

THE CITY OF ANGERS' CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY CHARTER



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governance **cross-sectorial**
participation **network** **inclusion** **evaluation**
monitoring **cooperation**
citizenship **access**

1. Context

The city of Angers is home to around 150,000 inhabitants. 32% of its residences are social housing with an average income lower than the national average. Angers is also characterised by its rich, cultural and artistic landscapes and diverse provision of culture. The city of Angers currently considers cultural diversity as a common treasure and is committed to encouraging cultural expression in the most diverse forms and places. In order to allow communal development, this diversity should not only be defended, but encouraged. As such, the city of Angers has been encouraging cultural and artistic experimentation, such as 'pratiques de liberté' (freedom practices), opportunities for gatherings and emotional experiences in order to create new landmarks. These gatherings and exchanges between different environments and cultures help to overcome their mutual fear of each other. They facilitate dialogue and allow citizens of Angers to live happily within their communities.

It was within this context that the Culture and Solidarity Charter was established for the whole Angers territory and its different neighbourhoods.

2. Project origin and objective

Since 1995, the city of Angers' policy has been characterised by diagnoses and convergent thinking between sectors for cultural and social actions: for many reasons, some people have not been able to participate in the city's artistic and cultural life.

In 1998, the city of Angers started supporting local partners in the fields of social and cultural action and adopted the Culture and Solidarity Charter: in order to change perceptions, recognize different cultures, encourage cultural discovery and exchange, create a network between people and develop feelings of belonging towards the city and city life.

The project's objective was to allow people who had financial difficulties, felt isolated or felt disadvantaged to feel like real citizens through the discovery of different forms of art and culture. This discovery enables everyone to express themselves through culture, it encourages sharing and openness to other different perspectives, and helps people form connections with others.

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3. Content and development

The Culture and Solidarity Charter was adopted in 1998 and is the first text on communal cultural and social action. It was rewritten in 2004 and 2012 to bring it closer to current practices and realities, such as: redefining culture and solidarity and underlining new goals. The Culture and Solidarity Charter defines the project's values, objectives and modes of operation for each partner to comply with.

This communal, transversal and interdependent project forms a federation of participating structures (associations, community centres and cultural and artistic centres are signatories of the Charter), which support and develop projects that prioritise people with financial difficulties, or those who feel isolated or disadvantaged and are therefore not/no longer participating in city or neighbourhood life. This project supports their artistic and cultural discovery.

The actions that have been implemented are varied in order to provide artistic and cultural programs for adults, women, retired and working populations, as well as young people and families: outings to live shows at the cinema (single price tickets at £1.50 each, thanks to support from the city of Angers), interventions for different art forms, encounters with artists, discovery of places of creativity, practical workshops for artistic and cultural expression and collective and participatory creative projects. These various actions are opportunities for meeting people and for emotional experiences that work towards avoiding social isolation and exclusion. Almost 100 cultural outings are organised every year for around 5,000 participants.

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4. Main contributors

The signatories of the Culture and Solidarity Charter represent 55 partners, which are scattered all over the Angers territory, these include: resident associations, social integration, charities, community centres, services and structures for creation, dissemination and cultural and artistic mediation. These

associations support people and implement joint projects to encourage a collective dynamic among the target population. The cultural structures offer a selection of programs.

The contributors, who are supported by the city of Angers, are involved in a partnership approach to jointly develop different projects (pooling of resources and networking of contributors) and to permanently question the established guidelines and practices (participatory monitoring, assessment and development of the Culture and Solidarity Charter).

The Culture and Solidarity Charter represents a great platform for exchange and experience for partners and neighbourhood contributors (associations, artists, residents, professionals) who are often also associated with the implementation of actions thanks to commitment to this approach from community centres.



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5. Assessment

This project has encouraged a working partnership and networking between associations, cultural structures and contributors from different neighbourhoods, as well as between the neighbourhoods themselves. Changes to everyday life for participants include: discovery or rediscovery of cultural venues, a feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood and the city in general, a taste for outings in the city and motivation for attending cultural and artistic programs. Support from the city of Angers is still essential for some associations, particularly those who are having implementation difficulties (difficulty mobilizing participants).

The implementation of the Culture and Solidarity Charter requires a real commitment from contributors in the area, so that they are united around shared values. This working partnership takes time and the project requires real co-creation and co-implementation from its various partners. It requires a policy framework (guidelines) including: a budget, co-creation (collective project), a networking of contributors, management (an elected representative and a referral department), support, shared governance between contributors and regular reviewing and monitoring. It is also necessary to work on a smaller scale with neighbourhoods and cultural and social structures that may be interested, in order to properly explain the objectives of the Culture and Solidarity Charter and its modes of operation. This is the only

way that the project has been able to establish itself throughout the area among various bridging structures.

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6. Relative Information

Website: <http://www.angers.fr/vie-pratique/culture/la-politique-culturelle/charte-culture-et-solidarite/>

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