

Latin America and the Caribbean at MONDIACULT 2022

América Latina y el Caribe frente a Mondiacult 2022

Edgardo Bermejo Mora

Consultant in Diplomacy and Cultural Policies

edgardobermejo@yahoo.com.mx



Abstract:

Over and beyond the fragmentation and diversity of the peoples and cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean, this article explores the common ground the 37 countries that comprise the region could find at MONDIACULT 2022. The first section discusses the problems facing the region since MONDIACULT 1982, including governance issues and cultural policies, while the second takes deliberations in the run up to MONDIACULT 2022 and summarizes these in a decalogue of topics, concerns and proposals that could be included in the conference's final declaration.



Resumen:

En este artículo el autor explora los puntos de coincidencia, dentro de la fragmentación y la diversidad de los pueblos y sus culturas, que podrían encontrar los 37 países de América Latina y el Caribe en Mondiacult 2022. En la primera parte se exponen las problemáticas, la gobernanza y las políticas públicas culturales en la región desde Mondiacult 1982. En la segunda parte, a partir de las deliberaciones rumbo a Mondiacult 2022, se recoge en un decálogo los temas, las preocupaciones y las propuestas que podrían incluirse en la declaración final de la Conferencia.



Key Words:

MONDIACULT 2022, Latin America and the Caribbean, cultural governance, culture, diversity, unity.



Palabras clave:

Mondiacult 2022, América Latina y el Caribe, gobernanza cultural, cultura, diversidad, unidad.

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This is the part of the world
in which the ground is still being built.
Those of us born there have our own idea
of what is the body and what is the soul.

Carlos Pellicer,
“Song of the Usumacinta”

Latin-Americanness

The Mexican author Gabriel Zaid reminds us of the pickle we Latin Americans got ourselves into by insisting on “assuming cultural identities based on geopolitical identities: “Mexican-ness,” “Guatemalan-ness,” etc. How can this be explained?”¹

National identities were gradually forged in the region from the early nineteenth century and up until the twentieth century. During this time, we sought to document our singularities and differences as a means of legitimizing our political borders. It was more pressing, more imperative to stress that which made us “unique” and “different” than to acknowledge all that which, on the one hand, links us historically and culturally to each other, and on the other, connects us with the pre-Columbian, European, African and Asian traditions that also form part of our heritage.

¹ Gabriel Zaid, “Problemas de la cultura matriotera,” *Plural*, no. 46, July 1975, p. 8.

As the Argentinean author Martín Caparrós reminds us, “inventing motherlands is, first and foremost, to establish differences between lands that were once one and the same.” Furthermore:

We believe we *should be* integrated and are surprised to see our disintegrated *real self*. [...] We have spent two centuries stubbornly working toward our disintegration. [...] Over these two centuries, the most difficult task undertaken by our States, our literati, our people and our executioners was to find and/or create differences between territories and peoples with a clear intention: to undo America, to divide it into motherlands.²

At the opening of his book, Caparrós insists that, “Over and beyond folklore, craft traditions and other sentimentalisms [...], what are the common traits that allow us to talk about a region, and the differences that confuse and complicate and complete it. That is what this book is about.”³

And *that* is also the subject of this article, which explores the common ground the 37 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean could potentially discover in the run up to the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022). This same region, in all its rich, complex diversity, today has 147 sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, which is just one fact, one of many, that confirm its cultural significance. As the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) said in 2020, we are talking about a multilingual, multiethnic territory inhabited by more than 700 million people—equivalent to one out of every ten people on the planet—, with a cultural sector that employs more than 2 million people who contribute between 2 and 6% of the GDP of their respective countries,⁴ and that can still be recognized as a common space today.

² Martín Caparrós, *N América*, Mexico, Penguin Random House, 2021, 17. The italics are the author's.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴ Secretary General, “La OEI presenta un decálogo en defensa de la cultura,” OEI, May 26, 2020, at <https://oei.int/oficinas/secretaria-general/noticias/la-oei-presenta-un-decalogo-en-defensa-de-la-cultura> (date of access: September 8, 2022).

