Impact of the

UNESCO Creative Cities Network

at Local, National & International Level

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Executive Summary

Today more than ever, cities and their municipal governments are at the frontline of global crises from rapid urbanization to climate change, digitalization, rising inequalities and the impact of COVID-19. To strengthen their capacity and enhance the local management of these global challenges, cities are collaborating on a regional and international scale through city diplomacy, an innovative means to enable municipalities to join forces by exchanging information and good practices, and jointly carrying out cultural projects.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) is an international network that fosters inter-city exchange and cooperation with a view to leveraging culture and creativity for sustainable development. Innovative by nature, the Network, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, has been a frontrunner in the implementation of UNESCO's culture mandate at the local level through collaboration with cities and with Member States. UCCN encompasses seven creative fields - Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music – and promotes intersectoral and crosscutting approaches to culture. Through their commitment to the UNESCO's culture programme, member cities unite their resources and knowledge to support the Network's overall mission and objective.

Home to 55% of the world's population,[1] cities and local governments are at the frontline of global challenges such as rapid urbanisation, climate change, digital transformation, rising inequalities, and post-COVID-19 recovery. To strengthen their impact in addressing such issues, cities are increasingly engaging in international collaboration to foster information exchange, share good practices, and jointly implement cultural projects at regional and international scale.

Since 2004, the UCCN empowers cities worldwide to leverage the transformative power of culture and creativity as drivers of more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development in cities. As outlined throughout this report, the UCCN plays a fundamental role in providing the cities of tomorrow with a platform for cooperation, dialogue, and exchange, as well as a laboratory of ideas and practices for devising creative solutions to contemporary urban challenges.

Through the selection and analysis of good practices and the collection of testimonies the report demonstrates that the Network not only functions as a valuable platform for institutional innovation, planning and coordination among members, but also that, more broadly with UNESCO, it plays a critical role as facilitator of municipal and regional government involvement in international challenges and debates, thereby strengthening the local engagement of actors, communities and individuals. In this regard, the Network has proven its rapid adaptability and ability to address the local impact of global challenges and to promote widespread dissemination of the Organization's values of international cooperation and solidarity. These features represent salient pillars of a network capable of nurturing long-term development strategies for its member cities, while remaining responsive to unforeseen crises such as COVID-19, or more recently, the 2023 Türkiye and Syria earthquakes.

The first section of the report focuses on the contribution of the UCCN to cities' economic, social and environmental development. It explores how the UCCN membership translates into economic growth, social cohesion, protection and promotion of cultural diversity, cultural employment, and enhanced global positioning, all supported by concrete examples provided by member cities from different world regions. It also emphasizes the role that local stakeholders play in supporting member cities and encouraging

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1 https://unhabitat.org/wcr/

their initiatives, while also benefiting from increased access to culture and creative undertakings. The increased international visibility and effective intercity collaboration promoted by the Network emerge as primary drivers of these outcomes. Cities worldwide, regardless of size or socio-economic conditions, benefit from being part of the Network.

Moreover, UCCN's contribution to localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering a platform to support the development of sustainable local development policies aligned with global priorities is discussed in depth. The UCCN plays a crucial role in sharing tools, experiences, solutions, and guidance towards advancing SDG localization, delivering both tangible and intangible results and enabling cities to collaboratively incubate and share good practices at local level. In essence, the UCCN not only contributes to global sustainable development but also enriches member cities with knowledge, resources, skills, and partnerships that promote culture, creativity and the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) towards building future-proof cities.

The report then addresses the promotion of culture-centred bottom-up policies - from local to regional - through the UCCN. Notably it highlights the tangible benefits the Network offers to its members on a national scale, including knowledge sharing, recognition, and access to resources. At national level, the Network facilitates cooperation between local and regional governments with a view to organizing joint activities, disseminating knowledge, and implementing public policies and frameworks.

Indeed, many initiatives are carried out with the support of National Commissions for UNESCO, actively strengthening the links between UCCN member cities nationwide, across all creative fields, and thereby playing a key role in advancing and developing sustainable development through culture and creativity. The effective model of national inter-city collaboration proves to be an appealing asset of the Network for UNESCO's Member States. The report thus explores the recent growth of national coordination of Creative Cities and national city networks, building on the UCCN, with member cities playing a central role with regard to their development and expansion. The

emergence of city co-development and national city networks provide further opportunities for cities of all sizes and geographies, across different creative fields, to address national issues and exchange experiences, adapting management approaches to meet evolving urban challenges.

By joining the Network, UCCN member cities also attract growing interest from national governments, which have become increasingly keen on supporting their activities. Indeed, Member States appear more inclined to support and enhance their cities by strengthening coordination and establishing more coordinated cultural policies and diplomacy. The UCCN designation elevates the standing of member cities, prompting national governments to invest in optimizing their cities' potential. In sum, the UCCN significantly encourages a broader scope of action on a national scale, inspiring more coordination among different administrative levels and thematic fields, with concrete results in advancing the UCCN's mission and objectives.

Furthermore, the report explores the impact of the UCCN at the international level, and its enhancement of the international outreach of member cities. Member cities are involved in a myriad of bilateral and multilateral collaborations within and across creative fields as well as regions. Although a balanced geographic representation has yet to be achieved, efforts are underway to strengthen the participation and contribution of cities from underrepresented regions in the Network.

City-to-city cooperation has been a valuable support mechanism during challenging times, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the Network facilitated the sharing of initiatives, and good practices. Moreover, member cities demonstrated solidarity by supporting fellow cities affected by nature or human-induced disasters.

Finally, the report presents a forward-looking approach, exploring the challenges and opportunities to be addressed by the Network in the years ahead. The lessons learnt seek to guide future Network activities, in line with UNESCO's and its Creative Cities' aspirations for the future of the programme. The interviews conducted[2] confirm an alignment between what member cities perceive to be the Network's added value and their

2 Please refer to Annex I for the list of member cities interviewed.

ambitions for the Network's future. Member cities share an ambition to strengthen the Network's impact at local level, focusing on sustainable urban development through the cultural and creative sectors.

The UCCN is actively exploring different methods, communication strategies, and resource opportunities to strengthen the coordination of this local dynamic by cities. The international visibility offered by the Network complements the development of coherent, concrete actions on the ground. From an international perspective, the Network's future relies on strong levels of interaction and collaboration, particularly given its increasing size and diversity. There is an ongoing reflection within the Network on developing new forms of interaction, including digital sharing and collaborative practices to further elevate the effectiveness of the Network. In addition, this will be matched by coordination among UNESCO's various city programmes, consolidated within the UNESCO Cities Platform,[3] under the coordination of the UCCN Secretariat.

Looking to the future, the UCCN will continue to act as a catalyst for coordinating and supporting member cities worldwide in leveraging culture and creativity for sustainable development. Indeed, capitalizing on past success, the Network will continue to consolidate and progress at local, national and international level with the support of its member cities and National Commissions for UNESCO, as well as by liaising with other UNESCO urban actions under the UNESCO Cities Platform (UCP).

This report is built on a dual approach consisting of comparative research on primary and secondary sources on Creative Cities' action and advocacy, and a series of semi-structured online interviews with representatives of member cities, and National Commissions for UNESCO with a view to ensuring geographical and thematic representation.

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3 The UNESCO Cities Platform gathers eight city related networks and programmes across the Organization's fields of expertise: education, culture, sciences, communication and information. The Platform reflects the transversal approach of UNESCO's work on and for cities towards the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals. For further information: UNESCO Cities Platform | UNESCO

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Established in 2004, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (henceforth referred to by its acronym UCCN) is an international network of inter-city exchange and cooperation dedicated to leveraging culture and creativity for sustainable urban development. Innovative by nature, the programme was among the first global networks of its kind to localize culture and creativity in partnership with both UNESCO Member States and their municipal governments. Indeed, the launch of the UCCN reflects the efforts made by the Organization to strengthen its relationship with municipal governments, recognizing them as key actors for sustainable development. Over the years, the UCCN has grown into a fully fledged international city network. Today, the Network is composed of 350 cities in more than one hundred countries worldwide, across all regions.

The Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music. While each city is designated as a Creative City in a particular creative field, the Network promotes intersectoral and crosscutting approaches to culture and thereby strongly encourages inter-city collaborations across cultural domains. Pooling their resources and knowledge, member cities work together to attain the mission and objectives set out by the Network: to place culture and creativity at the heart of their local development plans and to cooperate actively on an international level.

20 years after its launch, the UCCN has proven to be a valuable platform and laboratory of ideas for enabling cities to contribute to the Organization's mandate and values, and also more broadly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: 'To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.

The UCCN, with the support of its member cities and National Commissions for UNESCO, has demonstrated its commitment to developing and disseminating numerous policies and practices, as well as to enhancing local communities' contribution to global sustainable development through culture and creativity. As a result of their global presence and active membership, UCCN member cities, with the support of National Commissions, have strengthened their national and international collaboration, and reported a vast array of local outcomes, including tangible advancement in social cohesion, protection and promotion of cultural diversity, economic development, employment and global positioning for the benefit of local communities.

The UCCN employs a participatory approach to nurture collaboration involving a wide range of relevant stakeholders, particularly member cities and their respective municipalities, cultural and creative practitioners, and citizens more broadly by:

- Sharing good practices;
- Developing inter-city cooperation projects;
- Promoting creativity and the CCIs;
- Reinforcing access to, and participation in, cultural activities; and
- Integrating culture in urban development plans.

This report will build the above-mentioned objectives to assess the added value and impact of the UCCN. It will therefore be divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1: The impact of UCCN on cities' local economic, social and environmental development. This chapter focuses on the added value of the UCCN's participatory methodology for local communities and actors, and analyses its impact in terms of sustainable development and localization of the SDGs.

Chapter 2: From local to national: Integrating culture in development policies. This chapter focuses on the impact and added value of cooperation between UCCN member cities in different countries and their contribution to national strategies for sustainable development.

Chapter 3: Promoting international cooperation through the UCCN. This chapter analyses the impact and added value of bilateral and multilateral collaboration among UCCN member cities within and across the seven creative fields covered by the Network, on both regional and global scales.

Chapter 4: The future of the UCCN: challenges and opportunities. The fourth and final chapter presents an overview of the reflections expressed by UCCN member cities and National Commissions for UNESCO during the interview. It offers a vision for the future of the Network based on its strengths, opportunities and challenges.

