ensuring, at the same time, the sustainable growth of urban areas. In this regard, participants shall be invited to share examples of climate mitigation or adaptation plans, as well as urban regeneration strategies, which build on the transformative power of culture and creativity to forge climate-ready cities. Speakers will also concentrate more specifically on the necessary protection of their invaluable urban historic landscapes and heritage, both tangible and intangible, from the diverse impacts of climate change.

The role of culture for crisis prevention and recovery will also be explored, including by sharing good practices on support and protection schemes for local artists and culture professionals.

Subnetwork Reports

During the online meeting, the subnetworks will be invited to present their respective reports, highlighting the main past and ongoing culture driven activities in the sub-network, notably joint projects and initiatives carried out over the past year. The subnetwork reports will also provide food for thought on new thematic trends, challenges and opportunities across different creative fields.

Presentation of the 2024 UCCN Annual Conference by the Host City

Projecting into 2024, Braga, a Creative City of Media Arts, will be invited to present its project for the forthcoming 2024 UCCN Annual Conference. In collaboration with UNESCO, the Conference, under the theme 'Bringing youth to the table for the next decade', is foreseen to be held from 1 to 5 July 2024.



Introduction



Across the globe, culture is increasingly being recognized for its transformational contribution to sustainable development. In September 2022, 150 States gathered in Mexico for the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development unanimously adopted the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, positioning culture as a global public good and explicitly called for the creation of a standalone goal on culture in the post-2030 development agenda.

Since, culture has been integrated in major intergovernmental policy, from the G20, G77+China, and the BRICS Summit to the Ibero-American Summit and the EU Council, among others. Its contribution towards building sustainable cities has also been gaining recognition by decision makers, promoting increased decentralization and transfer of competence to local authorities, from enhanced access to culture and arts education and the provision of training, to urban heritage inventory and conservation, cultural tourism and support to the creative economy.

Up to 13 per cent of urban employment in major cities is based on the creative industries, as the largest share of those cultural and creative industries – which account for 3.1% of global GDP² – are hosted in urban settlements . World cities and metropolises increasingly turn to culture to renew their development models and urban strategies are harnessed to foster social cohesion, inclusion, citizenship and the full recognition and exercise of cultural rights within increasingly multicultural urban societies. Cities are major development actors. Promoting cross-cutting approaches and synergies among city networks is therefore necessary to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, and in particular SDG 11.

Against this backdrop, the Online Meeting of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) that took place on 23 October 2023, saw a diverse gathering of cities from all world regions to explore the theme “Culture: The Key to Unlocking Local Sustainable Development”.

Moderated by Denise Bax, Chief of Communication, Cities, and Events Unit, within the Culture Sector of UNESCO, the Online Meeting covered several key sections. It began with the opening remarks, presented by Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, which underlined the significance of the UCCN and the objectives of the meeting, as well as a growing recognition of culture as a global public good with a view to integrating it as a standalone goal within the post-2030 international development agenda.

2] [Reshaping policies for creativity: addressing culture as a global public good \(UNESCO, 2022\)](#).

The opening plenary was followed by breakout sessions, focusing on the three main themes stemming from the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration. The meeting proceeded with the presentation of the sub-network's reports, providing an overview of all seven creative fields covered by the Network, highlighting their activities, main initiatives and future goals. The Mayor of Braga took the floor, displaying the city's plan for hosting the 2024 UCCN Annual Conference. In closing, Mr Ottone R. emphasized the UCCN's important role in fostering international cooperation, promoting culture in local development plans, and advancing creativity, culture, and innovation in cities, aligning with UNESCO's mission and the priorities set in the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration.

Opening Plenary

by Ernesto Ottone, R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO.

In his opening remarks, the Assistant Director-General for Culture expressed the essential role that culture plays as a “source of identity, innovation, and resilience, as well as a catalyst for positive change”. He emphasized the link between culture and sustainable development highlighting the influence of diverse creative fields, including Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music, and underlined the role of the UCCN in promoting culture and creativity as powerful drivers of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental stability.