Integration *vs.* fragmentation

Parallel to the historic trend in Latin America and the Caribbean that highlighted particularisms and differences to validate borders, national myths, anthems and flags, for two centuries the flawed and demagogic rhetoric of “Latin-American unity,” Bolívar’s battered old dream, flourished. Verbose pseudo-integration floundered in the face of effective, decisive fragmentation, despite the countless regional and subregional integration efforts to emerge since the second half of the twentieth century right through to our times.

Contaminated blood, attacked by the predatory virus of offending imperialisms, coursed in the “open veins” of the continent—as described in 1971 by Eduardo Galeano of Uruguay—,⁵ but what we did not realize was that the bacteria of our nationalist sectarianisms and our own weaknesses and atavisms were breeding in that same blood in equal measure. It took us a long time to admit that the blame needed to be doled out more evenly: not all our ills were brought upon us by outsiders or our colonial past; we, too, contributed in many ways to the damage. And while, officially, the desire for regional integration is to be found in our DNA, we have not yet been able to decode the genetic sequence that categorically confirms this.

Francisco Rojas Aravena sums it up as follows:

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that is currently characterized by: a) its enormous heterogeneity in the most diverse of spheres; b) its status as a democratic region; c) and a zone of peace; d) its high levels of inequality and social differentiation; e) a reduction in poverty and emerging middle classes; f) its greater degree of political autonomy within the international system; g) its tendency to remain on the sidelines of global geostrategic issues; h) its propensity to promote regional integration strategies; i) its vast natural resources; j) its high indices of violence; and k) the fact

⁵ Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1997.

that the United States will remain in place as the hegemonic power in the region.⁶

Nonetheless, in the overlap between both tendencies (discursive integration versus historic disintegration), several multilateral efforts that lent meaning to the “Bolivarian dream” materialized. In terms of regional cultural policies, the most significant precedent dates back to 1948, when the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, signed in Bogotá, stated that, “Every person has the right to take part in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to participate in the benefits that result from intellectual progress, especially scientific discoveries.”⁷

Over the three decades to follow, this early recognition that accompanied the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) translated into cultural policies that rested on three main pillars of action we today view as extremely limited: incentives for creation and artistic education; the protection and management of cultural heritage; and cultural dissemination with a marked emphasis on the so-called “fine arts.”

Those were the years when cultural policies reflected the protectionist-oriented development model promoted in the region at the end of World War II, one that advocated import substitution and domestic market incentives.

In the 1980s, particularly after MONDIACULT 82, attention shifted to two novel aspects: the preservation and promotion of national cultural identities and the cultural component of development, both as strategic objectives of a new anthropological and social approach to culture. The value of diversity, along with broader notions of cultural heritage and cultural rights, came to be accepted in the region, hand-in-hand with a new vocabulary that alluded to multiethnicity, multiculturalism, multinationalism and interculturalism,

⁶ Francisco Rojas Aravena, “Regionalismo e Integración regional,” in Thomas Legler, Arturo Santa Cruz and Laura Zamudio González (eds.), *Introducción a las relaciones internacionales. América Latina y la política global*, Mexico, Universidad Iberoamericana, 2021, p. 148.

⁷ Ninth International Conference of American States, American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, article 13, paragraph I, at https://www.oas.org/dil/access_to_information_human_right_American_Declaration_of_the_Rights_and_Duties_of_Man.pdf (date of access: 8, 2022).

concepts that were eventually written into the constitutions of most countries in the region.