This report is built on the following dual approach:

Comparative research on primary and secondary sources regarding UNESCO Creative Cities' international action and advocacy. This includes the Membership Monitoring Reports that UCCN member cities produce every four years, information available on the UNESCO and UCCN websites, and all documents made available by UCCN member cities and National Commissions interviewed as part of this research;

Between June 2022 and January 2023, a series of semi-structured online interviews with representatives of UCCN member cities and with National Commissions for UNESCO, conducted by Dr Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, the expert in charge of the development of this report. For the complete list of people interviewed, see Annex I. The interview process was defined in line with relevant UNESCO guidelines. Due consideration was given to balanced geographical and thematic representation as well as to UNESCO's priority areas for action. The evaluations and recommendations gathered in these interviews have been adapted in light of their applicability to UNESCO's mandate and framework.

1. The impact of UCCN on cities' local economic, social and environmental development

1.1 Becoming a UNESCO Creative City: A participatory approach to municipal action

The Network's Mission – to promote sustainable urban development through culture and creativity – has evolved and been strengthened in line with the international agenda. This is illustrated by the full integration of the 2030 Agenda in the work of the Network, which as presented in section 1.4, has led to the integration of the SDGs as core objectives of UCCN member cities' local, bilateral and multilateral actions. By supporting this evolutionary dynamic, the Network demonstrates its ability to create a bridge between global agendas and local development. Indeed, this global agenda of shared priorities has enabled the dissemination of solutions that are easily adaptable and replicable in different urban contexts. More recently, the UCCN Secretariat undertook the revision of its Membership Monitoring and Reporting Exercise (MMRE) as a follow-up to the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022, held in Mexico in September 2022.[4] A new online survey is being developed to measure and assess the contribution of member cities' cultural policies, assets and activities to sustainable development towards, to the implementation of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, and to the 2030 Agenda more broadly. Such developments bear witness to the Network's flexibility and adaptability, as well as its unwavering commitment to linking global agendas and local action.

The Network has also played a key role in strengthening the practice of inclusive and cross-border collaborations between cities from around the world, going beyond a restrictive interpretation of 'city diplomacy' which involves only large cities. For example, the coordination role assumed by Fabriano or Enghien-les-Bains in their respective sub-networks – Crafts and Folk Art, and Media Arts – bears witness to the solid two-way link that smaller cities can establish within the Network: these cities provide an essential contribution to the Network's activities, while also benefiting from international centrality, sustainable development and outreach opportunities.

Interviews with UCCN member cities and National Commissions for UNESCO also demonstrated the programme's participatory approach. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the UCCN is to encourage and support member cities in stimulating and enhancing their initiatives through partnerships involving local stakeholders, public and private sectors, as well as civil society more broadly. As pointed out by the Focal Point of the City of Bradford, a Creative City of Film, during an interview for this report , "to be a genuine UNESCO Creative City, there is a need to work with the community. You cannot have just development without community development". The UCCN's participatory approach is apparent from the very moment cities work towards submitting their application to the Network. Indeed, the process of preparing an application within the framework of the UCCN Call for Applications requires cities to involve the local creative sector concerned (creators,

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4 MONDIACULT 2022 identifies culture as "a global public good with an intrinsic value to enable and drive sustainable development", and emphasizes " the need to coordinate, strengthen and develop instruments and mechanisms for the integrated analysis, monitoring and measurement of culture and its impact on sustainable development". Source: UNESCO. "MONDIACULT 2022 Final Declaration." UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, September 30, 2022. https://www. unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/10/6.MONDIACULT_EN_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION_FINAL_1.pdf

professional organizations, cultural enterprises, etc.) in the design and preparation of the application. This participatory process leads municipalities to build an application that results from a participatory process involving relevant stakeholders and partners of the public and private sectors, as well as civil society more broadly.

This approach responds to the priorities identified by municipal leaders, to be implemented by their respective administrative structures in partnership with multiple local actors.

A concrete example of the added value of the UCCN's participatory approach at local level is the project Cabina di Regia created by Parma, a Creative City of Gastronomy. Established as a new model of governance to enhance local food and wine culture, this project stimulated cooperation among public and private actors within the industry, such as the University of Parma, the local Chamber of Commerce, ALMA (the International School of Italian Cuisine), chefs, private associations, multiple Consortia for the protection of local products, and various other food companies and actors.[5] Another example of multistakeholder collaboration was spearheaded by San Antonio, a Creative City of Gastronomy. The city established the UNESCO Chef Ambassador Programme, which involved the designation of six local chef ambassadors to represent San Antonio as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in local, national and international activities over their two-year term. Demonstrating the benefits of the UCCN's participatory approach, the programme notably focuses on developing international partnerships and communicating the UCCN's Mission and objectives to the local community, in schools, retirement homes, and public and private institutions.

Moreover, as outlined by Montréal, a Creative City of Design, the UCCN designation represents 'a project for an entire city, a collective project that, to become a reality over time, demands that all stakeholders – elected officials, citizens, experts, entrepreneurs and designers – buy into it and make it their own'.[6]

Early on in the application process, the UCCN establishes international standards and procedures for cooperation, to which member cities must commit. This allows all cities, especially those which might not have previously had access to such approaches, to fully benefit from the opportunities offered by the Network.

Therefore, from the moment they prepare their application to join the Network, cities demonstrate that they have established a mechanism to consult, engage and empower local actors in their respective creative field. A vast majority of the interviewed cities and National Commissions for UNESCO, such as Auckland and the Italian National Commission for UNESCO, identify the mapping and establishment of such a broad-based coalition of different actors as the primary added value of the Network.

Since applying to join the Network, Auckland's music ecosystem no longer appears 'fractured': a common framework was developed, capable of bringing the city together through a culturally cohesive approach. Local cultural industries now gather on a regular basis, allowing everyone to engage in dialogue and knowledge exchange and to establish collaborations.

The case of Auckland is far from unique. For several cities, the application process provides momentum, resulting in new long-lasting collaborative relationships that enable the city's sustainable development goals to be implemented in a participatory way (see section 1.4 for an overview of the localization of the SDGs by UNESCO Creative Cities).

This dynamic is also fueled, as illustrated by interviews with the Cities of Angoulême, Bradford, Dakar, Fabriano, Macao SAR, and Santos, by inhabitants and professionals' sense of pride derived from the international recognition granted by the UNESCO Creative City designation. However, it extends far beyond that.

In fact, the participatory approach is also being applied upward by many cities, involving higher levels of territorial government, such as counties or regions, to achieve shared goals. These multilevel interactions thus establish a multi-actor collaboration model, at a magnitude rarely seen before the application process. All UCCN member cities benefit from the Network's membership, including those with cultural visibility prior to their designation. The preparatory work for this report revealed and demonstrated that membership to the

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5 Parma MMR 2019

6 Montréal MMR 2019

Network has also brought significant added value for these cities.

Indeed, the Network's goal of fostering sustainable local development provides cities with a framework for consolidating and structuring their local creative industries in a tangible way. This is driven by the structuring and formalization of the dialogue with different Creative City actors in the area. According to the founding principles of the Network, member cities engage in an ongoing dialogue with these actors, allowing for further refinement of municipal policies to a city's specific needs, as well as for the creation of opportunities arising from a holistic approach to development. Both of these integrate the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

This is embodied in the case of Mumbai, globally renowned for its Bollywood film industry. Indeed, the city has greatly expanded municipal action and engagement with local cultural actors. While the Municipality initially focused exclusively on granting film permits, it now involves the industry's actors directly, as well as other artistic sectors (particularly music) in a series of project calls aimed at enhancing the city's contribution to local development. Such an inclusive approach has enabled the city to support young talent in the film industry. When it comes to actors in the creative supply chain, the opportunity to participate in projects under the Mumbai Creative City label undeniably provides increased local, national and international exposure in terms of branding.

The city of Angoulême gained international recognition, notably thanks to its International Comics Festival, the second largest comics festival in Europe, aiming to promote the growth of the publishing industry since 1974. In addition, the city is renowned for its involvement with various actors in the field, higher education facilities dedicated to arts and comic book creation, an economic development hub, an international centre for artist residencies, and the Cité de la Bande Dessinée, the world's largest comics library. The city acknowledges that joining the Network allowed it to further strengthen this international orientation, in particular by facilitating direct exchanges with other Creative Cities of Literature, such as Milan, Barcelona, Prague and Edinburgh.

In the field of gastronomy, Parma's membership to the Network since 2015 furthered the Municipality's recognition of local and international skills and talents, contributing to making the city an 'interdisciplinary platform: a place of sharing and participation in which skills, resources, good practices and gastronomic experiences can be made available on three main macro-areas, Education, Experience, Production'.[7]

Montréal is another international city that has greatly benefitted from the UCCN designation. In 1991, more than a decade before joining the Network, the city had already identified design as a development tool when it created the position of Design Commissioner, in charge of implementing numerous initiatives aimed at stimulating creation in design and promoting the local and international reputation of Montréal-based designers. Building on this, the city's 2006 designation as a Creative City of Design undeniably enhanced and consolidated the Municipality's approach and actions in the field of design. For example, the Bureau du design was officially created in 2006 with the aim of raising the public's awareness of talented local designers and architects, supporting public commissions and, more broadly, asserting quality design in Montréal through its policy document Montréal Agenda 2030 for Quality and Exemplarity in Design and Architecture, which sets out guidelines for leveraging creativity and innovation for the city's green and social transition.

It should be noted that at times, applicant cities are designated in a creative field that, although developed and dynamic, differs from the city's internationally recognized field of expertise. In this respect, Milan is a case in point. While considered to be one of the world's most renowned design capitals, the city joined the Literature sub-network by virtue of its thriving publishing sector, identified as an instrument for advancing local priorities and sustainable urban development goals. Indeed, this membership has enabled the city to strengthen actions of hospitality and the integration of foreigners. For example, with the support of Bookcity Milano – one of the main local events dedicated to literature – the city aims to increase participation from communities of foreign origin in various events to foster their integration and enhance intercultural dialogue.