UNESCO's aspirations for the UCCN are ambitious. Cities are expected to host about 70% of the world's population by 2050, according to UN-Habitat, placing local policies and initiatives at the forefront of global development. Furthermore, cities and their inhabitants are playing an increasing role in delivering development outcomes through the implementation of sustainable urban policies at both local and national level, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and notably its Goal 11, which focuses on ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’, and beyond.

Mr Ottone R. urged cities to adapt their urban policies to meet the evolving needs of their populations, addressing issues such as quality of education, technical and vocational education, job creation, and climate change. Participants were invited to engage in an open discussion, exploring how culture contributes to the sustainable development of cities from various angles. These include fostering local creative economies, growing digital technologies, promoting inclusive urban policies, stimulating arts and culture education, building climate resilience, and supporting post-crisis recovery.

The meeting offered an overview of the diverse activities within the 7 sub-networks of the Creative Cities, as well as introducing the XVI UCCN Annual Conference to be hosted by Braga in 2024 under the theme “Bringing youth to the table for the next decade”. Recognizing the efforts of all the member states for their constant support to the Network and commitment towards a more sustainable, resilient, and vibrant future, the Assistant Director-General for Culture underline the outcomes of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, adopted at the MONDIACULT 2022 Conference, by which culture was recognized as a “global public good” and its inclusion as a standalone goal within the post-2030 international development agenda was call for by the 150 participating States. This Declaration has set a forward-looking agenda for UNESCO in the field of culture, including by requesting the elaboration of a Global Report on Cultural Policies to be launched in 2025.

UNESCO is committed to further strengthening synergies between the UCCN and the Culture Conventions and programmes towards achieving its Medium-Term Strategy, as well as the goals set by the 2030 Agenda and the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration. As such, the UCCN will continue to strengthen international cooperation, make creativity an integral part of urban development, promote cultural industries, nurture hubs of creativity and innovation, integrate culture into local development plans, and enhance access and participation in cultural life. This, Mr Ottone R. emphasized, is at the core of UNESCO’s mission, with the UCCN playing vital role in these efforts.

Thematic Breakout Sessions



Theme 1: Boosting the Economic Potential of Creative Cities and Unleashing Creativity in the Digital Era

The discussions around Theme 1, moderated by Andy Pratt, focus on “Boosting the Economic Potential of Creative Cities and Unleashing Creativity in the Digital Era”, highlighted the relevance of nurturing the creative economy within Creative Cities, showcasing its growth (more than 3% in recent years) despite the challenges presented in the post-COVID world.

Culture and creativity increasingly foster diversity in cities as a means of innovation and urban transformation. The stakes for cities revolve around finding a balance between traditional forms of cultural experiences and new forms of employment. This session also emphasized the complexities of adapting to the evolving landscape of the creative economy in cultural policy.

Moreover, the challenge of adopting a transversal approach, not just across different art forms but across different institutions was also stressed. Overall, this session invited cities to exchange on means to successfully harness the full potential of the creative economy in the digital era.

Bogota shared insights on their commitment to strengthening and developing creative districts, aiming to integrate culture, creativity, and entrepreneurship into socio-cultural and economic development. **Viborg** emphasized the importance of public commitment and political advocacy to stimulate economic growth through creativity and Media Arts. The added value of the UCCN was also highlighted, particularly through the opportunity it provides to connect and share ideas with other cities within the Network. The city of **Geelong** described their success in eco-reef projects, which not only contributed to enhancing environmental sustainability but promoted tourism, stimulating the local economy in the long term. In addition, **Santa Fe** discussed grants and efforts to build a creative economy ecosystem, uniting with multiple departments and both public and private partners. **Enghien-les-Bains** focused on supporting start-ups which have media arts components, as well as creating a Metaverse cluster to boost their economy and to create training opportunities, with the aim of attracting a Metaverse hub in the region. **Manchester**'s project highlighted the economic and intercultural benefits of promoting multilingualism. Working alongside the University of Manchester and appointing a team of multilingual city poets, poets have written poems for diverse occasions in a variety of different languages. Lastly, **Glasgow** showcased a digital interactive trail that combined various Creative Cities and heritage sites, boosting economic growth through tourism and culture, and creating a bridge between online and offline resources in innovative ways. The contributions from the participating Creative Cities further raised awareness on the importance of utilizing culture and creativity for economic advancement.