In the 1990s, the neoliberal models that gradually took hold in the majority of countries had a double-edged and extremely varied impact on cultural policies in the region. On the one hand, the new free market paradigm and reduced state intervention weakened cultural institutions—budget cuts, the closure of venues, the privatization of different sectors, especially the audiovisual industry—, but on the other, new windows of opportunity opened due to growing recognition of the connection between culture and the economy. This allowed for increasingly precise documentation of the impact of culture on economic development, leading to the first programs and actions designed to incentivize what were initially dubbed the “cultural industries,” but that we today acknowledge as the complex ecosystem of the creative economy and the creation of culture satellite accounts in the official statistics kept by most countries.

At the turn of the century, Juan Luis Mejía Arango, former Colombian minister of culture, identified no less than six flagship studies in the region that explain this connection,⁸ including: *The Economic Impact of the Cultural Industries in Colombia* (2003),⁹ *The Impact of Culture on the Chilean Economy* (2003),¹⁰ *The Dynamics of Culture in Venezuela and its Contribution to GDP* (2005)¹¹ and *The Economic Impact of Culture in Peru* (2005).¹² To this list we could add the Mexican Atlas of Cultural Infrastructure

⁸ Juan Luis Mejía Arango, “Apuntes sobre las políticas culturales en América Latina, 1987-2009,” in *Pensamiento Iberoamericano*, no. 4, 2009, p. 117.

⁹ Colombian Ministry of Culture, *El impacto económico de las industrias culturales en Colombia*, Bogotá, Andrés Bello Convention, 2003.

¹⁰ Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes de Chile, *Impacto de la cultura en la economía chilena. Participación de algunas actividades en el PIB y evaluación de las fuentes disponibles*, Bogotá, Andrés Bello Convention, 2003.

¹¹ Carlos Enrique Guzmán Cárdenas, Yesenia Medina and Yolanda Quintero Aguilar, *La dinámica de la cultura en Venezuela y su contribución al PIB*, Caracas/Bogotá, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes de Venezuela/ Andrés Bello Convention, 2005.

¹² Instituto de Investigación de la Escuela Profesional de Turismo y Hotelaría de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación, Turismo y Psicología y de la Universidad de San Martín de Porres, *El impacto económico de la cultura en Perú*, Bogotá, Andrés Bello Convention, 2005.

(2003),¹³ especially the pioneering study by the Mexican economist Ernesto Piedras, *How Much is Culture Worth?* (2004).¹⁴ All these efforts gathered momentum with the publication of another study that was crucial to the transition and diversification of cultural policies in the region—the 1996 report of the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development entitled *Our Creative Diversity*.¹⁵

Concomitant to these changes in the paradigms of cultural policies prompted by the 1982 Mexico City Declaration, the years that followed saw the strengthening of a new institutional architecture for the implementation of cultural policies in the region. In some cases, culture was deemed deserving of a ministry in its own right (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia, among others) and in others, national culture councils were created (in Chile and Mexico for example).

It is a time, said Mejía Arango, when UNESCO “remains the source from which most of the continent’s cultural actions flow,”¹⁶ guided by the three UNESCO conventions ratified in the first decade of the twenty-first century: the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). He then goes on to state that, “if these three instruments of international law have a common denominator it is the role international cultural cooperation should play as a prerequisite to obtaining positive results.”¹⁷

We can therefore say that, in the first two decades of this century, international cultural cooperation in the region underwent a shift in three different

¹³ Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Conaculta), *Atlas de infraestructura cultural de México*, Mexico, CONACULTA, 2003.

¹⁴ Ernesto Piedras: *¿Cuánto vale la cultura? Contribución económica de las industrias protegidas por el derecho de autor en México*, Mexico, CONACULTA/Sociedad de Autores y Compositores de Música/Sociedad General de Escritores de México/Cámara Nacional de la Industria Editorial Mexicana, 2004.

¹⁵ Javier Pérez de Cuellar (dir.), *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development*, Paris, UNESCO, 1996.