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7 Parma MMR 2019

1.2 Supporting the creative sector and promoting culture and arts education

Upon their designation as members of the UCCN, cities commit to leveraging culture and creativity in their local development plans. This commitment translates into concrete local actions, strategies and policies aimed at maximizing the multidimensional impact of culture and supporting creative economies and industries.

Almost all of the cities interviewed report how the designation has enabled the municipality itself – or the designated Focal Point (the main executive contact) – to systematize and boost the local creative ecosystem.

Indeed, several cities identify increased support for creative professionals, artists and practitioners from their municipal government as one of the main outcomes stemming from UCCN membership. For example, Reykjavík, a Creative City of Literature, has set up a grassroots fund to assist poets and writers. Artists selected through a dedicated call receive financial support, are invited to co-run a literary house and receive personalized assistance.

The programme also involves foreign-born writers and facilitates the translation of their work into Icelandic. Moreover, they are provided with valuable support in their integration within the local literary community. This has facilitated the creation of around three collectives of foreign-born writers creating works in different languages.

Singapore, for its part, believes that joining the Design sub-network in 2015 has considerably opened doors for local designers and provided opportunities within the design industry, specifically 'international exposure, opportunities to hone our skills, and access to new markets'.[8]

Opening up to foreign markets is indeed a recurrent theme in interviews conducted as part of this research. For example, Macao SAR, a Creative City of Gastronomy, highlights how the use of the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy designation in various contexts – e.g., events, documentaries, social media and projects with other Creative Cities – has helped the local food industry.[9] Similarly, the City of Bologna issues calls to support musicians who perform abroad, preferably in other cities from the Music sub-network. Moreover, in 2010, Bologna launched IncrediBol!, a project aimed at promoting the creation and internationalization of start-ups within the CCIs. The impact of the project was acknowledged by the Emilia-Romagna Regional government, which became one of its sponsors.[10]

The City of Auckland identifies the added value of the Network in terms of international connections for geographically remote areas. In fact, according to the city, the Network constitutes a platform for identifying pathways for artists and music creatives to access broader markets, beginning with those located in other cities in the Network.[11]

The City of Mumbai, in turn, has put in place a policy to support young talent through dedicated grants and events. To further expand this policy, Mumbai is committed to securing the support of the local film industry and raising awareness of the importance of cultivating young talent.[12] This emphasis on youth is shared by the City of Istanbul, which encourages collaboration between young designers and local artisans. The combination of innovation and tradition has inherent cultural value, stimulates employment and economic growth, and increases exports.[13]

In several cities, support for young creatives also involves education. For instance, the membership and participatory approach of the Network has encouraged the City of Sharjah to create synergies between universities and artisans, enabling an intergenerational dialogue in which usefully strengthens the skills of students and fosters innovation among professionals. A similar approach is adopted by Buenos Aires. In

8 Singapore interview

9 Macao SAR interview

10 Bologna MMR 2020

11 Auckland interview

12 Mumbai interview

13 Istanbul interview

collaboration with the School of Design and Communication of the Universidad de Palermo, Buenos Aires manages an Incubator for Creative Entrepreneurship aimed at supporting design students, graduates and entrepreneurs.[14]

In addition, Bitola, a Creative City of Film, collaborates with primary and secondary schools within the framework of its annual International Mobile Film Festival, an international festival of short-length movies which encourages and supports young filmmaking talents in producing films on mobile phones. Aimed at democratizing filmmaking, the festival notably provides visibility and support for 17-year-olds through the organization of dedicated workshops initiating them in stop-motion techniques.[15]

A similar project is Aswan Connect, established in the Creative City of Aswan and supported by the Om Habibeh Foundation in 2017, which seeks to provide incubation and mentorship for young artisans in the fields of handicrafts, arts and music, helping them generate sustainable income. For its part, in 2022, the city of Bradford fostered professional opportunities for students by connecting them with some of the most popular local film companies. The initiative accompanied young people in pursuing a professional career in the film sector, an industry that is thriving in Bradford thanks to the strong connection between the municipality, the University of Bradford and the film industry.[16]

As a result of the UCCN's holistic approach to creativity and its role in sustainable urban development, member cities have reported that one of the most positive impact of their membership is the establishment of municipal programmes aimed at promoting artistic and cultural education in children and young people and enhancing their engagement in their city's cultural activities.

In Iowa City for example, a Creative City of Literature, the involvement of children in local cultural initiatives – such as the One Book Two Book Children's Literature Festival and the Iowa Young Writers' Studio for high school students – is rooted in a strategic ambition to better equip young people for the future. As illustrated in their 2020 MMR: 'While the City of Literature designation, when conferred, reflected the work of past and current writers, poets, editors, publishers and more, the work of a City of Literature must involve providing a firm foundation for the future'.

Prioritizing youth is also a central focus of Reykjavík, which has introduced literary-focused programmes for preschool and primary school children. Through collaboration with schools and libraries, the city organized workshops, readings, events and the creation of a dedicated mascot – Sleipnir, the horse of Odin, the Norse god of poetry[17] – and thus enhanced the engagement of young generations with literature while stimulating their imagination. Witness to the success of this project is the fact that it has become a permanent programme and been replicated by other Creative Cities of Literature (see section 3.6.2).

Kobe, a Creative City of Design, also works to cultivate creativity among local children. Its programmes include Chibikkobe, an experiential project allowing children to work with creators and come up with their 'dream town'; the Kodomo SOZO Project, where children craft their own artworks out of waste materials collected from local shops and factories; and finally the Toshin Kodomo Machizukuri Meeting, accompanying children in creating a model of their ideal vision for the city 30 years from now.[18]

In 2021, Viborg, a Creative City of Media Arts, launched the global social media campaign #DrawwithDenmark, dedicated to children and youth affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign, aimed at sharing a message of hope and comfort to vulnerable children worldwide, saw the participation of around 40 Creative Cities and more than 3,300 children and young people across 33 countries. Following this global success, Viborg launched a second and third edition of the #DrawwithDenmark campaign in 2022 and 2023.[19]

14 Buenos Aires MMR 2020

15 Bitola MMR 2019

16 UCCN website

17 UCCN Literature sub-network, Sleipnir Travels, 2022

18 Kobe MMR 2020

19 UCCN website

In addition, the UCCN designation also strengthens other sectors, including cultural events. Sapporo, a Creative City of Media Arts, bears witness to this: its UCCN membership has translated into increased visibility and audience engagement. This is notably the case for the city's main events, such as the *Pacific Music Festival*, the *Sapporo International Short Film Festival*, *Autumn fest*, the *Snow Festival*, and the *Sapporo International Art Festival*.

As pointed out by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO,[20] UCCN events, reuniting representatives from cities around the world, enable the internationalization of their respective cultural industries and strengthened international collaboration. One example is the International Neset Ertas Memorial Festival organized in September 2022 by Kırşehir, a Creative City of Music. The event, attended by more than 50 participants from UCCN member cities such as Afyonkarahisar, Batumi, Hanover, Kutahya and Pesaro, offered valuable opportunities for raising awareness of the role of music in sustainable development and successfully established cross-sectoral synergies among fellow Creative Cities.[21] Likewise, the UNESCO Busan Inter-City Film Festival features films from other Creative Cities of Film, including Bitola, Łódź, Santos and Yamagata. Such an occasion allowed for both the celebration of the film sector and also the strengthening of exchanges among member cities.[22]

Collaborations between Creative Cities also take place through cross-cluster events and initiatives. The City of Macao SAR emphasized how membership in the Network confers several opportunities to develop new events through interaction with other Creative Cities.[23] In 2022 for example, in the context of the San Antonio Film Festival (SAFILM), San Antonio promoted a call to submit entries to the festival among Creative Cities of Gastronomy and Film for the Food Film Category. By creating this category, the City of San Antonio fostered cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborations, especially among Creative Cities of Gastronomy and Film, thus promoting a holistic vision of development through culture and creativity across the Network.[24]

Municipalities also provide direct financial support to their creative sector if necessary resources are available. In Enghien-les-Bains, a Creative City of Media Arts, the Centre des Arts receives direct support from the city to manage an ample space dedicated to culture, consisting of a theatre, an art gallery, artist residencies and a creative enterprise incubator.

Finally, the local cultural sector is the focus of dissemination and publication activity in several cities. This is illustrated by publications resulting from the collaboration between Popayán and the research group on Culinary Heritage of the University of Cauca: The Hidden Kitchens of the White City (2017), Grandmothers dishes; Traditional cuisine of Popayán (2018) and Parental kitchens; Five essays with a flavor of tradition (2019).

1.3 Promoting creativity and safeguarding culture for sustainable development

Culture and creativity have increasingly been recognized as a key to sustainable urban development. Cities have evolved into living laboratories, devising actions and policies that further leverage the impact of creativity to make cities better places to live and improve people's lives. At the heart of the Network's Mission is the implementation of local actions that harness culture and creativity towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

An example of this is the Urban Innovation KOBE Project, bringing together start-ups, venture capital firms and municipal employees with the aim of finding solutions and tools to improve well-being and achieve local priorities, such as the development of a VR system that simulates floods to raise awareness on disaster prevention.[25]

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20 National Commission of Türkiye interview

21 UCCN Secretariat, "Kırşehir Organized the International Neset Ertas Memorial Festival", UCCN website, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/kirsehir-organized-international-neset-ertas-memorial-festival

22 UCCN Secretariat, "Busan organises and hosts the 2018 edition of two film events in cooperation with the Creative Cities of Film Santos and Bitola", 2018, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/busan-organizes-and-hosts-2018-edition-two-film-events-cooperation-creative-cities-film

23 Macao SAR interview

24 UCCN website

25 Kobe MMR 2020

The Creative Cities of Tartu, Reykjavík and Québec have demonstrated their ability to link literature to urban spaces. The Tartu Public Library developed the Jutupeatus / Story Stop Project in 2018, consisting of one hundred signposts with QR codes placed throughout the country, directing users to audio and text extracts from locally-inspired literary works.[26] A similar in situ literary project has been developed by Reykjavík and identified as one of the major successes resulting from the city's UCCN membership. Through the use of QR codes displayed next to the city's landmarks, residents and tourists can access sight-specific poems and prose.[27] Québec, a Creative City of Design, also produced a dedicated map entitled 'Rallye découverte Vieux-Québec littéraire', allowing residents and tourists to discover 25 iconic places in the literary history of 'the cradle of French-speaking America'.[28]

Similarly, the 'Literary Map of Barcelona' was designed to allow residents and tourists to explore the city's connection with literature: monuments dedicated to literary authors or characters, thematic museums, libraries, bookstores and literary cafes.[29]

The promotion of creativity at the local level has also proved to be one of the main tools for tackling the pandemic's harsh consequences on cities' creative industries. Indeed, Kırşehir built 'music corners' in public spaces during the pandemic. In addition to financial backing, these stages in the shape of musical instruments proved a valuable support for both musicians and inhabitants, combating social isolation and championing local talents.