With regards to creativity in the digital era, **Nörrköping** shared that the city is working on a national level with copyright and the rights of composers, during the AI creative era, and is integrating digital technologies into various creative sectors, such as the film industry, immersive production and gaming, emphasizing the importance of research related to live experiences. **Belfast** is committed to a 3-year strategy for the music sector and stressed the importance of the role of digital means, promoting the use of interactive technology as a way of making music more accessible, especially to those with disabilities. **Nottingham**, alongside other Creative Cities of Literature, addressed literary and social mobility challenges by engaging in a project called "Story Valley." This project seeks to promote oral storytelling to drive social cohesion, literacy, and skill development, more particularly among the youth. Moreover, **Kansas City** emphasized the use of digital technology to connect musicians worldwide, promoting social inclusion, gender equality, and creative expression through music.

Potsdam is preparing for “The Green Visions Potsdam,” a unique film festival that connects film and science to address various environmental issues through entertainment. **Hamar** shared its use of gamification and VR technology for cultural and educational purposes. Similarly, **Busan** focused on digital technology to nurture a greater understanding of the film industry, while **Detroit** has developed a self-guided walking tour to tell stories and spread culture and history using digital technology. The above-mentioned initiatives demonstrate the diverse ways in which Creative Cities used digital tools as a mechanism for creativity, sustainability, and social progress.

The cities of **Frutillar, Nakuru, Heidelberg, Bendigo, Jinju, and Bida** also contributed to the discussion, highlighting their cities’ respective initiatives to support international collaboration, the promotion of local cultural and creative industries, and urban sustainability.



Theme 2: Forging People-centred Urban Policies and Promoting Learning through Creativity

Theme 2, moderated by Valentina Montalto, focused on “Forging People-centred Urban Policies and Promoting Learning through Creativity”. The discussions around this theme focused on accelerating challenges affecting the culture sector, including climate issues, migration, inequalities, and pressure on city ecosystems, which has prompted a reflection on the existing development models. The moderator underlined that culture-based policies and a people-centred approach are fundamental to ensuring a sustainable economic ecosystem for all and that development models should take this into consideration. Furthermore, it was also highlighted that integrating culture and creativity in local educational schemes and curricula is vital to equip learners of all ages with essential skills, such as critical-thinking or open-mindedness, enriching intercultural understanding and empowering citizens to fulfil their potential.

As part of the open discussion regarding people-centred urban policies, **Doha**, shared that it has invested in the preservation of local crafts skills, hosted exhibitions of global scope, and provided support to local designers, thereby positioning itself as a hub of artistic innovation. **Hatay**, coping with post-earthquake recovery, aimed to enhance the liveability of the city through projects that integrate technology. **Aswan** commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage with initiatives focusing on “living heritage in Aswan” and facilitated crafts training programmes for immigrant students from Sudan. **Asahikawa** engaged university students in teaching about Sustainable Development Goals to high school students and students from lower economic backgrounds.

Further to this, cities provided examples of gender equality and inclusive initiatives in their respective cities. Policies prioritized by a group named “The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusions Group”, are given precedence in **Glasgow**. In addition, music groups participating in Glasgow’s various festivals are required to maintain 50% representation of women. **San Cristóbal de las Casas** mentioned its advocacy for gender equality within the Latin America Network, while also urging for greater representation of the Latin America and the Caribbean group in the Network. **Bangkok** organized events addressing inclusiveness and gender issues, including Pride Month and Design Week.

Other cities provided examples of arts and culture education. **Paducah** made an illustrative demonstration involving the invitation of a potter who, incidentally, also possessed culinary skills, thereby engaging students in their artistic and culinary fields. **Santa Fe** also underlined an educational program implemented in public elementary schools, wherein artists were involved in classroom activities, and students undertook visits to cultural institutions. **Cannes** put forward its efforts to promote culture and arts education through a policy involving youth in artistic projects every year and establishing collaborations with other Creative Cities, such as **Dakar** and **Liverpool**. In 2019, a design policy emphasizing the importance of design quality and encouraging exploration of the creative aspects in art and architecture was implemented in **Montreal**. The #whoisthedesigner campaign was launched to recognize the contributions of designers and architects in shaping urban spaces.

