Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage in the Urban Agenda for the EU

FINAL SYNTHETIC Observations, Remarks & Recommendations

Finalized during final Partnership meeting, Rome June 2022, version December 2022

Summary

Culture and cultural heritage (CCH) in cities often help to shape collective identities, to create a sense of belonging within urban communities and to mobilize civil society. Cultural heritage is the outcome of a long-term emerging and adapting development and has withstood hazards and threats. While being a source of resilience, cultural heritage is nevertheless particularly vulnerable in its existence to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the digital divide or the war against Ukraine. Our shared cultural heritage defines and reinforces both our local and European identity.

Even though all cities declared that urban cultural heritage is important, the built heritage and culture are usually implemented through different and fragmented interventions. Culture and cultural heritage can be understood as a multi-layered system and require long-term visions and clear local strategies for their enhancement and protection from foreseeable and unforeseeable threats.

Final Partnership meeting, Rome, June 2022

The tree of results – the combination of all the results at action level together

*The CCH Partnership states that **Culture & Cultural Heritage (CCH) are drivers for sustainable, inclusive, green urban development** through:*

- *new paradigms of urban planning systems that take CCH into consideration beyond the traditional categories of "protection" or "enhancement" and that consider CCH not an obstacle but as a resource and as an integrated system rather than merely as objects (action 6) and that create stronger links between the risk management of urban areas and cultural heritage management (action 8);*
- *the acknowledgement of the potential of dissonant heritage sites – sites that society or social groups negatively associate with unpleasant memories and associations and perceive them as politically and/or ethically charged – as places of learning, civic participation, inclusiveness and democracy building, among others, and the need to better integrate dissonant heritage in the European Cultural Heritage strategic framework and programs and, in particular, within sustainable urban and regional development planning systems (action 10);*
- *the opportunity to re-use abandoned or dismissed spaces through cultural activities and collaborative management processes (action 4) which also foster cities' circularity (preventing further urban sprawl, the consumption of new urban soil, etc.) as well as to better empower spaces of community interest, such as public libraries, to foster training and education and social cohesion at neighborhood level (action 5);*
- *the activation of urban areas with temporary cultural "invasions" or "sprawl" using art and culture in public space to reach and engage citizens (action 2), to rethink and reshape public urban spaces, as well as through an institutional regulatory framework specifically designed to sustain entrepreneurship in local cultural sectors and to equip spaces for self-employed artists (action 3), allowing for the protection of the local culture sector in times of (economic) crisis.;*
- *to recognize the importance to manage touristic flows in a sustainable manner through the smart management of open data (action 7) and to provide a better regulation of short-term rental accommodations (action 1), decongesting city centres and reinforcing the "urban"-"peri-urban" link.*

*The CCH Partnership calls for a **European Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework**, where these three elements (culture and cultural heritage, climate change, and the urban context) are finally considered together in order to foster a common understanding of how to approach an ecological reconversion of urban areas and to avoid fragmentized practices while also preventing the loss of cultural heritage values when applying measures of energy efficiency (action 9).*

*The CCH Partnership underlines the importance of a **permanent platform for exchange and interaction** among cities and with European institutions on culture and cultural heritage (e.g. through Eurocities and URBACT), also closely linked to Member States, to better tailor initiatives to address their needs (action 11).*

Action 1 "Regulating Short Term Rental Platform in Cities"

One of the main outcomes of this action is a "Memorandum" which identifies the most significant difficulties and/or challenges that the current and prospect EU regulatory framework (notably, but not exclusively, dealing with digital platforms) may pose for an efficient and effective regulation of the short-term rental accommodation sector by national authorities.

Tourism and housing being mostly national competences, regional and local authorities are usually the relevant regulators and enforcers. However, mass tourism and, in particular, the short-term holiday rental phenomenon have exponentially put pressure on local authorities; they face significant enforcement difficulties when they aim to address mass tourism related negative externalities, albeit solid public interests may justify their regulatory action according to EU case-law.