The UCCN designation has also had a considerable impact on the development and quality of member cities' cultural offerings, amplifying the diversity of local cultural activities and events.

For instance, Kırşehir reports that the city's commitment to UNESCO and its participatory approach has led to qualitative improvements in cultural offerings, par-

ticularly with regards to music events. Kırşehir notably embraced the UCCN's participatory approach by creating a website allowing creative professionals to advertise public events.[30]

Improving cultural offerings also means increasing cultural participation for all types of audiences. In recent years, Helsinki, a Creative City of Design, has been dedicated to broadening and diversifying its cultural offering for children and young people. In 2018, during Helsinki Design Week, an annual design festival which comprises more than 250 events and attracts a total audience of up to 170,000 each year, the festival stepped up cultural participation with a dedicated Children's Design Week. This let children and young people access events aimed at raising awareness on the built environment and promoting design education.[31]

Another important element in strengthening cities' cultural offerings is increased international participation, contribution and collaboration in local events. For example, Macao SAR, a Creative City of Gastronomy, explained how the participation of foreign chefs in Macao SAR's culinary events has boosted the city's visibility on the international level.[32] According to several member cities, joining the Network has a twofold impact regarding the safeguarding of living heritage, including local traditions. On the one hand, it has enabled cities to gain, in Macao SAR's words, 'substantial elevation and international recognition [...] a stamp of approval'.[33] In other words, traditional practitioners are put on an equal footing with creative professionals and benefit, with a sense of pride, from this international recognition. The municipality, on the other hand, leverages traditions to reinforce cultural identity and to boost national and international tourism.

In this regard, Macao RAS is aligned with the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO. Indeed, the latter emphasizes the way in which the UCCN facilitated the 'preserving and reviving of

26 MMR 2019

27 Reykjavík interview

28 Québec City, Rallye découverte Vieux-Québec littéraire, 2022, https://www.rallyevieux-quebeclitteraire.ca/

29 Barcelona MMR 2019

30 Kırşehir interview

31 Helsinki MMR 2018

32 Macao SAR interview

33 Macao SAR interview

traditional culture' locally. For example, the Commission shared the case of Hangzhou, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, where industrial development has been boosted by an ability to enhance some 40 types of traditional crafts, such as Xiaoshan lace, Hangzhou brocade, Hangzhou embroidery, Hangzhou folding fans, Hangzhou copper carvings and stone carvings.[34]

In addition to preserving and safeguarding heritage, cities also appear to value intercultural connections, particularly those made within the framework of Network interactions. Indeed, thanks to the International Folk Art Market of Santa Fe, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, 'folk art artists across the world [...] have developed new practices that expand creativity and protect cultural traditions'.[35]

The Creative City designation also impacts the recognition and valorization of member cities' tangible cultural heritage. For example, in 2021, Carrara, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, reunited the Italian Creative Cities for the first edition of the Creativity Forum to discuss and exchange ideas on the valorization of cities' cultural heritage, while ensuring active promotion of the SDGs. On this occasion, Carrara presented the Carrara Charter and Declaration of Carrara, two documents aimed at providing a starting point for planning the cultural, social and economic regeneration of historical centers while re-thinking the role of craftspeople in this process.[36]

Another example aimed at valorizing tangible heritage was presented by the city of Heidelberg, a Creative City of Literature. In December 2022, the city organized a series of literary activities dedicated to young audiences in the extraordinary natural setting of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Grube Messel and the UNESCO Global Geopark Bergstrasse-Odenwald. Involving a wide range of stakeholders, the city of Heidelberg evidenced its role as a Creative City of Literature in raising awareness on key issues such as the importance of preserving World Heritage for

future generations in the context of sustainable urban development.[37]

Moreover, a number of member cities proudly mention how they adapted, and even thrived, in the trying context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed very restrictive opportunities for collaboration. Indeed, although in person meetings and field missions were suspended, cities made the most of the opportunities offered by online communication to engage in dialogue, exchange best practices, provide enhanced visibility, and collaborate on online productions. In this context, two major events were organized by the UCCN Secretariat. In September 2020, the third edition of the UNESCO Creative Cities Beijing Summit took place in hybrid format on the theme 'Creativity empowers cities, technology creates the future' and served as an international platform for dialogue, uniting a diverse set of urban stakeholders from Creative City mayors and policymakers to high-level representatives from intergovernmental organizations, from academics and experts to representatives from the private sectors (UCCN website).[38] Furthermore, in 2021 the UCCN Secretariat co-organized an online meeting on the theme 'UNESCO Creative Cities: Build back better from COVID-19' with Santos, a Creative City of Film. The event brought together more than 175 Creative Cities and provided a platform for mayors, representatives and other stakeholders from Creative Cities to share valuable experiences, exchange good practices and foster collective efforts, highlighting the decisive role culture and creativity play at city level in responding to, and recovering from, the pandemic.

The opportunities offered by online communication are also illustrated by cities like Sapporo which, like other members of the Media Arts sub-network, explored and expanded projects to support its artists during the pandemic (Sapporo interview).[39] Singapore, a Creative City of Design, highlights the extent to which the Network provided a platform to share knowledge and strategies through various webinars and workshops. The local government was thus able to share successful

34 Hangzhou MMR 2017

35 Santa Fe MMR 2020

36 UCCN website

37 UCCN website

38 UCCN website

39 Sapporo interview

initiatives with a broader audience thanks to the online format (Singapore interview).[40]

1.4 Impact on the localization of the SDGs by Creative Cities

During interviews, a great number of member cities asserted that the UCCN plays a key role in the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, towards the global achievement of the SDGs. As the city of Santos stated, the primary work of member cities is to 'think globally, act locally',[41] emphasizing the critical role cities have in advancing, at local level, international priorities such as climate change, rising inequalities and sustainable development. This 'glocal' approach is also underlined by several National Commissions for UNESCO. For instance, the Italian National Commission emphasizes cities' ability to raise awareness and broaden the application of the 2030 Agenda.[42] Indeed, during the interviews conducted for the preparation of this report, the SDGs were repeatedly evoked by cities and National Commissions as an essential interpretive tool for the Network's tangible impact.

In the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the most relevant SDGs with regards to member cities' local actions are SDG 11 'Sustainable cities and communities' and SDG 17 'Partnership for the goals'. Hand in hand, both SDGs encapsulate the UCCN's overarching Mission and objectives, and their application in member cities' projects and initiatives: to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable through international and multistakeholder cooperation.

Best practices undertaken by UCCN member cities illustrate the effective localization of the SDGs. The following section outlines a non-exhaustive list of projects and initiatives according to their relevance to the 2030 Agenda's specific SDGs.

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40 Singapore interview

41 Santos interview

42 Italy interview

SDG 11
Sustainable Cities and Communities

The inclusion of SDG 11 in the 2030 Agenda bears witness to the importance of cities in advancing sustainable development on the international stage. Home to 55% of the world's population today, urban areas are expected to grow up to 68% by 2050 according to the UN Habitat's World Cities Report 2022, thereby highlighting the urgent need for cities to develop strategies and be given the proper tools to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Naturally, the UCCN Secretariat and member cities' actions are driven by SDG 11 and aim to jointly shape the cities of tomorrow through a shared vision of transitioning to a resilient and sustainable urban future.[43]

Among the eight constitutive targets of SDG11, target 11.1 urges to 'ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums' by 2030. Helsinki's project A Home That Fits, launched in 2015, is in line with this target as it aims to convert empty spaces into accommodation for people in need, in collaboration with young designers. Coordinated by the council's youth department, the initiative primarily intends to decrease youth homelessness in the capital and enhance social cohesion and dialogue among people of differing ages and backgrounds, by renting out cheap rooms for 18- to 25-year-olds in state-run care homes and providing a range of social activities.

In addition, UCCN member cities' projects and initiatives also align with target 11.4 which aims to 'strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.' Tunis, in partnership with the Association for the Protection of the Tunis Medina, has carried out an extensive urban development programme exploring the Tunis Medina's heritage with multiple objectives: strengthening the city's supply of social housing, protecting and promoting its craft traditions, and preserving its built heritage.

Finally, UCCN member cities also align with SDG 11 through their efforts towards strengthening resilience in the face of multifaceted crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, in a context of largely unforeseen magnitude, UCCN cities have developed numerous solutions in which creativity has been used to implement rapid and effective solutions. The Creative Cities of Design of Bilbao, Braga, Curitiba and Turin, alongside their designers, developed numerous virus-protection solutions for citizens and health personnel. For instance, the city of Bilbao capitalized on its design potential to produce health protection equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic in the framework of the Maker Community against Coronavirus initiative. At the BilbaoArte artistic production centre, professionals from various backgrounds, including design and engineering, leveraged culture and creativity to create personal protective equipment (masks, face shields and respirators) destined for hospitals. Member cities have also focused on mitigating the impact of social restrictions. For example, the City of Edinburgh created a system of book delivery for children suffering from isolation after contracting the virus.[44] In parallel, cities took action to support the creative sector, which was particularly affected by the restrictions deployed to contain the virus. Bangkok provided local artists with public spaces to decorate or use as a creative space, while Melbourne supported writers and poets by commissioning poems that were then published in a weekly newsletter. Finally, the examples of Viborg and Wuhan illustrate how municipal authorities have collaborated with the creative sector to circulate verified public information relating to sanitation and social distancing by leveraging the power of video animation and graphic design.[45]

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43 UNESCO, "UNESCO Creative Cities Network: Strategic Framework" (UNESCO, 2017), https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/default/files/strategic-framework_uccn_eng_20170705_vf_no_budget_0.pdf; UNESCO, "Voices of the City: UNESCO Creative Cities Moving towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2019, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368163?posInSet=1&queryId=bbf52e85-5b8b-40d9-9067-65e9ee943fbb; UNESCO, UNESCO Creative Cities Network for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2020), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375210.