Moreover, two cities presented the progress made towards environmentally sustainable city schemes. **Isfahan** focused on non-polluting handicrafts and promoting education in handicrafts. **Nakuru**, engaged communities for better use of geothermal energy. **Overstrand Hermanus, Lubumbashi, and Trinidad** supported gastronomy and cultural unity through various events while providing logistical and financial support to projects benefiting women, youth, and marginalized groups. **Detroit** and **Aregua** prioritized community-driven models. The former focused on design challenges with open calls from residents and community activists, while the latter demonstrated a consolidated governance model, celebrating various activities such as anniversaries, international events around ceramists, and a dance festival.



Theme 3: Advancing the Role of Culture in Building Climate and Crisis Resilience and Recovery

The theme 3 moderator, Lázaro Israel Rodríguez, introduced the thematic session by referring to the urgency of understanding that human activity has been a dominant influence on climate and the environment. Highlighting that culture not only plays a role in understanding and addressing the negative impacts but also offers solutions to mitigate and adapt to these challenges.

Culture's cross-cutting impact was explored, serving as a bridge between communities during emergencies, making it imperative for cities to strengthen the role of culture in their strategies for crisis prevention, mitigation, and recovery. In a world where culture and cities face the devastating consequences of climate change and various crises, it was stressed that UNESCO Creative Cities can contribute to peaceful and sustainable resolutions by promoting intercultural dialogue and leveraging culture to build climate-ready and resilient urban areas.

Various cities addressed culture's influential role in raising awareness on environmental sustainability, motivating reflection, and inspiring climate action, thanks to its ability to convey engaging messages and bring communities together. Some of these cities referred particularly to festivals or programmes where their different creative domains are mobilized to fuel reflection on climate change, such as **Ambon**, with the "Sound of Green" programme, where music gives voice to environmental issues; **San Antonio**, with the "Pueblos del Maiz" initiative, a celebration of corn and its ancient traditions and a platform to reflect on the impact climate change has had on local cuisines; **Potsdam**, with its "Green Visions" festivals, a platform to promote discussions between filmmakers and scientists around the topic of climate change; and lastly **Viborg**, with the transversal contribution of the animation industry in raising climate awareness, combining humour with serious current issues, notably among children and youth.

Other Creative Cities focused on a variety of initiatives that harness culture as a driver of climate action beyond awareness. Thus, the mitigation of the impact of the cultural and creative industries on climate change was a central part of the discussion: from programmes aimed at motivating creative ways to reduce food waste through public grants and connecting creative artists with local food businesses in **Bendigo**, to promoting culture-led community revitalization projects in the historic city centre of **Macao SAR**, to developing green craft production programmes to improve the environmental sustainability of **Sukhothai's** traditional folk art after the pandemic. Lastly, the city of **Geelong** also presented its strategy to build synergies between culture and the education sectors to reinforce the trajectory for climate transition through the development of a programme around design and circular economy, while also highlighting the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge in climate action programmes.

Presentation of the Sub-network Reports

The session dedicated to the presentation of sub-network reports, provided an overview of the major activities, achievements, and collaborative efforts at the sub-network level. The contributions and goals of each sub-network were highlighted, demonstrating city members' commitment to fostering creativity, culture, and sustainable urban development.



Crafts and Folk Art

The Cities of Crafts and Folk Art have shown remarkable resilience and dedication in promoting cultural heritage, diversity, and creative assets. Gender equality, youth, and international engagement are evident as the cities develop events, exchanges, and initiatives.

An innovative development underlined within the sub-network was the introduction of Regional Coordinators, corresponding to the Network's five continental regions, facilitating effective communications, given the size of the sub-network. This sub-network has also been dedicated to the development of its website, seeking to establish online representation for all member cities.