¹⁶ J.L. Mejía Arango, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

spheres: those that are more aligned with UNESCO conventions and initiatives; those derived from regional integration mechanisms, both old and new—from the OAS (1948) to the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2011—; and a third, Ibero-American sphere that engages Spain, Portugal and Andorra, and that has achieved better results as regards the implementation of cooperation programs within the framework of the OEI and the Ibero-American Secretary General (SEGIB).

Ad hoc UNESCO-related organizations to emerge included the Regional Center for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL), based in Cuzco, Peru, and the Regional Center for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLALC), headquartered in Bogota, Colombia.

Within the OAS sphere, both the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) have made substantial contributions to the recognition, study and promotion of the creative economies in the region. However, in the case of regional integration mechanisms like CELAC, the Pacific Alliance, Mercosur, the Andean Community, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), regional cultural cooperation policies have tended to be merely of a declaratory nature, so vague there is no real way of gauging their effectiveness.

It is in the Ibero-American sphere, within the framework of the 2006 Ibero-American Cultural Charter—which I will be discussing in the next paragraph—that projects and joint financing have reached fruition and that we have been able to verify with greater certainty their effectiveness at achieving cultural integration in the region.

Mexican ambassador Claude Heller cites the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), created in 1959, as a prime example of the successful integration of a regional organization, whose members agreed to cede a portion of their national sovereignty for the common good.¹⁸ We have yet to create an equivalent for the cultural policies of the region.

¹⁸ Claude Heller, *Las relaciones multilaterales de México*, Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico, 2021.

Mapping similarities

Unlike other regions of the world, such as Africa or Asia, where national processes for the institutionalization, socialization and legitimization of cultural policies (from legal and regulatory frameworks to the planning and financing of culture, including mechanisms for participation in these and their governance) have been marred by inconsistencies, in Latin America and the Caribbean, cultural laws and policies, centralized and endorsed by the region's politically diverse governments and States, have gained momentum in recent decades—albeit with varying degrees of progress—, both internally and in the form of different regional and intraregional mechanisms for dialogue, integration and collaboration, a noteworthy and fruitful example of which are the “Iber Programs” that SEGIB has been coordinating for more than two decades now.

If we take the Ibero-American Cultural Charter,¹⁹ adopted at the Sixteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in Montevideo, Uruguay, on November 3-5, 2006, as our main point of reference, we can say that a common cultural space has been taking shape in recent years, that, without turning a blind eye to the specific challenges each country faces in this area, their uneven levels of development and the notorious exclusion of English- and French-speaking nations of the Caribbean, Central and South America from the “Ibero-American space,” nonetheless constitutes common ground conducive to the negotiation of an agenda with a shared vision for the region that could have an influence on the debates and conclusions of MONDIACULT 2022.

Without going into the finer details of the tenets and lines of action of that flagship document of 2006, it is clear that the nine principles of the Charter (recognition and protection of cultural rights; citizen participation; solidarity and cooperation; openness and equality; the cross-cutting nature of culture; social, economic and cultural complementarity; targeted cultural activities, goods and services; contribution to sustainable development, social cohesion and social inclusion; and the principle of State responsibility

¹⁹ This document can be consulted at <https://oei.int/oficinas/secretaria-general/publicaciones/carta-cultural-iberoamericana>

in the drafting and implementation of cultural policies) form a roadmap that has guided the region's cultural policies and that, in turn, has been enriched by other programs that address the cultural phenomena of our day, like the Digital Agenda for Ibero-America (2014) and the Ibero-American Strategy for Culture and Sustainable Development (2020).

If the Mexico City Declaration, signed in 1982 by 128 UNESCO member countries, is the most important precedent for multilateral reflection and the search for consensus on global cultural policies—this being the principal deontological benchmark that later led to the drafting and approval of the main UNESCO normative instruments—, and if the Ibero-American Cultural Charter of 2006 is, in turn, the region's updated reinterpretation of the tenets of MONDIACULT 1982, then MONDIACULT 2022 is an opportunity for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to revise, broaden and redefine the principles set forth in both documents, principles that, in decades to come, will ideally lead to better cultural policies that take into consideration both regional and global perspectives and integrate these into internal cultural policy actions on the one hand and external ones we define as cultural diplomacy on the other. Finding a new approach to North-South and South-South dialogue and cooperation that fuses (internal) cultural policies and (external) cultural diplomacies is perhaps one of the greatest challenges the near future holds.