44 Edinburgh MMR 2020

45 UNESCO, UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19 (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2020), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374264?posInSet=7&queryId=1f26fc80-270a-4c54-bb11-17e83ea8888b.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SDG 17
Partnership for the goals

SDG 17 aims to 'strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development', reflecting the Network's participatory approach towards achieving the 2030 Agenda on a local level, and its commitment to international and inter-city cooperation.

SDG 17 reflects the holistic approach adopted by the 2030 Agenda, which encourages global partnerships to implement the SDGs more effectively. In this regard, cities have enormous potential. Home to the majority of the world's population today, cities bring together the local level and global issues, to ensure that policies which emerge are concrete and applicable. Above all, member cities benefit from facilitated dialogue with a wide range of cities, enabling them to jointly develop culture and creativity-driven initiatives and solutions to address major global challenges affecting urban centers, drawing on each other's strengths.

In line with target 17.6 on knowledge sharing and cooperation, the Network enhances North-South, South-South, and triangular regional and international cooperation among its member cities, particularly with regards to access to, and participation in, cultural activities. In 2022 the member cities of Cannes and Dakar joined forces in the Cannes-Dakar Meetings, a series of inter-city meetings which brought together French and Senegalese industry partners and other creative stakeholders to foster the sharing of good practices and experiences. In the framework of this programme, African filmmakers were invited to the Cannes Film Festival, and other film-related events like La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, La Semaine de la Critique and Les Rencontres cinématographiques de Cannes. Moreover, relevant partnerships were developed between educational institutions. Indeed, L'Ecole d'Acteurs Régionale Cannes-Marseilles (ERACM) and L'Ecole Internationale d'Acteurs de Dakar (EIAD) signed a three-year cooperation agreement, committing to holding student-oriented workshops and co-produce a bilingual show in French and Wolof, among other activities.Finally, with a diverse programme and participants from across the world, the UCCN Annual Conference offers a valuable international platform, fostering collective reflection on the contribution of culture and creativity to building sustainable cities for the future, in the short, medium and long term.

To summarize, the localization of the SDGs is central to the UCCN's Mission and objectives and is evident through member cities' concrete projects. The conclusions of the XIVth Annual Conference held in Santos in July 2022 further reaffirm member cities' 'strong commitment to serving UNESCO's mandate and principles, notably in fostering international cooperation and solidarity to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals'.

While UCCN member cities work towards achieving SDGs 11 and 17 in particular, activities spill over into other target areas due to their cross-cutting nature, embracing growth and innovation, climate action, discrimination and equality, education and health.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SDG 3
Good Health and Well-Being

Many UCCN member cities also work towards localizing SDG 3, to 'ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages', and believe in the positive impact of culture and creativity on health and well-being, as well as its power in improving citizens' overall quality of life. In June 2019 for example, Kinshasa, a Creative City of Music, launched the project Full Patate in which 600 participants of all ages practiced sports activities to the beat of live music.[46] Focusing on the positive effects of combining sport with music, the initiative was co-organized with IDEO-Rockcity, a music label which manages young local artists.

In addition to the aforementioned pandemic-related response, UCCN member cities draw on culture and creativity a to mitigate symptoms of, and cope with, other medical conditions. For example, the city of Mannheim employed music therapy to reduce anxiety in patients undergoing cancer treatment such as experimental chemotherapy.[47]

In terms of preventative healthcare, several Creative Cities of Gastronomy have also strengthened their efforts towards ensuring greater food safety and hygiene standards in the food supply chain. For example, the city of Phuket has established its very own City of Gastronomy Food Standards, and regularly organizes food hygiene and sanitation audits by the Health Department to evaluate whether food businesses are meeting food safety criteria and protocol.[48]

46 Kinshasa MMR 2019
47 Mannheim MMR 2018
48 Phuket MMR 2019

SDG 4
Quality Education

Moreover, Creative Cities highlight that quality education is one of the most tangible outcomes of their membership, particularly thanks to its participatory approach which encourages synergies between municipal governments and the education sector. This allows municipalities to apply SDG 4, to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', in local communities.

When it comes to primary education, the UCCN membership has enabled member cities to enhance school curricula with a component related to art, creativity and imagination. In Kırşehir, for example, music classes for children were widely encouraged, and in Reykjavík, creative projects for young children were developed in collaboration with kindergartens, schools and bookstores. In Reykjavík, the initiative was deemed so successful that it was made permanent.

Regarding higher education, UCCN membership is considered to have strengthened ties with universities. For example, the city of Sharjah believes that UCCN membership was instrumental in expanding the local academic offering related to Crafts and Folk Art. Indeed, the city established concrete synergies between universities and local artisans, enabling students to expand their skills while allowing artisans to exchange with students and share their knowledge and know-how.

The Gastronomy sub-network also established academic and creative projects with the aim of ensuring quality education for all. For example, the cities of Parma, Östersund, Bergen, and Dénia co-organized the Master's degree in Food City Design (FCD), a post-graduate interdisciplinary programme focused on the role of food and design in urban regeneration and sustainable development.[49]

Finally, UCCN member cities also value the Network for providing a platform for reflection on, and preparation for, future creative sector employment challenges. As Enghien-les-Bains points out, forward planning is essential for developing training to equip young people for future professions, which are likely to be characterized by strong porosity between creative sectors.[50]

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49 Parma MMR 2019
50 Enghien-les-Bains interview

SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 10 Reduce Inequalities

The Network's member cities share a firm commitment to reducing different forms of inequality and discrimination, such as those related to gender, age or disability. In line with UNESCO's priority areas of action, member cities' projects and initiatives harness culture and creativity for localizing SDG 5, 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', as well as SDG 10, 'to reduce inequality within and among countries'.

As highlighted by Fabriano, UNESCO's focus on gender equality[51] constitutes a valuable contribution to the localization of discussions on women and girls' rights, enabling cities to design and implement urban policies on gender rights in line with SDG 5.[52]

A concrete example of UCCN action towards gender equality lies in the collaborative EQ Equalizer project, launched in 2019 by four Creative Cities of Music: Hannover, Auckland, Adelaide and Norrkoping. EQ Equalizer is an open-source gender equality project designed to foster participation and create opportunities for women entering, or working in, the music sector, thereby encouraging cities to develop projects which support gender equality in their local communities. Each of the four cities have created EQ-themed projects, tailored to local conditions and outcomes, providing women and girls with funds to create music videos as well as mentoring from creative professionals in the film, choreography, music production, songwriting, singing and performance industries.

In line with UNESCO's priorities on Gender Equality and Youth,[53] the city of Bradford presented its short film Girls Power during the 2022 edition of the Fabriano Film Fest, produced by a collective of young filmmakers. The film portrays the hopes, dreams and aspirations of three teenage girls from Bradford, revealing the strength and compassion of a young generation of girls who share the determination to fight for equality.

Sharjah, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, promotes knowledge sharing on gender equality as one of the benefits of interacting with other member cities. In particular, Sharjah illustrates how dialogue within the sub-network has enabled the city to map and enhance local inclusivity, identifying good practices and adapting them to different contexts.[54]

Moreover, Kırşehir, a Creative City of Music, highlights how UCCN designation led to new initiatives to promote the talent of women and girls with a view to equality and inclusion.[55]

Bogotá, a Creative City of Music, also launched an extensive educational programme in 2013, in collaboration with the City Arts Institute, Idartes and the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, to broaden access to musical practice to the entire urban population, with the goal of 'enforcing cultural rights and of generating better audiences and artists for the future'.[56] In the same spirit, the city of Santo Domingo developed the Sistema de Bandas programme to provide musical education to hundreds of children and young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.[57]

51 UNESCO, "Priority Gender Equality," April 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality.4,17]]},»issued»:{«date-parts» :[[«2023»,4]]}}}],»schema»:»https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»}

52 Fabriano interview

53 UNESCO, "Priority Youth," April 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/youth.4,17]]},»issued»:{«date-parts»:[[«2023»,4]]}}},{«id»:1463,»uris»:[«http:// zotero.org/users/6527255/items/5QVX2GS2»],»itemData»:{«id»:1463,»type»:»webpage»,»language»:»en»,»title»:»Youth»,»URL»:»https:// www.unesco.org/en/youth»,»author»:[{«literal»:»UNESCO»}],»accessed»:{«date-parts»:[[«2023»,4,17]]},»issued»:{«date-parts»:[[«2023»,4,17]]}}}],»schema»:»https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json»}

54 Sharjah interview

55 Kırşehir interview

56 Bogotá MMR 2017

57 City of Santo Domingo Este, "Alcalde Manuel Jiménez anuncia ante la UNESCO sistema de bandas musicales para niños de sectores populares", 2022, https://ayuntamientosde.gob.do/alcalde-manuel-jimenez-anuncia-ante-la-unesco-sistema-de-bandas-musicales-para-ninos-de-sectores-populares/

To combat inequality between neighbourhoods, Buenos Aires, a Creative City of Design, has developed the Barrios Creativos (Creative Neighborhoods) programme which supports bottom-up cultural initiatives in several creative fields, including literature, gastronomy, music and media arts.[58]

A similar goal prompted Gaziantep, a Creative City of Gastronomy, to develop Atelier Without Obstacles, a project consisting of vocational training programmes for socio-economically disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities. The initiative is carried out in the context of the city's Unobstructed Living Space and Rehabilitation Center, which has a barrier-free kitchen designed to accommodate people with disabilities.[59]

In Lviv, the programme Third age: the pleasure of reading (2016-2018) created a platform for dialogue among senior citizens, promoting conviviality and the importance of reading at any age.[60]

Finally, Québec City, another member of the Literature sub-network, has contributed to the localization of SDGs related to reducing inequalities by strengthening the integration of autochthonous peoples into local cultural life. Activities include a writing residency for autochthonous writers and public programming in collaboration with the Salon du livre des Premières Nations.[61]

58 Buenos Aires MMR 2020

59 Gaziantep MMR 2019

60 Lviv MMR 2019

61 Québec MMR 2021

SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Member cities also report that joining the Network allowed them to contribute to the localization of SDG 8 'to promote sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" as well as SDG 9 "to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation'.