A large number of activities, joint projects, and initiatives were held across the sub-network. These include **Areguá's** first International Dance Festival, **Aswan's** 10th International Festival of Art and Culture, and **Weifang's** 40th International Kite Festival. In-person and online forums and events have been a cornerstone of the sub-network's activities. Among many notable events are **Biella's** Creative Cities Forum, **Chiang Mai's** Capacity Building Workshop for Artists and Craftsmen, **Kutahya's** Creative Cultural Industries Summit, **Sukhothai** hosted the 1st Symposium of Tribal Crafts and Folk Art, and **Weifang's** hosting of the first China "World Good Crafts" exchange and promotion conference.

Nassau has served as an example for sharing expertise and promoting the arts. Its international outreach efforts and collaboration with educational institutions to develop a craft curriculum have contributed to cultural preservation and global arts promotion. Similarly, **Paducah** celebrated its 10th anniversary as part of the UNESCO Creative Cities by hosting artists-in-residence, while **Trinidad** marked its third UCCN anniversary with a vibrant four-day celebration.

The sub-network looks forward to continued collaboration with other sub-networks within the UCCN.



The UNESCO Creative Cities of Design sub-network counts 43 cities, which comprises four thematic working groups, each working on projects contributing to the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals.

The Design & Education group, chaired by **Curitiba** and **Queretaro**, initiated “The Street Design Challenge” together with **Wuhan**, a two-day competition for university students to share their vision of how public space design can improve the quality of life in communities, whose theme for this year is “Tactical Urbanism to Reduce Heat Islands in Cities.” The Design & Policy group, chaired by **Kolding** and **Saint-Étienne**, launched a research project to map design ecosystems and develop city-level action plans, which will be delivered throughout 2023 and 2024. The Design & Business group, chaired by **Kortrijk** and **Graz**, created the “The Worldwide Things Collection” connecting designers and promoting UNESCO Creative Cities of Design. Lastly, the Design & Community group, chaired by **Geelong**, focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 10, reducing inequalities through local-level projects shared among participating cities.

Over the past year, cities celebrated design and international cooperation through campaigns like #WholsTheDesigner #WholsTheArchitect, to raise public awareness of the importance of promoting design and architecture professionals on their work on public buildings and urban spaces. Cities important to the automotive industry, such as **Detroit**, **Geelong**, **Graz**, **Kortrijk**, **Puebla**, **Saint-Étienne**, and **Turin**, organized “Around Autofiction”, a seminar workshop on sustainable mobility innovation, to create an exchange platform between the professionals of cities involved in the planning and construction of active mobility infrastructures as well as highlight how a user-led design perspective would improve the efficiency of such infrastructure to generate a shift towards sustainability in transportation.

Additionally, cities like **Covilhã**, **Fortaleza**, and **Brasilia** collaborated on the FIADA International Crafts and Design Fair. This event aimed to disseminate and preserve national and international handicrafts, emphasizing makers and designers and the relevance of design in the conception, innovation and commercialization of their products based on traditional techniques and knowledge. **Kortrijk's** "5X5" initiative, where 5 industrial SME-companies were matched with a designer to create a new product/service and encouraged to collaborate between industrial companies and designers, serving as a model for forming creative partnerships.

The sub-network anticipates future challenges and opportunities concerning the implementation of UNESCO’s programme at the city level. Emerging themes include climate and circular design, inclusivity in healthcare design, and the impact of technology, including AI and other technological advancements.



The UNESCO Creative Cities' Film sub-network revisited a project that originated in Santos and is set to conclude in Braga. This collaborative project focuses on providing opportunities for underrepresented voices and promoting sustainable urban development through creative workshops that train local groups in film production, ultimately leading to the creation of films. The Film sub-network actively collaborates through various working groups, such as green shooting, virtual production, post-COVID industry and theatres, funding finding, film festivals, and art for future lab.