Based on the experience of recent years, the question we need to ask ourselves is: what can Latin America and the Caribbean add to the global conversation on the cultural policies of the twenty-first century at MONDIACULT 2022 that is both innovative and specific to the region?

We have only eight uncertain years left of this, the third decade of the twenty-first century, to meet the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals—something that looks set to be an upward toil towards a 2030 that waxes more *dystopian* than *utopian*, more violent than peaceful and more troubled than harmonious. Meanwhile, the concerns expressed by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in practice and, more recently, at the various forums and regional consultations held in preparation for MONDIACULT 2022, all point to the pressing need to come up with new governance mechanisms for culture, new approaches to the concept of culture itself and cultural phenomena, and alternative, sustainable models that encompass culture, human rights, the economy, education,

science, technology, the environment, health, urban planning and social wellbeing, especially considering that vertical, centralist, sectorial, patriarchal and neocolonial approaches are still prevalent in the region, albeit to varying degrees, and that, as a whole, these pose an obstacle to the design of comprehensive, inclusive, cross-cutting cultural policies that foster the mobility of their actors and the free circulation of their creations. Even more important—and this cannot be stressed enough—is that the planning and evaluation of policies be verifiable, so that, with the Cartesian aid of indicators and statistics, we can make sure we invest capital—public, private and social—in a new model that could be defined as *inclusive, resilient and sustainable cultural infrastructure*.

As part of preparations for MONDIACULT 2022, UNESCO called a regional consultation on February 14-15 for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to identify priority issues that should be included in the conference's final declaration. Four main themes were chosen: culture for peace; the defense of individual and collective rights in support of cultural and linguistic diversity; greater international cooperation and solidarity in the protection of cultural heritage; and access to cultural rights and creative freedoms.²⁰

The deliberations that took place during this regional consultation were later uploaded on to YouTube.²¹ I reviewed them online and selected a decalogue of recurring topics, concerns and proposals. These are mostly concrete cultural policies and programs put forward by the region, but reference is also made to conceptual, lexical and methodological ideas developed in Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to broadening the deontological horizons of the cultural policies of the twenty-first century.

It is unlikely all these will be included in the final declaration of MONDIACULT 2022, although the inclusion of some of them would greatly

²⁰ UNESCO, "Se llevará a cabo la Consulta Regional para Latinoamérica y el Caribe #RumboAMondiacult2022," February 12, 2020, at <https://www.unesco.org/es/articulos/se-llevara-cabo-la-consulta-regional-para-latinoamerica-y-el-caribe-rumboamondiacult2022> (date of access: September 8, 2022).

²¹ Available on the UNESCO Mexico YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UNESCOenMexico/videos>

enrich the conference's final document, lending it a greater global impact and reflecting the region's vision, values and past experience.

A new definition of "cultures"

As regards the concept of culture, which today aspires to be acknowledged as a global public good due to its immense transformative power, its contribution to social and economic development, and the cross-cutting role it plays in bringing us closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), fostering peaceful coexistence and building inclusive, democratic societies, we need to redefine *cultures*, *cultural phenomena* and *cultural rights* (yes, in plural) as a complex, diverse ecosystem, and a set of processes linked to the creation of symbolic and collective world-views geared toward sustainable development—all in the light of the new, interdisciplinary knowledge of the twenty-first century, to which academic communities and thought centers in Latin America and the Caribbean have made a valuable contribution in recent years.