Action 2 "Cultural Street Invasion, the local and European identity"

The action revealed that there is a need to support and promote local culture production, its consumption, and the backing of citizen engagement in this field not only through funding, but also through initiatives in cities/regions focused on "street invasion" (linking cultural production to both local and European identity) supporting skill and capacity building programmes.

A "New" Cultural Model, centered around citizens and public spaces, can be successfully implemented by cities using the philosophy, methods and tools produced in the action (applying both to the local and regional context). The creation of cultural itineraries combining these concepts and varieties of culture forms and expressions as well as cultural heritage permits cities to rethink their public urban spaces and their uses.

Action 3 "Cultural hub for innovation, modernisation and enhancement"

There is a lack of physical spaces to experiment with culture creation and artistic expression: an issue that occurs predominantly in city centres and gentrified neighborhoods, a further handicap when it comes to job creation in and around the cultural and creative industries. Digitalization, not as a culture platform, but as a complementary facet to culture and cultural heritage require knowledge and vision, which is currently often lacking.

The ever-increasing vulnerability of self-employed artists, many of whom are working in precarious conditions, is coupled with the need for equipped space of work and the lack of institutional regulatory framework(s) to support entrepreneurship.

The action confirmed that even though initiatives for culture production and/or citizen experimentation exist, these often do not come to fruition because of a lack of local/regional support, lack of space, resources or skills and knowledge. Changing this aspect is key to boost sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development.

Action 4 "Collaborative management to adapt and reuse spaces and buildings for cultural and social innovative development"

The adaptation and re-use of abandoned or underused urban spaces and buildings for socio-cultural purposes is a mean of sustainable, inclusive, green development which also fosters the circularity of a city (no further urban sprawl, no consumption of new urban soil, etc.). The action highlights the legal procedures and city assets needed to foster collaborative management processes implying the delegation of the management of urban spaces to private associations (third sectors bodies).

The action highlighted the need of: i) collaborative mapping of underused/dismissed places of some value for the identity of a community (urban commons); ii) regulating procedures (legal framework) for the re-use of urban commons through collaborative management; iii) including "temporary use" in urban planning systems; iv) strengthening the competencies of local stakeholders in actions of co-design.

Urban Regulation on Commons (Legal Framework) should give the opportunity for: 1) communities to point out places they need for collective use; 2) public authorities to formally recognize inputs from society; 3) communities empowered and delegated for the re-use.

Action 5 "Raise awareness for public libraries and their new tasks on a European and National level"

The action was concerned with raising political awareness for public libraries at the European and national levels for their potential as "third places", their contribution to the development of skills like literacy and

digital sovereignty, and to strengthening social cohesion, democratic participation and urban development in general.

The objective was to bring public libraries to the fore at the European level. The action showed how libraries can support the EU achieving its goals and provided recommendations how the European level could support and cooperate more with public libraries as important urban partners and multipliers for promoting the European idea and common societal goals for the future. Combining their wide reach into neighbourhoods with a very high level of trust among citizens, their position as partners for urban development is to a large extent undiscovered or underestimated.

Action 6 "Urban Strategic Plan for Culture and Cultural Heritage Enhancement"

Even though all cities declared that urban cultural heritage is important, built heritage and culture are usually implemented through different and fragmented interventions. A clear strategy for the enhancement of culture and cultural heritage is needed.

The action proposes a model of urban strategic planning systems where culture and cultural heritage are considered beyond the categories of "protection" or "enhancement" used by "traditional" plans. A strategic model is easily adoptable by European cities as it can be modulated and articulated according to local needs and territorial specificities.

The effort of setting up this planning model will represent a way to improve current urban planning tools by making them more interdisciplinary, by giving a more extensive outlook to urban heritage in a broad sense, and by finding the right balance between cultural, social, economic, environmental, and technical aspects of planning, design, building and adaptive re-use.