The sub-network also emphasized important urban development projects from various Creative Cities within the film sector. For example, in 2021 **Sarajevo** introduced a 30% cash rebate scheme for film and TV series production, significantly boosting the local film industry. The BH Content Lab further supported local storytelling, resulting in a 400% growth in production in the region, earning Sarajevo the Screen International Global Production Award in the City of Film category at the Cannes Film Festival. Another notable example is **Busan**, where the city engaged in a variety of activities related to urban development, including community cinema support, village filmmaking projects, outreaching screening services to isolated areas, and the Busan Intercity Film Festival, fostering cultural development and exchanges among UNESCO Creative Cities of Film.

Additionally, **Mumbai's** upcoming Film sub-network activities during the Mumbai Festival in January 2024 will include a film heritage walk, an international film festival with a focus on screening films from Creative Cities of Film, live shooting activities, and behind-the-scenes events. Also, during the **Rome** Film Festival, the "Cinedays Roma Città del Cinema 2023", will feature an initiative that explores the role of culture and creativity in urban regeneration, using redeveloped facilities to enhance inhabitants' quality of life. Moreover, **Terrassa** is currently introducing its Film Lab with a focus on prototyping with new digital technologies such as virtual production and generative AI. This public funding laboratory aims to transfer talent between the local educational ecosystem and the Spanish film industry, contributing to local talent retention and improving media literacy.

The current focus of the Film sub-network explores thematic trends such as virtual production, AI for content generation, intellectual property issues, addressing the digital divide, and promoting gender equality in the industry.



Gastronomy

The UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy sub-network has been highly active, with 49 member cities. A total of 245 initiatives were registered by the Creative Cities of Gastronomy, demonstrating a substantial increase from the previous year when 213 initiatives were recorded. These initiatives span a wide variety of themes, including academic research, knowledge reinforcement, as well as a strong focus on economic development and cultural identity. A notable increase has been observed in initiatives centred around traditional knowledge and sustainable tourism.

In alignment with the SDGs, the sub-network exhibited a strong commitment, with 225 initiatives clearly linked to these Goals, in particular included 'Responsible Production and Consumption' (Goal 12), 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' (Goal 8), 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' (Goal 11), and 'Partnership for the Goals' (Goal 17). Furthermore, there were 109 initiatives directly linked to other creative fields, with the Crafts and Folk Art, Music and Design sub-networks being the most frequently associated.

The sub-network is working on an action dashboard for sub-network initiatives that will facilitate access to information about initiatives categorized by city, creative field, SDG, and key priority areas within the sub-network.

Overall, the sub-network continues to grow and contribute significantly to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, with a focus on promoting gastronomy as a driver of sustainable development.



Literature

In the past year, the UNESCO Cities of Literature sub-network, consisting of 42 members cities, actively engaged in various collaborative activities. Initiatives include the “#17Booksfor17SDGs”, an annual social media campaign; World Poetry Day celebrations, a day spend celebrating poetry in a multilingual context; International Youth Day, youth projects organized and run by Creative Cities of Literature; the 5th annual SlamoVision, a “EuroVision”-like competition designed to crown an international slam poetry champion; and the “Story Valley” collaborative project created in **Manchester**.

An annual sub-network meeting was held in **Quebec City**, where good practices were exchanged, upcoming projects were discussed, and governance structures were improved.

A key focus in the past year was to expand literary residencies.

15 Creative Cities of Literature currently host in-person residencies each year, where writers and translators from other member cities are invited to spend time in the host city. Virtual residencies, a recent experiment starting in 2021, were also introduced, offering paid periods during which to write or translate alongside a combination of online networking sessions, public events, and digital commissions. Efforts within this sub-network are ongoing to streamline the promotion of these opportunities, making them more accessible to people in member cities.



Media Arts

The Media Arts sub-network underlined a year of noteworthy projects and collaborative efforts. The 22 cities actively addressed various challenges, such as promoting artists' economic resilience, integrating media arts into education at all levels, and emphasizing the role of media arts in creating new urban environments.

A notable project is the continued "City to City" virtual residency project, where selected media artists from different cities collaborate online to create new works of art, aligning with this year's theme "Augmented Humanity". The overall objective of this project marks a commitment to the importance of cultural exchange, cooperation, and economic support for the creative sector in light of the SDGs. Moreover, the Media Arts Cities of the future, an animated media project led by **Sapporo**, involves 18 cities. This initiative aligns with the UNESCO Constitution stating that we should assure our heritage to be conserved for the future. Collaborations with local governments, businesses, education institutions, and culture-focused projects are also significant components of the sub-network's activities.