Decentralization, diversity and cultural rights

There is also regional consensus as to the need to step up efforts to decentralize cultural policies and promote community models for cultural action, with special emphasis on new, non-paternalistic horizontal practices with a strong self-management component, particularly as regards respect for the autonomy and diverse identities and languages of indigenous peoples. What is needed are cultural policies that protect the native languages of indigenous peoples and preserve their ancestral and contemporary cosmogonies, including that of peoples of African descent and the Asian, European and Middle-Eastern diasporas that have settled in the region.

This is why the region views the global debate led by UNESCO on the broader notion *cultural rights*—and their intrinsic relationship to human rights—should cover as so essential, and why the defense of cultural rights as a means of guaranteeing cultural and linguistic diversity, and as a prerequisite to reducing inequalities and social injustices, is regarded as an issue of the highest priority.

Migration, community and territory

No less important are cultural policies that address the region's multiple migratory phenomena and that protect individuals and peoples displaced by armed or social conflict or economic necessity, within a framework of inclusion and inter-generational and cross-border dialogue that enriches the contemporary notion of inter-culturality from a Latin-American perspective that tenaciously and axiomatically understands cultural rights as being inseparable from human rights. As one of the most complex and challenging contemporary phenomena in the region, migration requires cultural policies that take a systemic approach to addressing its historic, economic and cultural roots. It would therefore be expedient for this to be included in the final declaration of MONDIACULT 2022.

The above all points to the need to draw up a new, practical and epistemological map for the cultural policies of our day, one that views cultural territoriality as a complex ecosystem where transborder, national, local, urban, rural, regional, global, public and private aspects all come into play. In this regard, the region could bring to the MONDIACULT table its experience implementing concepts like *community culture*, extensively applied in countries like Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela, and that calls for the design of participative cultural policies by and for communities; *the culture of good living*, a term coined by the Andean nations and that centers on freedoms, opportunities, capacities and the creative potential of humankind as part of one natural and social environment characterized by respect for Mother Earth; or that of *migrant culture*, which reflects on and problematizes the recent experience of Central American and Caribbean countries.

The biocultural aspect

It should also be noted that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean place great importance on a reappraisal of the notions of *cultural diversity*, *biological diversity* and *technological diversity* as part of the same interdependent, indivisible and mutually conditioned phenomenon. This is probably one of the main and most original contributions the region has to offer in the preparatory process leading up to MONDIACULT 2022. It is about broadening the paradigmatic basis of the very concept of cul-

ture, taking an innovative approach that would perhaps even call for the creation of a new semantic and epistemic field to label it; about leaving behind the limited, anthropocentric notion of “humanism” and embracing something different that we could, in principle, call “planetarianism.” The challenge will be to come up with a new vocabulary for something more universal, complex and inclusive that encompasses both human beings and all the species and components of the planet’s geography, all in correlation to technology—no less human for its algorithms and functionality—, to create a new, multidimensional horizon for the cultural policies of the twenty-first century, a hybrid territory where humanity, nature and technology mesh and interlock like the cogs in a clock.

Integrated heritage

This necessarily requires taking a new semantic and nominative approach to the concept of cultural heritage as we currently define it, with a view to designing a polysemic, inclusive paradigm that alludes to *the integrated heritage of humanity*, a new, holistic notion to which Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina and other countries in the region have contributed and that amalgamates the tangible, intangible, natural, health and agri-food dimensions of heritage in one interdependent space.

The combatting of illicit trade in cultural objects and the strengthening of both individual and collective intellectual property rights are priority concerns shared by the countries of the region. There is broad consensus that, to date, the legal frameworks in force and international and inter-institutional cooperation have been neither sufficient nor effective at checking the trafficking of cultural objects or commanding respect for the intellectual property of communities. Consequently, we need to reassess the legal, commercial, ethical, diplomatic, political, historic and cultural factors involved, in order to put a permanent stop to the trafficking of cultural heritage worldwide.

