

KULTUR IN THE CITY - A CULTURAL FESTIVAL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

**SOCIAL, CULTURAL, RESILIENCE, INCLUSION,
DIVERSITY, ARTS, CARE, COVID,
CULTURAL RIGHTS, ACCESS**


1. Mannheim and culture

Mannheim is a blueprint for modern urban societies. With a high percentage of migrant population and constituted by a diverse society, the city has committed to a culture of “emotional and social stabilization” to keep a society resilient even in times of crisis. In this regard, it is open to new influences and acts as a role model for peaceful coexistence for over 170 nations. Also, in 2014, the United Nations awarded Mannheim the title of “UNESCO City of Music”.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The general aim is to lead distance and differences through culture on the path of commonalities and dealing with the others otherness. For this, a space for encounters, exchange and creativity was created. Everyone was welcomed, regardless of their social status, because all people need and have the right to access and take part in culture.



THE GENERAL AIM IS TO LEAD DISTANCE AND DIFFERENCES THROUGH CULTURE ON THE PATH OF COMMONALITIES, AS WELL AS DEALING WITH THE OTHERS OTHERNESS THROUGH A SPACE FOR ENCOUNTERS, EXCHANGE AND CREATIVITY.

2.2. Project development

“Culture in the City” is an open-air festival, which was created during the peak of Covid-19 to continue making culture accessible. It involved cooperation with many cultural actors, 20 volunteers, 84 artists from the city and from different disciplines performed on 17 evenings.

The project consisted of three phases:

- i. Applying for money from a state government culture fund, curating and booking the artists, technicians and the stage.
- ii. Implementation with the help of many volunteers.
- iii. Evaluation and planning for the next few years.

This initiative was placed in the middle of the city, freely accessible (there was no entry fee) and visible to all, becoming an oasis for citizens and artists. Thus, the festival focused on socially disadvantaged people and those who otherwise had little or no access to culture due to long distances (the elderly and disabled) or their social and financial background.

In the open, wide garden of a church, the city came alive experiencing culture, as well as the diverse artistic spectrum that characterizes Mannheim as a City of Music, with music of different styles and cultures, readings, theater and more. People were invited to come together on chairs, benches or picnic blankets.

The project was significantly supported by the regional press and the employees of the cultural office. The cooperation between many different municipal cultural institutions as well as the cultural office and the church also constituted an important foundation, and the entire project was closely monitored by the employees of the Mannheim Cultural Office.



The festival was funded by the Culture Summer 2020 impulse program of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts (38.800€) and donations made by the audience and private persons. These aspects and the close cooperation with other actors in this city led to an increase in knowledge in our association, a strong identification of the volunteers, the artists and the public with their city as a cultural space and place of opportunity, even if external circumstances are difficult.

IN THE OPEN, WIDE GARDEN OF A CHURCH, THE CITY CAME ALIVE EXPERIENCING CULTURE, AS WELL AS THE DIVERSE ARTISTIC SPECTRUM THAT CHARACTERISES MANNHEIM AS A CITY OF MUSIC, WITH MUSIC OF DIFFERENT STYLES AND CULTURES, READINGS, THEATER AND MORE.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Through its cooperation with our association, the local government made a significant contribution to the implementation of the SDGs, which serve as the basis for the city's vision for 2030. Moreover, lasting alliances have been created. In cooperation with other local players, the initiative offered a space for networking, visibility and communication for 84 artists and the audience, while making culture accessible to everyone, thus contributing to the stabilization of urban society in its diversity.

For instance, the connection to the Keychange initiative (more female artists on stages) ensured an increase in female stage acts.



IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER LOCAL PLAYERS, THE INITIATIVE OFFERED A SPACE FOR NETWORKING, VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION, WHILE MAKING CULTURE ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE.

3.2. Assessment

The festival was evaluated through an audience survey and a survey among the artists. They included a depiction of participation, diversity, city culture and their importance for one's own life.

Also, it was possible to show the importance of participating in urban cultural life, which constituted a significantly positive point for our audience.

3.3. Key factors

The most important aspect of the festival was its openness to everyone, regardless of origin and social background, as well as the free entrance and the opportunity for the audience to freely move around. In addition, the location of the event facilitated that many people could simply drop by and attend the festival in a relaxed manner close to their place of residence. The family atmosphere that was developed through the involvement of so many different volunteers brought all these aspects together in a welcoming environment, which facilitated exchange among all those involved.

3.4. Continuity

Our project has been supported by the municipal cultural office since 2000, and also sponsored our festival with 5000 euros and network support in the contribution of cooperatives. At the same time, the employees of the cultural office provided answers to questions and formed a link between various institutions and offices. Also, a wide range of other training courses, free of charge, are being offered by the cultural office to the city's cultural workers. These will enable capacity building, which in turn, will positively impact the implementation of such projects in the future.

4. Further information

Mannheim was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (February 2022 – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Nadja Peter, Head of society, Mannheim, Germany, Baden-Wuerttemberg.

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