Several cities, such as Shenzhen[62] and Fabriano,[63] underline that the Network provided them with useful tools and an implementable approach for integrating culture and creativity into their local development models, with positive spillovers in terms of employment.

Despite significant differences in population,[64] both cities have indeed witnessed considerable improvement in terms of development models and branding.

In Shenzhen, a Creative City of Design, the contribution of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) to the city's GDP has in fact more than doubled from 2004 to 2015, reaching 10.8 per cent. These numbers reflect the outcomes of the city's innovation-driven development strategy which transitioned from Made in Shenzhen to the more innovation-driven Created in Shenzhen label.[65] The UCCN designation had a similar instrumental effect in Isfahan, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, where the transition from a semi-industrial city to a creative one has been driven by a focus on environmental sustainability.[66]

In turn, the example of Fabriano shows that the vision of the Network, based on access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities, accompanies the city's de-industrialization processes that, if left to their own devices, could exacerbate territorial divides and lead to a decrease in employment, population size and

services available to citizens. Fabriano points out that although designated as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, the Network's approach has equally been applied to other creative sectors in the city, which have been able to expand. Thus, the municipality is coordinating the transition to the 'Creative City' model aligned with the principles of- the Agenda 2030, with an accent on sustainability and accessibility.[67]

Moreover, the Creative City of Brazzaville is rehabilitating the cultural neighbourhood of Poto-Poto to turn it into an artistic, cultural and civic pole, accessible to the local population. The project aims to leverage innovation and infrastructure investment to enhance the historic district's attractiveness and turn it into a rich creative hub. As a result, Poto-Poto will feature rehearsal spaces and artistic residencies. The neighbourhood hopes to act as breeding ground for cultural innovation. Brazzaville is also building two artistic distribution platforms in remote urban districts to encourage the creation and dissemination of cultural products while increasing their accessibility.[68]

Popayán, a Creative City of Gastronomy, also illustrates the Network's contribution to improving the socio-economic conditions of workers in the traditional gastronomy sector. Indeed, the acceleration of the sector's economic dynamism is directly linked to the city's UCCN membership and, most notably, the visibility provided by international meetings between cities in the same creative field. Moreover, the city reports that training workshops greatly benefited workers in the sector. Opportunities linked to capacity-building have enabled workers to pay off debts, save money and resume education, thereby improving quality of life.

62 MMR 2020

63 Interview

64 12.59 million in Shenzhen, 31.212 in Fabriano

65 Shenzhen MMR 2020

66 Isfahan MMR 2019

67 Fabriano interview

68 Brazzaville MMR 2021

Dubai, a Creative City of Design, emphasizes how inter-city exchanges within the Network – and notably exchanges with Saint Etienne, a member of the same sub-Network – foster the acquisition of expertise on growth strategy. Such dialogues, Dubai points out, allow the strengthening of the city's international positioning as a place open to the world, where design is an important part of daily experience. This is also realized through international events in which other Creative Cities of Design participate.[69]

Finally, the City of Sharjah emphasizes how fruitful international collaboration is not limited to exchanges within a single creative field. For example, the city has woven strong links with Milan, a Creative City of Literature and one of the world capitals of design. The collaboration between the two cities has led to the integration of exhibitions curated by Sharjah as part of the 2022 Milan Design Fair. As Sharjah points out, strengthening international collaboration for growth and development is an essential component of interculturality, thanks to the bilateral dialogue between cultures created by such events.[70]

69 Dubai interview

70 Sharjah interview

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
SDG 2 Zero Hunger

During the interviews, several member cities confirmed the role of creativity as an extraordinary tool for fostering responsible consumption and production, and their commitment towards aligning their activities with SDG 12, to 'ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' as well as SDG 2, to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture' by 2030. For example, the City of Sharjah emphasizes how working together within the Network enables local thinking about natural resources and their sustainable use in the creative field of Crafts and Folk Art.[71]

In the same spirit, the city of Macao highlighted its role as a Creative City of Gastronomy committed to sustainable and responsible production through The Great Green Food Journey: Macao campaign. In partnership with National Geographic, the city produced a dedicated article on the magazine's official website outlining Macao's four centuries of culinary fusion and future goals for sustainable gastronomy. The article underlined the city's efforts towards ensuring a sustainable future for Macanese cuisine through the training of the next generation on both traditional cuisine and topics such as food waste.

With the same objective, Alba, another Creative City of Gastronomy, developed the ORTOgrafia educational project dedicated to bringing children closer to the cultivation of vegetables and fostering greater awareness of where ingredients come from. The project actively introduced children to various subjects, covering the natural cycle of local products, the sustainable management of energy needed to produce them, the techniques for producing organic fertilizer from degradable food waste, and methods for growing a sustainable balcony garden.

Furthermore, Łódź, a Creative City of Film, launched the initiative Green filming through the Łódź Film Fund. The fund endorses green filming principles with the aim of promoting sustainability in film production by mitigating the harmful impact of film production on the environment, especially regarding transportation and catering.

Finally, the cities of Tucson and Parma have implemented the City of Gastronomy DOGGY BAG project, aimed at promoting a new anti-waste culture among cities where the practice is not widespread.[72]

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71 Sharjah interview
72 Parma MMR 2019

SDG 13 Climate Action and environmental protection
SDG 14 Life Below Water, and
SDG 15 Life on Land

In line with UNESCO's priority on climate change and SDGs 13, 14, and 15, several cities highlight how the Creative City designation has reinforced their ambition to unlock the potential of culture and creativity for urban climate action.[73] Indeed, member cities consider creativity as a crucial instrument for improving conditions in water and on land. In fact, several cities identified the shift toward the Creative City model as an alternative to development patterns that negatively impact local flora and fauna, as well as people's quality of life.

In its 2019 MMR, Montréal states for instance that 'In the coming years, to address the many transformational challenges posed by the climate emergency as well as public health issues, Montréal will increasingly look to the creativity and innovative capacity of designers, architects, urban planners, and engineers.'

Istanbul also places design at the service of climate action. According to the city, design combines both creative innovation – realized in line with environmental sustainability criteria – and the restoration of historic buildings and public spaces, protecting them from the increasingly violent impact of atmospheric precipitation.[74]

An additional example of member cities' commitment towards climate action is the project The Heat is On: Young Writers on the Climate Change Crisis, a digital anthology released in 2022 on the occasion of World Environment Day by the city of Dunedin and other Creative Cities of Literature. The participants were young writers from 15 Creative Cities of Literature from all over the globe, featuring thought-provoking pieces that aimed to spark conversation and nurture awareness of the emergency of climate change and offer culturally different perspectives on the climate crisis. This initiative provided new insights and opportunities to develop solutions for a cleaner future, in line with the 2030 Agenda.[75]

Additionally, the UCCN Secretariat also highlighted member cities' critical role in taking action to reduce the impact of cultural and creative events on local surroundings by organizing a collective Beach clean-up' initiative as the opening event of the XIVth UCCN Annual Conference in 2022 to raise awareness of the urgent need to take concrete actions for environmental resilience while building enjoyable and sustainable urban spaces for all inhabitants.

Finally, to celebrate the 2023 edition of the International Jazz Day, the Creative Cities of Music worked collectively to develop the project Interconnection: A 'Jazz Relay' in Celebration of Life Below Water. Inspiration for the project draws from SDG 14: in much the same way as the rivers, lakes and oceans of the world are interconnected through the water cycle, these cities are connected through music.

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73 UNESCO, "Climate Change," April 17, 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/climate-change.

74 Istanbul interview

75 UCCN website

1.5 Conclusions

Providing a comprehensive overview of the impact of UCCN designation at local level, this report first of all delves into the outcomes that the membership has brought to member cities' economies, creative sectors and communities more generally. In particular, tangible progress in the areas of social cohesion, protection and promotion of cultural diversity, economic development, cultural employment and global positioning was discussed and illustrated through member cities' projects and initiatives. The increased international visibility and attractiveness brought about by UCCN designation and the effective inter-city collaboration encouraged by the Network were identified as primary drivers for these outcomes. The successes achieved by cities around the world, regardless of their size or socio-economic conditions, demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of the UCCN approach to development and its attractiveness to cities, residents and local actors, and support the Network's marked growth in membership over the past few years.

The report also showcases how the Network provides a valuable contribution to the localization of the SDGs, by offering member cities an overall framework for local development policy and action, fully aligned with global priorities. At the crossroads of local and global dimensions, the Network notably enables the sharing of tools, experiences, solutions and guides to support the localization of the SDGs. In this sense, the UCCN acts as a platform that encourages on-the-ground delivery of the SDGs with tangible results and supports cities in collaboratively incubating and sharing solutions at local level. Beyond contributing to sustainable development on a global scale, the UCCN enables member cities to reap a wide range of local benefits as a result, such as enhanced knowledge, resources, skills and partnerships to become the cities of tomorrow.

2. From local to national: Strengthening culture's impact

2.1 National cooperation among Creative Cities

One of the main added values of the Network is that it provides impetus for inter-city collaboration focusing on creativity as a lever for sustainable development in the same country. This takes place on two levels: firstly, through collaboration among UCCN members; secondly, via collaboration between a broader set of cities defined as creative based on a national framework, in which the UCCN members participate.

Nationwide collaboration between UCCN member cities is recurrently identified as essential for benefiting fully from membership. As such, it is increasingly the subject of coordination mechanisms.

