



The San Angel Flower Fair



HUMAN RIGHTS
HISTORY COMMUNITY
CULTURE DIVERSITY
MEMORY HERITAGE
GOVERNANCE
TRADITION IDENTITY

1. Context

The Flower Fair is a tradition of the former town of San Ángel, located in the south-west of Mexico City (now part of the city), which has been celebrated for 165 years. This place stands out for its marvellous architecture from the viceregal era, with cobblestone streets and mansions from the XVII century to the end of the XIX century. Born from the roots of the ancient pre-Hispanic town of Tenanitla, San Ángel was established as a religious settlement, initially administered by the religious order of the Dominican friars, and later, by the Carmelite friars. Over time, San Ángel became an important cultural centre, both for the Álvaro Obregón Municipality and for Mexico City. The Federal Government declared the site a Historic



Monument Zone on 11 December 1986 and the local government declared it a tangible and intangible cultural heritage site on 5 August 2010.

2. Mexico and culture

The Álvaro Obregón municipality is one of the 16 districts comprising Mexico City. Different cultural expressions converge here, such as patron saint festivities and traditions like the Dance of the Muleteers, the Chinelos dances, the burning of "chimos" or "judas", the lighting of the "first candle" during Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead), the multicoloured carpets of Santa Rosa Xochiac, the representation of the Passion of Christ during the Holy Week festivities, and many more; examples of sculptural art in the public space and an extensive cultural infrastructure comprising 10 museums, 23 public libraries, 10 theatres, 15 historical archives, 13 cinemas, 3 photo libraries and a sound library and 18 galleries. In this context, the San Ángel Flower Fair is one of the main festivities held in the Álvaro Obregón municipality. This fair was institutionalised in 1857, when the then president, Ignacio Comonfort, issued a decree to include it in the civic and religious calendar. However, this colourful festival has its antecedents from the viceregal era, when the Discalced Carmelite friars, who settled in San Ángel, instituted the celebration of the festivities of the Virgen del Carmen: every year, around the 16th of July - the day dedicated to the Virgin - the producers of the highlands and the chinampera area came to the town with their harvest of flowers to celebrate the patronal feast and sell their products. Although some customs and festivities have been lost over time, the Flower Fair has remained alive and has recovered many traditions rooted in the culture of San Ángel. It is, unquestionably, the oldest and most important festivity in Mexico City.

THE INITIATIVE SEEKS TO SAFEGUARD THE TRADITIONAL SAN ÁNGEL FLOWER FAIR AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE THAT FOSTERS IDENTITY AND PROMOTES SOCIAL COHESION.

3. Project goals

Main aim

Identity and social cohesion through culture: to guarantee the safeguarding of the traditional San Ángel Flower Fair, as it constitutes a cultural practice that has been fostering identity and promoting social cohesion among the inhabitants of Obregón and, in particular, among the population of San Ángel for the past 165 years.

Specific goals

- Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.
- Recovering traditions that have been lost or weakened due to the influence of contemporary cultural trends.
- Promoting cultural traditions among the inhabitants of Mexico City, in general, and among the inhabitants of San Ángel and Obregón in particular.
- Supporting local floriculturists and flower and plant product manufacturers.
- Contributing to the preservation of historical memory.
- Contributing to the dissemination of biocultural heritage and sustainability ethics.
- Encouraging local economic activity by triggering virtuous circles of cultural consumption.
- Stimulating cultural tourism in the south-east of the municipality.

THE FLOWER FAIR IS LINKED TO THE 16 PRINCIPLES OF AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE AS IT ENCOMPASSES THE RECOGNITION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS A SUBSTANTIVE HERITAGE FOR HUMANITY AS WELL AS FOR LOCAL POPULATIONS.

4. Development of the project

The cultural policies concerning the Flower Fair are: the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage; the exercise of cultural rights to guarantee the propagation of tradition bearers; cultural diversity as the main heritage of humanity; culture and the environment as common goods; the recognition of cultural rights as an indissoluble part of human rights; the promotion and defence of human rights, the inclusion of social actors in cultural policy design, the promotion of a culture of peace through heritage and creative diversity to facilitate integral human development.

The fair becomes a cultural platform where artists from different performing disciplines perform for a diverse audience. Local floriculture is also benefited, as flower producers from the original towns of Mexico City, such as Santa Rosa Xochiac and San Bartolo Ameyalco, Xochimilco, Milpa Alta, Tlalpan and Magdalena Contreras, find a space to promote and sell their products, as well as those who transform flowers and plants into by-products.

The fair has managed to preserve practices such as the decoration of local houses and mansions' balconies; the exhibition of traditional costumes; the exhibition and sale of different plants and flowers; painting and poetry contests, among many others. This fair also recognises the dahlia as the national flower of Mexico, which, by presidential decree of Adolfo López Mateos in 1963, became the symbol of Mexican floriculture.

Currently, the objectives are: to position the fair as a tourist attraction; to establish San Ángel as a cultural centre; to activate and strengthen a variety of productive ecosystems; to promote virtuous circles; to consolidate the Álvaro Obregón Mayor's Office as an ally for culture; and to manage the fair as a good cultural practice.



The organisation and general coordination are under the responsibility of the Álvaro Obregón Municipality. The following agencies and organisations participate with activities: Culture Secretariat of Mexico City, the Board of the Flower Fair, A.C., the Mexican Association of the Dahlia or Acocoxochitl, A.C., flower producers from Santa Rosa Xochiac, San Bartolo Ameyalco and other districts, the Museum of El Carmen, the Casa del Risco Museum, the Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo House-Studio Museum and the Hellenic Cultural Centre, among others.

On 20 September 2013, the Government of the Federal District issued a decree "declaring the Flower Fair Festival, which takes place annually in July in San Ángel, an intangible cultural heritage of Mexico City", the purpose of which was to contribute to the measures to safeguard this cultural asset.

5. Impacts and evaluation

The Flower Fair has a positive impact on the population by contributing to the preservation of their cultural traditions. Local floriculturists are economically benefited by being able to sell their products during the celebration. The local population also benefits from the cultural activities offered during this festivity. On the other hand, shops and restaurants are favoured by the high number of visitors that the fair attracts. Finally, the fair is a space that guarantees and contributes to the full exercise of cultural rights.

6. The initiative in the global frameworks

The Flower Fair has acted as a means for the reproduction of popular culture in San Ángel and Álvaro Obregón. It is linked to the 16 principles of Agenda 21 as it encompasses the recognition of cultural diversity as a substantive heritage for humanity as well as for local populations. The precept of cultural development from local to global is specifically expressed in this tradition, as the social actors and institutions involved in its celebration reflect a framework of democratic, participatory and inclusive governance.

In terms of the 2030 Agenda and the UN SDGs, the economic dynamics triggered among service providers, producers, entrepreneurs, artists, etc., are important to contribute to local development, especially in San Ángel.

Cultural rights, governance, gender equality, social participation, protection and care for the environment are elements linked to all the activities that take place within the framework of the fair.

7. Further information

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