Climate action and sustainable development

The role of culture in the environmental and climate action agenda—especially in the case of island nations and coastal and mountainous zones of the continent that are more vulnerable to the impact of climate

change—is another issue the region will be addressing at MONDIACULT 2022. It is generally agreed that environmental sustainability and cultural sustainability are part of the same process that favors and safeguards diversity, biocultural heritage and the exercising of cultural rights by communities. The region is positioned to contribute to debate on the updating of regulatory frameworks, inter-sectorial policies and good cultural tourism practices that ensure their expansion and accessibility, and the comprehensive development of communities in a context of environmental sustainability and respect for their customs and traditions.

It is also broadly accepted that culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development, along with its economic, social and environmental dimensions. As such, it is imperative that culture, as one of the specific and/or cross-cutting goals of sustainable development, be part of debate throughout the remainder of the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the resetting of goals and targets for decades thereafter.

Gender equality, young population and diversity

The region has consistently acknowledged the need for cultural policies with a gender perspective that recognize the role women play in the transferal of collective practices and knowledge, just as it has the need for equality and policies targeting young people, with a view to broadening their rights and fostering the exercising of cultural citizenship among the region's mainly young demographic. Affirmative action in defense of LGTB+ communities also falls into this category and requires the generation of equality indicators and legislative frameworks that ensure the participation and empowerment of these communities, and respect for their diversity.

The public space

In the deliberations preceding MONDIACULT 2022, Chile has justifiably stressed the importance of reclaiming and strengthening public spaces as places that encourage the convergence, validation and flourishing of cultural expressions. Recouping and refurbishing public spaces would favor coexistence, dialogue, social integration and the exercising of cultural rights and freedoms, something that has taken on even great-

er importance in the wake of a pandemic during which consumption of cultural goods and services increased exponentially due to quarantine measures. To counter the growing influence of digital platforms and their unidirectional, vertical messages, squares, streets, museums, libraries and theaters need to regain their vitality and make their physical presence felt by means of cultural policies for the twenty-first century that foster, guarantee and, more importantly, expand cultural citizenship to public spaces not traditionally considered natural or suitable territories for cultural action—places like markets, schools, the workplace, public transportation, hospitals and health centers, etc.

A sustainable, social-oriented creative economy

Social inequality and poverty are two deep-rooted problems that are a blight on the regional landscape. Consequently, cultural policies and regulatory frameworks to improve the working conditions of creative communities and shore up the ecosystem of the creative economy as a driver of economic and social development in the region are issues that MONDIACULT 2022 cannot avoid.

The countries of the region believe the creative industries need to be redefined from a united, comprehensive territorial and community perspective, whose means, scope and ends are not merely economic, but social, emotional and symbolic. The role these industries play in broadening and diversifying the territories of creativity also needs to be recognized as an effective counterweight to the concentration of contents, messages and values in the hands of international media monopolies, social networks and digital platforms. New business models for culture are also required in response to vertical approaches that prevent comprehensive, diverse, cross-cutting and inclusive expressions of culture from prospering.

High up on the region's agenda for MONDIACULT 2022 are three main proposals intended to put the creative industries on a new course: improve working conditions and the economic sustainability of creative communities, and acknowledge the historic vulnerability of the sector, which was accentuated by the pandemic; draw up inter-sectorial and interregional agendas, and enter into public-private partnerships to improve the quality of life of cultural agents through regulations that guarantee decent, well-paid jobs (this

necessarily requires we anticipate the phenomenon of artificial intelligence, taking into account the opportunities and especially the risks, given that artificial intelligence could lead to the gradual loss of jobs in the various culture-related production chains); and provide more tax incentives for the creative industries and the consumption of cultural goods, as well as tax mechanisms that make it easier for small and mid-size companies engaged in culture-related activities to gain access to credit, which, in turn, will require new actions for the systematic protection of individual, trade and collective copyright and intellectual property rights in these new digital environments.