To date, such coordination has taken on different forms depending on national context. The action of the National Commissions for UNESCO generally plays a central role in strengthening collaboration among UCCN member cities. For instance, the German Commission for UNESCO supports member cities' efforts to work together towards achieving 'additional structural, cultural promotion in order to strengthen the sustainable cultural, social and creative economic work of UNESCO Creative Cities in the sense of holistic urban development in our country'.[76]

A prime example of national cooperation among UCCN member cities is in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There, the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO convenes all 13 Creative Cities on a bimonthly basis. The City of Bradford reports how these meetings are necessary for the cities in terms of influence and funding, and how

meetings allow them to discuss various issues related to UNESCO Creative Cities' domestic action.[77]

This type of national cooperation between member cities is also well established in New Zealand. The country's four UNESCO Creative Cities have set up — together with the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO — a collaboration marked by a high level of collegiality and regular communication aimed at exchanging knowledge and practices. The City of Auckland appreciates the resulting support and advice, particularly on how to achieve the Network's goals.[78]

In addition, nationwide meetings prove useful in developing joint advocacy. This is certainly the case for cities in the USA, which held their first annual meeting in Iowa City in 2018. These gatherings are valuable for exploring cross-disciplinary connections and sharing best practices. For example, San Antonio, a Creative City of Gastronomy, reports a high level of dialogue and sharing of good practices among American UCCN member cities. This inter-city dialogue led to Tucson adopting San Antonio's practice of opening restaurants as grocery stores during the peaks of the pandemic crisis.[79]

Another example of solid coordination comes from France. To strengthen national collaboration, the French National Commission for UNESCO and French UNESCO Creative Cities[80] established the French Creative Cities Committee with a view to enabling French cities to come together in an annual meeting in which they exchange best practices and present projects. Throughout the meeting French cities set out a joint action plan, alongside national- and international-level objectives. In addition, the French coordination places

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76 Mannheim MMR 2018

77 Bradford interview

78 Auckland interview

79 San Antonio interview

80 The French National Committee of Creative Cities has a three-year presidency by one of its member cities, renewable once.

special emphasis on collaboration across different creative fields.

Indeed, these examples (and others) can inspire member cities in countries where, to date, there has been no structured collaboration on a national scale. For example, Mumbai expresses its interest in strengthening collaboration with other Indian Creative Cities under the auspices of the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO to support cities that would like to apply to join the Network.[81]

In addition, the Creative City of Santos communicates how hosting a UCCN Annual Conference, as it did in 2022, can not only strengthen the host city's international profile and visibility but also boost the outreach of the UCCN development model to other cities in the same country by engaging them in knowledge exchange.[82]

Finally, nationwide collaboration is also observed during the UCCN application process. Indeed, members cities frequently carry out mentoring roles for those wishing to apply. This is, for example, the case of Jaipur in India.[83]

Establishment of national creative city networks inspired by the UCCN

Inspired by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, many Member States establish their own national creative city networks, independent of the Organization, with their own membership and functioning criteria, and in which UCCN member cities play a driving role. Indeed, both Indonesia and Canada established their own national creative city networks based on the UCCN approach.

Inspired by the UCCN model, the Indonesia Creative Cities Network (ICCN) was founded in 2015 with the view of driving inclusive and sustainable prosperity for the country. Also inspired by the Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF), the Network presents itself as a 'hub organization for creative communities' which aims to connect cities from all over Indonesia that are committed to implementing the 10 Principles of

Indonesia Creative Cities, endorsed by 20 cities at the Creative City Conference in April 2015 and subsequently formalized in Surakarta in October 2015.[84] In 2022, the UCCN and ICCN notably collaborated in the event 'Road to G20 Summit: Beyond Urban' in the framework of Urban 20 (U20) which underlined the importance of city-based climate solutions.

The strength of the ICCN is found in its ability to involve a broad spectrum of cities of different sizes and conditions. In fact, it features more than 200 of the country's 514 cities and regencies in Indonesia. This union has enabled Indonesian cities to jointly position themselves in the international debate through white papers and policy recommendations.

Canada is also home to its own national network of cities called the Creative City Network of Canada (CCNC),[85] a national non-profit organization made up of municipalities, organizations and individuals working to support cultural development in their communities, currently comprised of 200 member cities. Established in 2002 with the purpose of addressing 'the need to provide support for professionals in the field by tapping into the expertise of peer municipalities across the country', the Network has expanded to include three distinct types of members since 2014: municipal, organizational and individuals such as artists, consultants and students. With a view to contributing to a vibrant and creative Canada, the Network provides resources and opportunities for engagement in committees and meetings.

In both cases, we observe the creation of a fruitful link in terms of exchanges and joint projects on a national scale between UCCN member cities and those participating in domestic networks. In Canada, this dialogue also benefits from the explicit support of the National Commission for UNESCO, which is working to foster dialogue and synergy in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the urban scale.[86]

81 Mumbai interview

82 Santos interview

83 Jaipur MMR 2019

84 Bandung interview

85 Creative City Network of Canada, Mission, Vision, Goals, History, Creative City Network of Canada website, 2022, https://www.creativecity.ca/about-ccnc/mission-vision-goals-history/

86 Canada interview

Moreover, Canada supports its own creative cities, assisting with international visibility and connectivity. For instance, in 2019 the national government hosted Canadian creative cities in its pavilion at the South by Southwest (SXSW) cultural and media festival in Austin, Texas. That event also represented the first gathering of the UNESCO Creative Cities in North America (see section 3.4).

2.2 The added value of collaboration between UCCN member cities and UNESCO National Commissions

National Commissions play a key role in facilitating and strengthening collaboration between UCCN member cities on a national scale. As part of this research, nine National Commissions for UNESCO from around the world were interviewed.[87]

Although the status, structure and functioning of National Commissions vary from country to country, these interviews reveal four major ways in which National Commissions provide concrete support to Creative Cities.

Strengthening capacities of both candidate and member cities

National Commissions for UNESCO are aware of the intense work involved in developing an application to join the UCCN. For this reason, several National Commissions work hand in hand with member cities to provide applicant cities with mentoring and advisory support aimed at fostering the exchange of expertise.

Some National Commissions even establish specific mechanisms to assist their cities. For example, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) has created an Advisory Committee consisting of academics and professionals in sustainable urban development as well as creativity and culture. This Committee supports cities interested in joining the UCCN, helping them adapt to the Network's Mission and objectives. These cities are then granted 'preparation-level city' status by the Commission, which they must maintain for at least one year before they can apply to the Network. During this period, the Committee familiarizes cities with

the concepts of culture and creativity for sustainable development, as well as the concrete approach to be adopted in order to achieve the Network's objectives and interact with other member cities. With the aim of maintaining a high level of dialogue and information exchange between cities, the Korean National Commission created a group chat bringing together representatives from Creative Cities in the Network and cities that are preparing to apply.

Similarly, the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO plays a coordinating role in the preparation of application documents, for which it has a dedicated mechanism.[88]

To foster knowledge transfer aimed at facilitating successful applications, some Commissions also encourage the creation of national networks. In Morocco, for example, the Moroccan National Commission for Education, Sciences and Culture is considering the creation of a network of national Creative Cities to reinforce the internal dialogue between UCCN members and those wishing to apply to the Network.

Once designated, UNESCO Creative Cities are recognized for their expertise in multiple areas, including sustainable and participatory urban development, cultural and creative industries, and international relations. For this reason, many National Commissions work towards strengthening the skills of municipal officials in charge of managing the local and international components of the Network.

For example, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO has developed an annual capacity-building programme dedicated to enhancing the skill set of local officials. The training covers several topics: in 2022, it focused on the evolution of the Network over time, while in 2021, it fostered bridge-building between cultural development and technological advancement. These courses are carried out by members of the above-mentioned Advisory Committee mentioned.

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87 Canada, Morocco, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, China, Italy, France, Brazil and the Republic of Korea
88 China Interview

2.3 International and regional cooperation and the impact of the UCCN on national and foreign policy

At national level, membership of the UCCN provides cities with considerable visibility and influence in policymaking. For example, Al-Ahsa, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art since 2015, was selected by the Saudi government to establish a national policy aimed at supporting the crafts and folk art sector. In addition, the city has gained national visibility. Furthermore, thanks to media coverage of events and programmes implemented, the impact of membership in terms of 'participation, expertise and international centrality' has aroused interest from other Saudi cities, prompting them to work on their own potential application to the UCCN.[89]

Another example of increased visibility at national level can be found in Fabriano. Its creativity-led development model and good practices have gained broad national resonance, most notably with the support of other Italian UCCN member cities and the presence of the President of the Republic of Italy at the XIIIth UCCN Annual Conference, hosted in Fabriano in 2019.[90]

The Creative City of Tartu also reports similar outcomes in national visibility, identifying how the nomination has generated, among other things, 'a stronger nationwide recognition of the city's role and identity as an intellectual and cultural hub'.[91]

Yet, across the globe, local governments could be included more frequently in the creation and implementation of national foreign policy strategies, although in recent years inclusion is increasing.[92] Traditionally, the management of international relations has been identified and practiced as a national activity by both international and domestic law.

However, many countries such as France increasingly recognize cities' contribution to national foreign policy, international cultural influence and international cooperation. For this reason, France's National Commission for UNESCO reports how the French diplomatic network supports French UCCN member cities in working with their peers abroad.[93]

In addition, Morocco's National Commission directly fosters collaboration on sustainable development through creativity between its own domestic cities and those of partner countries. As previously mentioned, this dynamic has a strong South-South dimension and also extends to UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, whose four Moroccan cities partnered with Abidjan, in Côte d'Ivoire. In the framework of transnational collaborations, national support provides financial aid, particularly to facilitate travel and interactions between cities, as well as monitoring.

Moreover, in such interactions, it is clear that the National Commission particularly values the partnership dimension, allowing for Moroccan cities to partake in other partner countries' programmes and vice versa.[94]

National Commissions for UNESCO are also instrumental in facilitating international cooperation between their respective member cities and foreign Creative Cities.

Indeed, the Moroccan National Commission for Education, Sciences and Culture fostered the exchange of knowledge between domestic and foreign UCCN member cities. In Morocco, this type of exchange, in line with a South-South cooperation perspective, is strongly encouraged, particularly in an African regional context. The National Commission also supports its cities in identifying good foreign practices that can be successfully adapted to Moroccan urban contexts.

In addition, National Commissions also foster the participation of their own member cities in bilateral cultural programmes. For example, with the support of the National Commissions of France and Portugal, the UCCN member cities of Enghien-les-Bains and Braga launched a project titled Cartographie imaginaire in the framework of the France-Portugal Season from February to October 2022. The project involved some 30 schoolchildren from the two cities, who worked together with the help of artists to produce a short film

89 Al Ahsa interview

90 Fabriano interview

91 MMR 2019

92 Kihlgren Grandi, Lorenzo, City Diplomacy, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020

93 France interview

94 Morocco interview

in motion design. Despite differences of language and culture, the project demonstrated children's ability to harness culture and creativity for building imaginary worlds based on their similarities and particularities.