Action 7 "Data collection and smart use applied to the management of tourist flows"

Make easier data access and sharing for public interest to enhance Smart Destination planning and management and improve ICT tools in order to better enjoy the city and its surroundings, thus promoting sustainable tourism, livability and well-being.

Capitalize the experience of the CCH Partnership in the current programming period 2021-2027 to boost the role of cities as drivers of sustainable development, cradle of innovation and adequate scale for demonstration and experimentation.

Action 8 "Guiding Principles for Resilience and Integrated Approaches in Risk and Heritage Management in European Cities"

Urban heritage often helps to shape collective identities, to create a sense of belonging within urban communities and to mobilize civil society. Cultural heritage is the outcome of a long-term emerging and adapting development and has withstood hazards and threats. Despite being a source of resilience, cultural heritage is nevertheless particularly vulnerable in its existence.

This is why the major concern of this action has been to evaluate and foster the link between the fields of risk management and cultural heritage management to contribute to the development of an effective integrated approach to risk and cultural heritage management in European cities.

Action 9 "Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework"

The action has aimed to prepare the background for a problem-solving-oriented, multi-level, multi-stakeholder European Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework, creating policies and programmes.

When launched in 2019, the European Green Deal – aiming at reducing EU greenhouse gas emissions and at achieving climate neutrality in the EU – did not include culture and cultural heritage in its set of transformative policies. However, cultural heritage, culture and the arts can support the just transition and climate resilience goals pursued by the EU, as the European Cultural Heritage Green Paper by Europa Nostra clearly demonstrated.

While confronted with the urgent need of protecting their cultural heritage, cities could greatly benefit from unleashing the potential that arts, culture, and cultural heritage offer for strengthening resilience, driving climate action, supporting transitions to sustainable development, stimulating social awareness, and encouraging participation.

Action 10 "Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage"

Despite their rich potential, dissonant heritage sites do not receive sufficient public attention or support in many parts of Europe. They are neglected, not accessible to the public, or threatened by demolition and decay.

The action highlighted the need to better explore the potential of dissonant heritage, especially in smaller towns and remote areas, understanding their richness and broadening their impact for society, urban and regional development, cultural tourism, and education.

Acknowledging the architectural heritage and historical significance of dissonant heritage across Europe and activating its full potential require a sensitive, careful, and integrated approach that involves a variety of actors. The action has worked to create awareness and specific tailored research to develop strategic recommendations on how to better integrate dissonant heritage in sustainable urban policy, as well as a toolkit for local practice (expected to be published in 2024).

Action 11 "Local cultural services fostering social inclusion: identification of cities' research needs and peer-learning activities"

The action calls for stronger direct interactions with city governments, including sharing knowledge on cities' precise research needs, as well as EU-funded long-term peer-learning programmes for cities. Specifically, results from action 11's survey on cities' research needs on culture and social inclusion show that local governments need to conduct specific research if they want to plan better local policies and cultural policies that have positive impacts on social inclusion. This list of precise research needs be taken into account by public and private organisations that fund research at European level (i.e. European Commission, European Parliament, universities, research centres, NGOs, philanthropies etc.) when shaping future calls for proposals and other research initiatives.

Long-term European peer-learning schemes for cities are smart investments. Local leaders are committed to become more resource efficient, more resilient, more inclusive and to work more with citizens to better understand their needs and to better deliver innovative solutions for local challenges.

Sharing experience through peer-learning programmes such as Cultural Heritage in Action (the European peer-learning programmes for cities and regions on cultural heritage, led by Eurocities) and the URBACT programme allows cities to develop and grow: it is important that cities can continue to learn from each other in the future.