Furthermore, the Media Arts sub-network has been seeking cooperation opportunities with other UCCN sub-networks. This is demonstrated by projects such as "DrawWithDenmark – Green Together" and "Concert Dessiné," which combines music, drawing, comics, and digital technologies. Throughout 2022-2023, the sub-network participated in many international events, presenting cooperation, and reinforcing the sub-network's goals.



Music

The UNESCO Cities of Music sub-network showcased a year of meaningful achievements and increased engagement and mobility among musicians from diverse genres. Following the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Creative Cities of Music have obtained connections and exchange among members through both in-person and online meetings, conferences, and cultural exchanges.

The annual sub-network meetings centred around collaboration, mobility, and youth education, as well as addressing themes such as sustainability, gender equality, and inclusion within the music industry.

Notably, the sub-network strengthened connections within its music communities, for action and knowledge exchange, with around 50 acts from the 59 member cities performing in at least one other Creative City of Music during this year. Increased conferences and showcase festivals also provided collaboration opportunities by exporting music and research, creating awareness of the sub-network's work. Moreover, the sub-network participated in the Global Sustainability Forum in **Daegu**, putting emphasis on the role of music cities in driving sustainability.

The Creative Cities of Music aim to make music a catalyst for social sustainability. They work collectively towards inclusivity, gender equality, and accessibility in their local music scenes. These goals are achieved through various initiatives, including policy support, programmes for youth expression, and support for music technology and creative innovation hubs. A noteworthy example is the “Jazz Relay” project which started in **Veszprem**, was later presented in **Nörrköping** and produced by cities such as **London, Hannover, Kansas City**, and others. This project focused on raising awareness of SDG 14 through a new composition performed online on International Jazz Day on 30 April.

The sub-network has developed digital tools to map music venues in the cities, and to create sound together on a global level. Efforts are also underway to strengthen seven of the nine action points from the MONDIACULT 2022 declaration. In addition, moving forward, the Creative Cities of Music will focus on establishing a platform for academic collaboration within the sub-network, and building capacity through various strategies. They remain committed to connecting musicians, creators, artists, creative industries, city developers, universities, and policymakers to support the local implementation of the SDGs with the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration at the heart of their mission.

Host City Presentation by Braga

With the title “Bringing the Youth to the Table for the Next Decade”, Ricardo Rio, Mayor of Braga, extended a warm invitation to the UCCN community for the 2024 Annual Conference. Braga, a prospering city in northern Portugal, displays a rich cultural heritage, and the city's journey as a UNESCO Creative City for Media Arts reflects its commitment to sustainable development. Together with UNESCO and collaborating with regional partners in Northern Portugal, such as Amarante, Barcelos, and Santa Maria de Feira, Braga will host a dynamic event representing all creative fields covered by the Network.

This inter-disciplinary approach aligns with UCCN's mission. Emphasizing the strength of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Braga has formed strong connections within its creative field and throughout Portuguese Creative Cities. Mayor Rio pointed out that as 2030 approaches, the urgent need for collective action to achieve the 2030 Agenda further highlights the importance of harnessing culture and creativity. In close collaboration with UNESCO, Braga and its regional partners are dedicated to creating a meaningful XVI Annual Conference and collaborating to strengthen the impact of the UCCN Network. The mayor invited all participants to unite their voices for culture and creativity in Braga from July 1 to July 5, 2024.

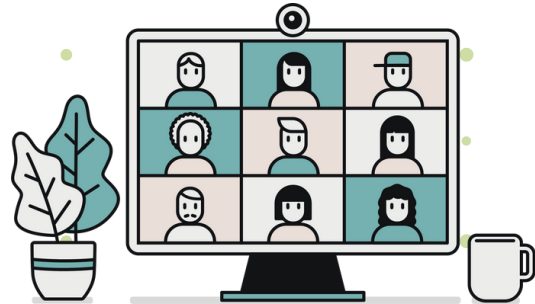
Closing Plenary

by Ernesto Ottone, R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO.

