

# Forty Years after the World Conference on Cultural Policies-MONDIACULT 1982

## *A 40 años de la Conferencia Mundial sobre las Políticas Culturales-Mondiacult 1982*

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### **Abstract:**

Forty years on from MONDIACULT 1982, the issues on the table then remain as valid as ever. This article reviews the history, development and conclusions of MONDIACULT 1982, with emphasis on Mexico's participation and contribution, and the legacy that will live on beyond MONDIACULT 2022.

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### **Resumen:**

A cuarenta años de la realización de Mondiacult 1982, los temas abordados entonces siguen estando vigentes. En este artículo se repasan los antecedentes, el desarrollo y las conclusiones de Mondiacult 1982; se destaca la participación y los aportes de México así como el legado que trasciende a Mondiacult 2022.

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### **Key Words:**

MONDIACULT 1982, cultural policy, culture, Mexico, UNESCO.

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### **Palabras clave:**

Mondiacult 1982, política cultural, cultura, México, Unesco.



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Culture therefore covered artistic creation together with the interpretation, execution and dissemination of works of art, physical culture, sports and games and open-air activities, as well as the ways in which a society and its members expressed their feeling for beauty and harmony and their vision of the world, as much as their modes of scientific and technological creation and control of their natural environment.

MONDIACULT, Mexico, 1982

## Introduction

Forty years ago, the first World Conference on Cultural Policies—MONDIACULT 1982, convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), made a major contribution to the establishment of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.<sup>1</sup> The issues addressed then remain as valid as ever and the hope is that MONDIACULT 2022 will achieve full recognition and respect for human and cultural rights by means of participative processes that encompass

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<sup>1</sup> As recognized by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), see “Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development. UCLG Policy Statement,” November 17, 2010, at [https://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/zc\\_culture4pillarsd\\_eng.pdf](https://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/zc_culture4pillarsd_eng.pdf) (date of access: August 26, 2022). The document advocates that culture be deemed a pillar or specific dimension of sustainable development, interconnected with and just as important as the other three pillars.

governments, society, boards specializing in art and culture, the artistic and creative community, and diplomacy. Lending continuity to the institutionalization of culture will, however, require fostering cross-cutting, interdisciplinary collaboration in the educational, scientific, communications, health, economic and tourism sectors.

## History

Organized by UNESCO, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies (Venice, Italy, August 24-September 2, 1970) was the first government-level conference convened to discuss matters related to cultural policies and is the most relevant precursor of MONDIACULT 1982. One of its greatest achievements was the institutionalization of culture:

It follows from the recognition of the *right to culture* that the public authorities have a duty to provide the means of exercising this right [and] the concept of development has gradually been expanded, diversified and elaborated so that *cultural development* is now realized to be part and parcel of total development, for which therefore the national authorities should have a policy.<sup>2</sup>

Another precursor deserving of mention was the publication of Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies (1969-1986), a collection of studies and research papers on cultural policies that explore the problems, experiences and results obtained in cultural regions with varying levels of development. The first volume, containing prior reflections on cultural policies, and the third, which equates cultural rights with human rights, were of interest during preparations for MONDIACULT 1982.

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<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies, *Final Report*, Paris, UNESCO, October 1970, p. 7, at [https://culturalrights.net/descargas/drets\\_culturals#15.pdf](https://culturalrights.net/descargas/drets_culturals#15.pdf) (date of access: May 23, 2022). The italics are the authors'.



Intergovernmental Conference on the Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies (Venice, Italy, August 24-September 2, 1970). UNESCO Archives.



First volumes in the UNESCO Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies collection. Biblioteca José Luis Martínez, Biblioteca México.

## *Mexico's participation in the 1970 Venice Conference*

The Mexican delegation was represented by José Luis Martínez Rodríguez, then director-general of the National Fine Arts Institute (INBA), as president of the delegation and vice-president of the conference; Javier Espinosa Mandujano, secretary to the minister of Public Education; and Ivonne Loyola y Escobedo, first secretary at the Mexican embassy in Italy.

The function of culture in modern societies was addressed by Mexico, while the need for State agencies to guarantee artistic freedom of creation and thought, and the participation of artists in the economic and social life of their respective countries was also discussed.

## **Contributions and transcendence of MONDIACULT 1982**

MONDIACULT 1982 was held in Mexico City on July 26-August 6 of that year, and was convened by UNESCO to review experiences *vis-à-vis* cultural policies and practices since the Venice Conference of 1970.

The first order of business was to acknowledge the organization of regional intergovernmental conferences by UNESCO to discuss the situation and trends in cultural policy in Europe (Helsinki, Finland, 1972), the Asia-Pacific region (Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 1973), Africa (Accra, Ghana, 1975), Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogota, Colombia, 1978), and the Arab countries (Baghdad, Iraq, 1981). The purpose of these meetings was to analyze culture in national contexts, with a view to coming up with recommendations on how to implement cultural policies that take into consideration the diverse characteristics of the people of each region. At the time, it was deemed preferable that any measures adopted foster cultural development.

Accordingly, at MONDIACULT 1982 “*cultural policy* was defined as the manner in which the creative *élan* of each member of society or society itself was recognized and encouraged through the sum total of practical measures, organizational approaches and economic and social development. Cultural

policy was consequently the concern of all, of each individual and of each country, and as such embraced all aspects of national life”.<sup>3</sup>

The cultural policy recommendations made by MONDIACULT 1982 remain valid today and States have an essential role to play in these, especially the conservation and reappraisal of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural expressions, national languages, and the training of experts.