The five synthetic recommendations at CCH Partnership Level

1 - FOSTERING A BROADER UNDERSTANDING of culture and cultural heritage in European cities

It is of utmost importance to mainstream a broader understanding of European cities as well as of their culture and cultural heritage, taking into consideration the natural, built and otherwise created, tangible as well as the intangible dimensions (i.e., such as local traditions, local know-how and skills). European cities and their heritage are not to be referred to just one historical period or just to the city centre. Besides, the CCH Partnership agrees on the importance to not just focus on the officially protected heritage or cultural artefacts preserved in a museum. Rather, it is important to take into consideration all the places that are indispensable for a local community and that constitute the identity of a place: public and open spaces worthy of development, rehabilitation and/or preservation, considering the "uncomfortable" or "dissonant" heritage as well. It is necessary to raise awareness for culture and cultural heritage in a broader understanding, acknowledging their nature as integrated and interconnected systems rather than as stand-alone objects, as well as developing long-term and integrated strategies and tools to identify culture and cultural heritage in all their diversity and complexity. The CCH Partnership stresses the importance of fostering and applying a broad and holistic understanding of culture and cultural heritage in future EU-legislations, funding-programmes and initiatives.

2- PROMOTING INTEGRATED APPROACHES in practice

The Partnership emphasizes the importance of integrated approaches in urban development in order to foster and promote culture and cultural heritage in European cities. Culture and cultural heritage can be understood as one key element of and driver for supporting sustainable urban development and transformative climate action. Establishing integrated approaches that strengthen links between individual planning departments and that take cultural heritage and low-threshold municipal cultural facilities, such as public libraries, public music and art schools or municipal museums, as starting points for further urban development should be the guiding principle in the practice of European cities. Moreover, funding programs that focus on integrated and long-term approaches and thus relate to culture and cultural heritage in their social, ecological, and economic dimensions should be endorsed at the European level in the future.

In addition, the scale of the territory should be regarded and treated in an integrated way: Urban areas do not function in a vacuum and in isolation from the rest of the territory in which they are located, as many functions vital for cities are located outside their limits (e.g. water supply, air filtering/ quality, energy production, etc.), and often there is a common culture and cultural heritage both in urban life and context and beyond. Therefore, the Partnership encourages national, regional and local decision-makers and stakeholders to develop approaches that reflect and consider solutions that go beyond the urban area, including functional urban areas (FUA), peripheries, peri-urban, in-between spaces, non-urban spaces, and rural communities.

3- INCREASING RESILIENCE of culture and cultural heritage for communities and cities

Culture and cultural heritage play an important role in increasing resilience of the European city in two meaningful ways: They are resilient to disasters and crises, and they can increase societies' resilience to those disasters and crises. The Partnership highlights the importance of culture and cultural heritage for strengthening resilience of European cities, as multi-layered, interconnected systems and as a valuable source to recover from crises and disasters or to counteract problematic trends and developments. For instance, culture and cultural heritage can build resilience by strengthening the identity and skills of local citizens. Moreover, cultural institutions have actively responded to changing conditions over the years and can likewise support adaptation to climate change and contribute to a just and ecological transition. Overall, traditional skills, knowledge, arts and crafts (e.g., using traditional building techniques and building materials) contribute to the resilience of places through strengthening local economy and identity.

Resilience is also relevant in the sense that in turbulent times, cultural institutions have to maintain a high level of trust that the population has in them (for instance, public libraries are largely considered neutral information providers, but can never be completely neutral e.g. towards political forces that work with fake news or continue to deny man-made climate change).

Hence, to safeguard culture and cultural heritage from a variety of threads and hazards as well as to increase urban resilience, the Partnership suggests that EU-activities should strengthen the promotion and funding options

- of traditional crafts as well as the specific skills needed in the fields of culture and cultural heritage, especially in smaller towns and cities, to foster capacity building
- of peer-learning activities in this field, more generally, on local policies aiming to increase the resilience of local cultural actors (through trainings, knowledge exchange, new services provided by local administrations to cultural organisations, etc.)
- of emergency interventions (e.g. in the field of disaster risk management) and
- of abilities, which have become more important in the digital age and the growing diversity of urban societies, e.g. the capability to identify disinformation and fake news or to communicate and discuss contrary viewpoints in a constructive and peaceful way.

