

“ART AND CULTURE FOR ALL” IN THE CITY OF CUAUTLA



ARTS CAPACITY CITIZENSHIP **SOCIAL**
PUBLIC SPACE **EDUCATION** **YOUTH**
STRATEGY IDENTITY PEACE

1. Background

Cuatla is the second-largest city in the eastern part of the state of Morelos. The region covers 153,651 square kilometres and has a population of 194,786 people, 78% of whom live in urban areas, and 22% in rural areas. The city of Cuatla was the backdrop for key events in the independence and revolution movements. With this rich historical past, it has become known as “The Heroic and Historic Cuatla”. In 2012, it was classified as a “Historic Monument Zone”.

With respect to culture and education infrastructure, Cuatla has 176 buildings that house 5 public libraries. There are 2,237 teachers that serve 48,063 students across all levels of education. Additionally, the municipality has a total of 35 parks, gardens, and green areas distributed throughout



its 30 neighbourhoods, which are used as civic centres, meeting points, and recreation spaces for inhabitants.

2. Cuautla and Culture

In its section on culture, the 2016 - 2018 Municipal Development Plan focused on the restoration of the social fabric, the safeguarding of public space, and the protection of children and youth from a strong wave of violence affecting both the municipality and the country. The Directorate-General for Education and Culture assessed the diverse needs of the population with respect to lifelong learning. It carried out diagnoses and meetings with local cultural stakeholders, alongside help from the City Hall, which cumulatively helped the department develop a strategic programme focused on the performing and visual arts.

THE 2016-2018 MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF CUAUTLA FOCUSES ON PROMOTING VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ARTS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE SOCIAL FABRIC AND PROMOTE PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN PUBLIC SPACES.

The “Art and Culture for All” initiative involves the development of arts training activities, such as music, dance, visual arts, and theatre, in addition to organizing artistic or cultural events in each of the neighbourhoods, and providing basic education at the city’s schools. “Art and Culture for All”, has been in place for almost the entire three years. This strategic approach has been implemented relative to the city’s educational infrastructure and the urban environment. The initiative is aimed at children and youth, so as to encourage artistic expression in younger children and adolescents in a way that is



standardized and consistent, thereby promoting universal values and citizen coexistence in public spaces.

“Art and Culture for All” was also created within a context of the internationalization in Cuautla, whose government, through the Office of Migration Affairs and International Relations, has managed to establish cross-cutting connections between municipal policies and many of the policies from international agendas. As a result, the Cuautla municipal government has been present at events such as the Habitat III Conference in Quito (2016), the UCLG World Council in Bogotá, the UCLG Culture Summit in Jeju, and the Forum on Learning Cities. Furthermore, the city hosted the presentation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by United Nations Volunteers and UN Habitat Mexico.

In 2017, an assessment was carried out by the Municipal Planning Institute, on the status of implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into different administrative areas of the municipal government. The institute found that “Art and Culture for All” complies primarily with Goals 4, 10, and 16 because it provides more opportunities for the entire population and disadvantaged groups in particular. It incorporates arts education into the daily activities of children and youth, and it promotes peace and justice. Additionally, the program reinforces municipal grants to libraries, the House of Culture, other public spaces, and generates wealth by emphasizing the value of artists' work.

3. Objectives and Project Implementation

3.1 Primary and Specific Objectives

The main objective is the restoration of the social fabric in Cuautla while safeguarding public space and protecting children and youth from a strong wave of violence affecting the city. This is to be achieved through arts training for children and youth in music, dance, visual arts, and theatre for the promotion of creativity, capacity building, and peaceful coexistence.

Other objectives include:

- Creating, promoting, and developing arts training programmes aimed at offering professional courses for youth to boost their arts and culture development.
- Managing adequate resources to establish infrastructure for art and culture activities (“Institute of Art and Culture”).



- Protecting public spaces by organizing arts projects in them.
- Attracting young people with artistic talent to promote Cuautla locally and nationally through their participation in events that reflect the city's level of diverse arts scene.

3.2 Project Development

Main Actions Carried Out

Cultural development programmes were implemented for children and youth. Through “Art and Culture for All”, the youth sector has become involved in cultural development programmes, which have helped to repair the social fabric, protect public spaces, and shelter vulnerable populations from violence. Together, this helps emphasize all that young creators have to offer.

Workshops generally encompass performing arts and local shows in music, dance, visual arts, and theatre. Classes are taught by specialized professors, which helps ensure the quality of students' work and foster their artistic growth in different areas. Likewise, to reach a wider audience, arts training programmes are kept open 6 days a week from Monday to Saturday, alternating activities and providing morning and evening timeslots.