Mr Ottone R. highlighted that we are at an important stage in the international development agenda, not only to achieve the goals we have targeted by 2030, but also to set the stage for the development goals that will follow. From now on, our collective effort must focus on positioning culture as a standalone goal in the forthcoming development agenda, at local, national, and international level. The outstanding turnout, in the UCCN Online Meeting, underlines the strong support of this vision among Creative Cities worldwide and highlights the significance of UNESCO's crosscutting mandate, particularly in the field of culture. UNESCO relies on all its Creative Cities to support this cause and draw inspiration from international discussions such as the UCCN Online Meeting to further deepen the recognition of culture and creativity's transformative role in addressing contemporary global challenges. As the Network looks ahead, the inclusion of new members will seek to expand the Network's diversity, resourcefulness, and impact. UNESCO looks forward to exchanging with Creative Cities around the world in Braga in July 2024 at the next UCCN Annual Conference, where the shared commitment towards sustainable development will continue to prosper.



Participation and Outreach



286 city representatives, including Mayors, attended.



83 participants took the floor.



188 cities were represented.

**The UCCN Secretariat expresses its sincere gratitude to the cities
which attended the meeting :**

Al Ahsa	Dakar	Kolding	Potsdam
Alba	Dénia	Kortrijk	Puebla
Ambon	Detroit	Kosice	Québec
Areguá	Doha	Kuching	Querétaro
Asahikawa	Dubai	Kuhmo	Ramallah
Aswan	Dublin	Kütahya	Rasht
Austin	Dundee	Limoges	Reykjavík
Baghdad	Dunedin	Liverpool	Rouen
Baguio City	Edinburgh	Ljubljana	San Antonio
Bandar Abbas	Enghien les bains	Łódź	San Cristobal de las Casa
Bandung	Exeter	London	San José
Bangkok	Fabriano	Lubumbashi	Sanandaj
Barcelos	Florianópolis	Lviv	Santa Fe
Beirut	Fortaleza	Lyon	Santos
Belém	Frutillar	Macao SAR	Sapporo
Belfast	Gabrovo	Manchester	Sarajevo
Belo Horizonte	Galway	Manises	Shanghai
Bendigo	Gaziantep	Mannheim	Sharjah
Bergamo	Gdynia	Medellín	Shenzhen
Bergen	Geelong	Melbourne	Shunde
Berlin	Ghent	Merida	St. Petersburg
Bida	Gimhae	Metz	Sukhothai
Biella	Glasgow	Mexico City	Suzhou
Bilbao	Göteborg	Modena	Sydney
Bogotá	Graz	Montréal	Tambasasayama
Bohicon	Hangzhou	Mumbai	Tartu
Bologna	Hanoi	Nagoya	Terrassa
Braga	Hatay	Nakuru	Thessaloniki
Brazzaville	Heidelberg	Namur	Torino
Bristol	Huai'an	Nassau	Toronto
Bucheon	Ibagué	Norrköping	Trinidad
Buraydah	Icheon	Norwich	Tsuruoka
Burgos	Iowa City	Nottingham	Ulyanovsk
Busan	Isfahan	Östersund	Valladolid
Caldas da Rainha	İstanbul	Overstrand Hermanus	Veszprém
Cannes	Jingdezhen	Paducah	Viborg
Cape Town	Jinju	Panama	Viljandi
Carrara	João Pessoa	Paraty	Vranje
Cebu	Kanazawa	Parma	Weifang
Changsha	Kansas City	Pasto	Wellington
Chengdu	Kargopol	Pekalongan	Whanganui
Chiang Mai	Karlsruhe	Pesaro	Wrocław
Cochabamba	Katerina	Phetchaburi	Wuhan
Como	Katowice	Phuket	Xalapa
Covilhã	Kazan	Port Louis	Yangzhou
Curitiba	Kirsehir	Porto-Novo	York
Daegu	Kobe	Portoviejo	Zahle