Despite their inherent resilience and their important contribution to strengthening European cities' resilience, culture and cultural heritage are vulnerable to multiple man-made and natural hazards – as for instance the COVID-19 pandemic and the massive destructions of the current war in Ukraine show.

Developing strategies and approaches and implementing them to be better prepared in case of disasters is of utmost importance and should also be considered in the EU's follow up-activities – this requires understanding and mitigating the risks culture and cultural heritage might face (risk analysis), setting up specific local culture and cultural heritage emergency plans , elaborating prioritisation lists for heritage objects, and implementing prevention measures and emergency training prior to emergencies to assure a swift and integrated response in case of disaster.

4- Understanding the role of culture and cultural heritage in SOCIAL INCLUSION, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

Through multi-sectorial integrated territorial policies, culture and cultural heritage, whether they are built, written, otherwise created or natural, tangible or intangible, are driving factors for both social cohesion and profitable long-lasting development. Culture and heritage play a key role in integrated sustainable territorial/urban development and social interaction. Rehabilitating spaces through the recognition of the built and natural specificities of the places gathered from collaborative processes with local communities means: i) building wealth without consuming land and ii) enhancing the beauty of places (open spaces or buildings) recognised as part of the local identity, otherwise named "common goods" (also highlighted in the New Leipzig Charter).

Fostering a sound integrated sustainable territorial/urban regeneration means connecting place-based and people-based approaches: paying particular attention to the local know-how and creativity, this is to say the smart specialisation strategies of a specific place (being part of intangible heritage), the quality of the habitat and the landscape (being part of built and natural heritage), and the re-creation or recognition of the identities of places and people. Ensuring access, knowledge, use and production of cultural content and cultural heritage as a collective good means making culture and heritage more usable by and accessible to all social groups. As a result, it is important to give the appropriate and major role to culture and cultural heritage as driving tools to foster sound sustainable territorial/urban development.

The CCH Partnership urges urban and regional decision-makers and stakeholders to consider that innovation and creativity can take many forms and can go beyond technology and digital applications, thus broadening people's (especially younger generations') understanding and vision. Indeed, culture and cultural heritage can be a key source of innovation for overcoming social challenges. Therefore, member states, regions and local governments should actively search for innovation and creativity beyond technology, data and internet-related applications. The Partnership encourages them to reflect on and explore social, environmental, organisational, processual and further innovations.

Last but not least: the CCH Partnership recognises the value of exchanges of knowledge, practices and approaches primarily among cities, but also including member states and regions following the principles of CONVERGENCE OF URBAN POLICY AND APPROACHES THROUGH EXCHANGING URBAN PRACTICES as a means to enhance local administrative capacity building, smart specialisation and innovation as well as win-win approaches, codesign and cocreation.

5- PROTECTING EUROPEAN VALUES AND DEMOCRACY

Culture and cultural heritage can make fundamental contributions to building and protecting democracy in Europe in various ways and on different levels: our joint history with its connecting events are the cornerstones for European democratic values. They have manifested themselves in the built, tangible (but also intangible) heritage and its specific institutions. This holds particularly true for public spaces – these complex, multi-layered spaces are places of freedom of expression and places where democracy is lived and strengthened. These qualities are unique and very characteristic for the European city, and they are deeply rooted in culture and cultural heritage as well. In addition, public libraries increasingly expand the public realm described above and also exemplify these values – as places of education, creation, meeting, exchange and participation. In addition, many European countries share a history of dictatorship in the 20th century, and the difficult heritage they left behind bears an important witness to the history of our democracies today. Hence, dealing with the different and differently assessed cultural inheritances from this continent's past not only fulfils a compulsory task of political, cultural, and historical education and contributes to the communication of history in the EU. It also supports educational work in the service of our European dialogue and integration.

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