Just as important are training and the development of capacities geared toward the creative economy, in the understanding that free-minded, educated and trained cultural agents are essential to preserving the intercultural diversity of the planet and ensuring the sustainability of our new cultural ecosystems.

In light of the risks posed by the monopolistic generation and circulation of digital cultural contents, unequal access to technology, and the ever-present threat of exclusion, the region values and promotes a new concept it refers to as *digital literacy* as a key component of the new cultural ecosystem of the twenty-first century, aimed at preserving and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity within a framework of public policies that understand, debate and regulate analogue-digital transitions.

The above indicates just how crucial it is for the region to strengthen ties between culture and education, both formal and informal, as a vital and indispensable means of empowering individuals and societies as a whole.

A new global governance for culture

The two major goals that sum up the priorities, aspirations, needs, significance, ethics and nature of the cultural policies of the present and immediate future from the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean are to: establish a new, global dialogue between public cultural institutions, creative communities, civil society organizations, the private sector, the education sector, multilateral and regional organizations for the design of the cultural policies of the twenty-first century, and create a new, inclusive, multisystemic and inter-sectorial ecosystem that serves to shore up and guide these policies.

On the one hand, the hope is that the actions, programs and specific international, regional, national and local collaborations to arise from MONDIACULT

2022 clearly establish the respective spheres of action and responsibility of UNESCO and its member states, and on the other, that these make an innovative, inclusive, consensual, sustainable, representative and cross-cutting contribution to a revised global agenda that broadens the horizons outlined in 1982.

Other stops on the regional itinerary

To complement this decalogue, which, generally speaking, was the result of consensus among the countries that participated in the consultation, I have identified another 13 specific reflections and concerns voiced by some countries in the region:

- The concept of *collective rights* as applied to cultural policies and intellectual property.
- The notions of *decolonization* and *depatriarchalization* as applied to the design of cultural policies and cultural management.
- The quest for restorative justice in countries with legacies of slavery.
- Condemnation of coercive unilateral measures that pose a threat to the enjoyment of social and cultural rights.
- The need to do away with the sterile, neocolonial differentiation between art and popular art.
- Encourage the purchase and use of handicrafts as cultural goods and protect artisans.
- State policies in support of community radio stations.
- Reestablish the value of different cuisines in the interests of sustainable development.
- Guarantee freedom of worship as part of decolonization processes and encourage an appreciation of diversity.
- Enforce the cultural exception clause in regions where the imposition of hegemonic powers has the potential to impact culture.
- Foster dialogue with the World Trade Organization on the separation of cultural indicators from tourism indicators.
- Encourage dialogue with financial sectors for a more equal reorganization of the creative industries and easier access to financing.
- Include the cultural rights of children in the design of public policies.

Unity in diversity

And so I circle back to Caparrós and what he calls “the (historic) construction of differences,” that insistence on “creating countries: creating differences with the rest of the territory, arguments that justify the fact that we are us up to this point and they are them from here on.” Faced with the reality that “we have spent 200 years very patriotically attempting to make sure Latin-American unity does not exist, only to later lament that it does not exist,” Caparrós, who coined the term “ñamérica” (cultural territory of the ñ), suggests we think of the metaphor of the choir: “a choir is a set of different voices that end up forming one [single] voice.” He concludes, then, and I concur that, “It all comes down to knowing what it would be to be Latin American. In other words, over and beyond homelands—those differences so laboriously constructed—, what is it that bonds us, that unites us? Or put more pro-saically, what the hell do we have in common?”²²

In his poem “Unity,” penned in 1927, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda wrote:

There is something dense, united, settled in the depths,
repeating its number, its identical sign. [...]
I am encircled by a single thing, a single movement: [...]
a distant empire of confused unities.

Almost a century after these words were written, I picture Latin America and the Caribbean, and the cultural policies that integrate the region and project it outward to the rest of the world within the framework of MONDIACULT 2022, as that “distant empire of confused unities.”

²² M. Caparrós, *op. cit.*, p. 21.