As regards artistic and intellectual creation and artistic education, it was deemed the duty of States to promote these by establishing the necessary conditions and infrastructure. It was also suggested greater advantage be taken of new technologies and, in light of their rapid progress, that steps be taken to prevent the gap from widening between actors in the cultural sector, while continuing to work on laws that guarantee improved conditions for artists.

As for the relationship between cultural policies and policies implemented in the areas of education, science and communications, it was proposed efforts be made to better coordinate these and ensure that any new policies introduced are horizontal.

In terms of the cultural industries, namely the production and dissemination of cultural services, States were urged to support and coordinate their actions with the private sector.

Likewise, to facilitate the planning, management and financing of activities related to cultural development, States were advised to continue shoring up their departments and ministries of culture, allocate larger budgets to the cultural sector, and step up the compilation and dissemination of cultural statistics and indicators.

Other takeaways are reflected in the concepts to come out of the conference, particularly the statement that “*culture* may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group,”<sup>4</sup> the establishment of the principle of *cultural identity*, which encompasses all aspects of human life, and *culture and democracy* as a prerequisite to the opening

<sup>3</sup> World Conference on Cultural Policies, *Final Report*, Paris, UNESCO, November 1982, p. 9, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000052505> (date of access: May 23, 2022). The italics are the authors’.

<sup>4</sup> World Conference on Cultural Policies, *op. cit.* p. 41.

of spaces to the participation of individuals and society in cultural policy. Another issue that remains relevant today is the democratization and decentralization of culture, which should go hand-in-hand with one another, and encourage the participation of other areas of society.

It was acknowledged that each society needs to plan, manage and finance its own cultural activities, and that cultural heritage is comprised of both the tangible and intangible cultural expressions of a people, including their language, traditions, spaces, historic monuments and literature. The importance of protecting and conserving this heritage remain goals of the cultural policy agenda of the twenty-first century.

It was also recommended that States guarantee efforts and the social conditions required to foster *artistic and intellectual creation*.

Finally, debate reflected a need to strengthen ties between culture, education, science and communications, whose development requires complementary measures that cut across these four sectors.

### *Mexico's participation in MONDIACULT 1982*

Education Minister Fernando Solana headed the Mexican delegation and presided over the conference. Other members included Manuel Tello, Víctor Flores Olea, then permanent representative of Mexico to UNESCO, Manuel Madrazo Garamendi, Jorge Montaña, Juan Antonio Mateos, Rafael Tovar y de Teresa, and José Luis Martínez y Hernández.

One of the main accomplishments of MONDIACULT 1982—the approval of the “Cultural identity and intercultural relations of migrants” and “Intercultural practices of migrants” recommendations—can be accredited to the active participation of Mexico. Among other proposals, these recommendations called on member states to “recognize and develop all the potential for cultural and intercultural enrichment inherent in the interaction of cultures brought into contact by migrants, ensuring that such linguistic and cultural minorities are in a position to exercise their rights to the full, with due regard for their cultural preferences and the development of their capacities for expression.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> World Conference on Cultural Policies, *op. cit.*, p. 71.



## *Issues pertinent to MONDIACULT 2022*

International cultural cooperation is a priority, encompassing as does local, subregional, regional, interregional and international spheres. This cooperation needs to be horizontal and should prioritize the protection and promotion of all cultures, especially minorities. As MONDIACULT 2022 draws near and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation efforts need to continue. These should be of an interdisciplinary nature, with greater focus on the professionalization of the cultural sector.

From the mid-twentieth century to date, migration has increased among diverse cultures at an accelerated rate, with the majority of international migrants fleeing the world's most densely populated countries. According to figures published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 281 million international migrants, equivalent to 3.6% of the world population, were displaced in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

This phenomenon has pushed the promotion of the cultural rights of migrants to the top of the cultural policy agenda. Consequently, MONDIACULT 2022 and participating culture ministers need to flesh out these recommendations, taking into consideration the growing complexity of the migratory phenomenon and the cultural challenges it poses.

## Conclusions

The legacy of MONDIACULT 1982 lives on and we face much the same challenges today as we did then in a world that is a mosaic of races, cultures and minorities, and where culture prevails as a key component of sustainable development. Despite its vulnerability, it is clear culture has the capacity to revert inequalities and protect cultural heritage. Notwithstanding, States need to commit to guaranteeing human and cultural rights, and to respect the independence, sovereignty and identity of individual nations.

<sup>6</sup> IOM, "IOM's World Migration Report Shows Global Displacement Rising despite COVID-19 Mobility Limits," communiqué, December 1, 2021, at <https://www.iom.int/news/ioms-world-migration-report-shows-global-displacement-rising-despite-covid-19-mobility-limits> (date of access: August 29, 2022).

The strengthening of cross-cutting, interdisciplinary cultural collaboration with the education, science, communication, health, economic and tourism sectors is another need that persists.

In 1982, cultural actors represented a small social group with a reduced presence; at MONDIACULT 2022, their participation will be vital to ensure the cultural policies of the future are: inclusive, *i.e.* that they *leave no one behind*; that they are the outcome of a policy of proximity under which strategies are designed with the input of the individuals and communities they target; that they encourage new partnerships between entrepreneurs linked to culture and actors in the cultural sector; that they contribute to the democratization and decentralization of culture; and that they help improve conditions for professionals engaged in the cultural sector, and support the professionalization of culture.

A priority of MONDIACULT 2022 will be for all the cultural actors involved to put their heads together and come up with a mechanism that incorporates culture into the Sustainable Development Goals.