THE PROJECT PROVIDES ADEQUATE SPACES FOR PRESENTING YOUTH ARTISTS' PROJECTS, WHICH HELPS REVIVE AND RENOVATE SPACES IN DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGHOUT THE CITY.

Preservation and Renovation of Spaces



This project is ensuring the protection and renovation of “La Casa de la Cultura”. This will be the headquarters of the Institute of Art and Culture where arts and culture activities are taught, which will serve as a training hub for the city’s youth. The space will provide people with a more complete and harmonious level of development, along with values that will help them face future challenges in life.

It is crucial that spaces in the surrounding areas continue to be revitalized. In fact, 14 neighbourhoods were specifically proposed, indirectly benefiting at least 18 neighbourhoods and other areas. These 14 were selected after the results of the 2017 study, and included participation and support from the general population. The location of these neighbourhoods is strategic in order to optimize the impact on the entire municipality.

In the medium and long term, agreements are planned with state art schools to provide professional support, thereby strengthening arts initiatives and achieving set goals. Necessary steps are also in place for involving the State Government, the State Congress, and/or private initiatives in order to gather economic resources that will aid in the promotion and strengthening of the Institute of Art and Culture. Funding will also support the incorporation and official recognition of the programme through CEMAEM and/or UAEM, with a permanent staff that can ensure that the project continues.

4. Impact

4.1 Direct Impact



Impact on Local Government

The “Art and Culture for All” programme began its activity with the emergence of the current administration. To date, there are 30 locations providing related initiatives in the Historic Capital of Morelos, 27 neighbourhoods, and 3 expansion areas.

With the support of the local government, stages that were initially only available for project activities have been used for other initiatives. Civic squares, such as the Zócalo, Alameda Central, or the South Revolution Park, have been added to neighbourhoods and primary schools. These are spaces of musical expression for a large number of children, youth, and adults from Cuautla.

Impact on Culture and on Local Cultural Actors

The project has also had a positive impact on the cultural and artistic sectors of the city. By opening workshops in different neighbourhoods, it has created the possibility for artists and educators to share their knowledge, experiences, and stories with students. Both temporary and permanent jobs have been created as a result.

WITH A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, THE PROJECT HAS HELPED INVOLVE CHILDREN, YOUTH, ADULTS, AND THE ELDERLY, SOME OF WHOM ARE MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY.

Impact on the Territory and Population

In some workshops, the issue of environmental protection has been addressed, especially in the use of materials in fine arts. Likewise, progress has been made in the revitalization of public spaces. These are used to create a shared social environment that reflects the vibrant cultural life of the neighbourhood and its people, while encouraging families to meet and establish healthy habits around



mobile devices and online social networks. Additionally, the project has helped foster an important feeling of pride and belonging among the citizens of Cuautla.

Assessment

To evaluate of the scope, successes, and areas of opportunity of the project, the following have been established:

- Organizational meetings
- Supervision and support for coordinators through strategic approaches and meetings with the workshops based on specific topics (monthly or when required)
- Logbooks to measure progress in the school community

The total of 125 presentations by students is also an important indicator for measuring the programme's success.

4.2 Key Factors

One of the most important parts of this project is that it responds to a previous need in the population. The Directorate-General for Education and Culture started this strategic project for the performing, fine, and visual arts so that the population could develop their skills by taking back their spaces, and engaging in free activities that provides greater access for all citizens.

4.3 Ongoing Work

In mid-2018, a global evaluation was carried out in order to make adjustments and consolidate the project so that a new administration would continue it. This will involve working alongside the Municipal Planning Institute so that it can make recommendations to new governments on the importance of monitoring and improving the project.

Once the programme is fully evaluated, "Art and Culture for All" will be shared on forums of city networks such as UCLG as a good practice, which will open up new opportunities for learning about similar initiatives in other cities, and ultimately complement this project. The participation of unionized

municipal employees in supporting, making proposals to, and accompanying new authorities will be another way to ensure ongoing work.



THE PROJECT FOCUSES ON DEVELOPING ARTS AND CULTURE AS CORE ASPECTS OF URBAN LIFE AND COEXISTENCE. IT PROVIDES TRAINING FOR PARTICIPATING, COMMITTED, AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS WITHIN THEIR OWN ENVIRONMENT.

5. Further Information

Cuautla was a candidate for the third UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (November 2017 - May of 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2018, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices implemented under Agenda 21 for culture.

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