CULTURE - AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

During the World Urban Forum 10 in Abu Dhabi, 8-13 February, the theme Connecting Culture and Innovation was the focus of UCLG Africa's sessions that took stock of the emerging innovative approaches and practices that harness culture and innovation as drivers for sustainable development. Culture provides the connections between urbanisation, innovation and pride as a basis for achieving inclusive, safe, and resilient cities and to this end, UCLG Africa's side events were organised to explore how Africa's Rich Cultural Heritage specifically lends itself to the sustainable development of Africa's cities.

African Capitals of Culture WUF10 Abu Dhabi 8-13 February 2020

What Culture means to Africa's Sustainable Development.

One of UCLG Africa's newest projects, the "African Capitals of Culture," consolidates culture as the fourth pillar of the sustainable development for African cities and territories. "Culture is at the beginning and end of all development," said poet-president Leopold Sedar Senghor. From the cities of Rabat in North Africa to Maputo in Southern Africa, rapid urbanization is impacting on city development creating many challenges, but also emerging opportunities. The programme will bring together African cities, home to immeasurable cultural richness and diversity, to share best practice on how this cultural wealth and expression can contribute to the development of cities and its populations.

African Capitals of Culture provides a rightful place to the continent's cultural and artistic expressions. Can we imagine sustainable and human urban development without reflection, debate and cultural visions? European development models have shown their limitations and Africa is now facing an immense challenge to invent its own solutions in line with its realities. A simple example of cultural expression being infused into the development process can be seen below where the architectural firm, NLE, worked with 100,000 residents of waterside slums in Lagos to create a concept for floating homes that is culturally specific and resilient.

*Architecture firm NLE has been working with the residents of a 100,000 strong
waterside slum district in Lagos to create floating homes in the lagoon.*

The cultural sector contributes not only to the economic development of cities and territories, but also to social cohesion, well-being and individual identity. Involving communities in the development of resilient cites can create spaces that reflect the cultural identity and helps to create a sense of pride for the disadvantaged communities that live there.

Makoko, Lagos Floating School

Senegalese mothers and artists use art to stop their children from leaving

Conversely, culture can be used to influence and advocate for change, for example, how cultural expressions can speak to topics like migration that is impacting greatly on many communities in Africa.

It is reasons like this that drive cultural pride, social cohesion and inclusive participation and why UCLG Africa will continue to promote culture as a specific dimension of sustainable development for cities in Africa. From the promotion of cultural policies that celebrate African heritage to the development of innovative tools promoting music and the arts for the development of the hospitality and tourism sector, UCLG Africa will provide collaborative spaces for African cities to share best practice with each other.

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In order to create effective cultural policies this requires information mapping and data captured on cultural industries in any given city to effectively plan cultural interventions. Between 2015 – 2016, Morocco went through this development process, which they will now share with other African cities and will include:

- The development of a comprehensive survey to identify the population's cultural practices and the cultural structures and infrastructures.
- Developing an online tool with relevant information on cultural industries and heritage sites;
- Organizing multi-stakeholder events that include local authorities, civil society organizations and cultural practitioners, to prepare recommendations that inform stakeholders of all policy development in the field of culture.

Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi
UCLG-AFRICA : Secretary General

With all the above providing a strong starting point for cities that put culture at the heart of their development.

Africa's First Capital of Culture

Rabat - Africa's first Capital of Culture was announced by UCLG Africa on the 4th February and will celebrate this city's most illustrious heritage monuments. As part of Morocco's Vision 2020 programme, the country aims to become one of the world's top 20 tourist destinations in the world.

Established in 1985, European Capitals of Culture have become flagship programmes for local development and provides international influence for the designated city. The African Capitals of Culture, while creating their own mechanism, has the ambition to play a similar role on a continental scale: to strengthen the contribution of culture to the development of cities, to stimulate reflections on sustainable urban and human development and to facilitate the circulation of artistic expressions, imagination, knowledge and skills across the continent. 2020 will see a series of workshops and exchanges on the development of appropriate cultural policies, not only with the designated Capital of Culture, but also 5 other sister cities in the 5 regions of Africa.

Follow our stories on culture from around Africa through our channels including our website www.uclga.org and share your thoughts with us on [f] @UCLGAfrica and [twitter] @UCLGAfrica on how culture has, or can, transform your city.