Alongside cooperation at national level, UCCN cities are increasingly interacting with their respective local and regional governments.

In Canada, for example, two types of support are provided to member cities. On the one hand, cities are supported at the national level by the UNESCO National Commission. On the other hand, cities are supported at the provincial level, particularly in the Province of Québec, in which most of the country's French-speaking population is located. The Province of Québec, which also plays a supportive role vis-à-vis the respective Organisation internationale de la Francophonie's operator dealing with city diplomacy, namely the International Association of Francophone Mayors,[95] supports French-speaking Creative Cities of Literature.[96]

Moreover, in Melbourne, interaction between the city and the State of Victoria is intrinsic to actions undertaken within the UCCN framework. In fact, the Melbourne UNESCO City of Literature Office is a joint initiative of Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne. The Office actively supports coordination and collaboration among organizers of creative events, including 23 different literary festivals in the State of Victoria. The result of this work includes 'a unique map of the festivals that was circulated to Libraries and Councils across the state'.[97]

Finally, in some cases, regional governments also support member cities in the organization of the UCCN Annual Conference. Indeed, the Marche regional government was directly involved in the XIII UCCN Annual Conference hosted by the city of Fabriano in 2019. The support of regional authorities ensured that the Conference engaged many other cities throughout the region, hosting diverse workshops.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter examined the many ways in which the UCCN constitutes a highly attractive programme for cities worldwide by looking at the tangible benefits the UCCN offers to members on a national scale. From knowledge, recognition and access to resources, the Network facilitates cooperation among local and regional governments in the organization of joints activities, the dissemination of knowledge as well as the implementation of public policies and frameworks.

Indeed, many initiatives are carried out with the support of National Commissions for UNESCO, actively strengthening the links between UCCN member cities nationwide, across all creative fields, and thereby playing a key role in advancing and developing sustainable development through culture and creativity. In turn, this successful model of national inter-city collaboration proves to be an appealing asset of the Network.

This chapter has also explored the growth of national city networks independent of UNESCO and how UCCN member cities are driving forces in their implementation and expansion. The proliferation of city diplomacy and national city networks provide further opportunities for cities of all sizes and geographies across different creative fields to address national issues as well as exchange experiences to adapt governance approaches to evolving future challenges in urban areas.

By joining the Network, UCCN member cities also attract growing interest from national governments keen to support their activities. This chapter demonstrated that countries are indeed much more inclined in supporting and valorizing their cities by strengthening coordination and establishing more coherent cultural diplomacy. The UCCN designation also sparks interest of national governments, pushing to reinforce skills in city diplomacy for the sake of maximizing their cities' potential. Overall, the UCCN valuably encourages a broader scope of action on a national scale, inspiring more coordination between both cities and governments, with concrete results in terms of advancing the UCCN's Mission and objectives.

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95 Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF)

96 Gouvernement du Québec. 2022. Le Québec et l'UNESCO. Une Vision, Une Communauté, Des Priorités Pour 2022-2023. Gouvernement du Québec.

97 Melbourne MMR 2020

3. Promoting international cooperation through the UCCN

By virtue of the global dimension of the Network, UCCN membership enables cities to strengthen their international activities in the field of culture and creativity, as well as in sustainable development more broadly, as defined in the 2030 Agenda.

These dynamics represent one of the most visible manifestations of city diplomacy, that is, the ability of municipalities to collaborate internationally to pursue local sustainable development priorities and jointly address international challenges.[98] According to Mannheim representative, 'To be fully effective as agents of change in our interdependent world, cities need to be able to cooperate across borders'.[99]

Cities' foreign policies and relations can be bilateral and/or multilateral. UCCN membership, as illustrated in the following sections, has demonstrated the ability to impact both types of relations deeply, generating a number of clear benefits.

In parallel with national diplomacy, cities also resort to creativity in international events. The UCCN appears to be one of the most persuasive examples of just how inclusive city diplomacy is; inclusivity both large global megacities and intermediate and small urban settlements enjoy full rights and cooperate profitably.

3.1 Bilateral and multilateral relations among Creative Cities

Since joining the Network, UCCN member cities indicate that they have greatly benefited from establishing both bilateral and multilateral relations from the UCCN application process itself. Indeed, it is not uncommon for applicant cities to receive technical support from a foreign partner city that is already a member. Indeed Enghien-les-Bains provided technical assistance to the cities of Havana and Santiago de Cali in formulating their application.[100]

Bilateral collaboration can be significantly strengthened, particularly when member cities belong to the same creative field. For instance, the member cities of Popayán and Florianopolis, two Creative Cities of Gastronomy, solidified their collaboration through student exchanges.[101] Other relevant examples notably include the Rome-Galway student exchange programme in film and documentary,[102] and the biennial exchange programme between Melbourne and Edinburgh literary programmers.[103]

These interactions are due, among other things, to UCCN member cities' awareness that their respective local development strategies often pursue similar goals. For example, Angoulême illustrates how it has benefited from Creative Cities of Literature's expertise in areas related to publishing (with Milan), ancestral traditions (with Edinburgh), libraries (with Manchester), and poetry (with Barcelona). By harnessing such diversity, Angoulême believes that it is possible to strengthen cities' respective sustainable urban development.

Bilateral relations between member cities belonging to different creative fields are numerous and productive. As an example, the 10th edition of the Fabriano Film Fest, held in December 2022 in Fabriano, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, featured the participation of Bradford, a UNESCO Creative City of Film, which

98 Kihlgren Grandi, Lorenzo. 2020. City Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan.

99 Mannheim MMR 2018

100 Enghien-les-Bains interview

101 Popayán interview

102 UCCN Secretariat, "Action!: Galway and Rome Launch An Inter-city Student Exchange For Tomorrow's Filmmakers", UCCN website, 2017, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/action-galway-and-rome-launch-inter-city-student-exchange-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-filmmakers

103 Melbourne MMR 2020

presented two short films created by young local filmmakers.[104]

The City of Angoulême also points out how its nine twinning agreements, which predate the 2019 accession to the Network, have benefited from UCCN membership, as they have been revitalized and have evolved precisely because of the resulting increased international action of the city.

Bilateral collaboration is further highlighted during events. Examples discussed as part of the interviews for this report include the Santos Bandung Film Festival (SBFF), launched in 2017 and simultaneously organized in the two cities. This initiative originated in the context of the XI UCCN Annual Conference hosted by Enghien-les-Bains in 2017, where the two cities decided to implement a joint initiative to discuss (thanks to the contribution of filmmakers from the two cities) shared socio-economic challenges and, more broadly, sustainable development and the localization of the 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, the Pool Malebo Music Awards, launched in 2019 and co-organized by the two neighbouring Creative Cities of Music of Brazzaville and Kinshasa rewards the most active music actors on the two shores. The collaboration between the two capitals also includes a joint study on how to strengthen their respective music markets.[105]

In addition, many interviewed cities, including Santos and Angoulême, pointed out that the multilateral dimension facilitated by the Network brings a wide range of positive impacts.

The latter can be divided into three categories:

- Exchange of knowledge and good practices, particularly, but not exclusively, within sub-networks (see sections 3.5 and 3.6).

- Shared projects and event creation. In this regard, the Street Design Challenge provides a valuable example. Developed by Wuhan, Curitiba and Queretaro in 2022, this is a two-day competition for

university students to share their vision on how public space design can improve the quality of life in communities. For an overview of this kind of multilateral initiative, see the next section.

- Economic development, particularly in terms of supporting the creative sector and attracting professionals from abroad. An example is provided by the Youth 4 Food project, organized by five Creative Cities of Gastronomy – Bergen, Dénia, Gaziantep, Östersund and Parma. The project involved a series of workshops, meetings and outings to foster youth employment and entrepreneurship in the food sector.[106]

Finally, cities have made the most of the emerging virtual meeting platforms widely deployed during the pandemic to strengthen their multilateral interactions. This includes participation in events open to the whole Network, such as the 'Build back better through culture and creativity' online meeting organized in July 2021 by the UCCN Secretariat and Santos, and the sharing of good practices, which led to the publishing of the two UCCN publications.[107] In addition, virtual dialogue initiatives were promoted by UCCN member cities. As an example, in 2020, Popayán organized the webinar series Creative Latin Cities of Gastronomy of UNESCO, experiences with flavor and tradition, featuring Latin American Creative Cities of Gastronomy.

3.2 Solidarity, inclusion and cooperation across creative fields

Member cities also interact on a multilateral level by participating in initiatives aimed at enhancing international solidarity and support. Indeed, following the two explosions that devastated Beirut in August 2020, the UCCN Secretariat launched an appeal to share member cities' actions carried out or planned in support of Beirut, a Creative City of Literature, and its inhabitants. A total of 18 Creative Cities around the world shared solidarity initiatives, encouraging donations through fundraising or the collection of essential equipment

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104 UCCN Secretariat, "Bradford presented two short films at Fabriano Film Fest", UCCN website, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/bradford-presented-two-short-films-fabriano-film-fest

105 Kinshasa MMR 2019

106 Parma MMR 2019

107 UNESCO, UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19, 2020; UNESCO, UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19: From Immediate Action to Long-Term Recovery (UNESCO, 2022), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382110?posInSet=10&queryId=e8e9c57c-7f9c-474b-a5b0-86241bd1d740.

and organizing the call for emergency humanitarian aid to the area, in collaboration with NGOs or local associations.

Creative Cities also participated in the international call for funds launched by UNESCO, Li Beirut, to support culture, heritage and education in the city. In the same vein, following the 2023 devasting earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, which affected the Creative Cities of Gaziantep and Hatay, the UCCN Secretariat launched an appeal for solidarity among member cities.

On the occasion of International Jazz Day 2023, ten Creative Cities of Music came together for a joint video project in solidarity with Ukrainian Creative Cities, featuring performances from 40 different artists and musicians. Under the theme "Life below water", the Jazz Day Relay connected musicians around the world through jazz, in the same way that rivers, lakes and oceans are interconnected through the water cycle.

Despite their size, cities such as Enghien-les-Bains and Fabriano are undeniably active in the Network, as evidenced in several sections of this document. This demonstrates one salient added value of the UCCN, namely the ability to foster inclusion and a fruitful dialogue between a diverse range of cities, not only in terms of geographic positioning but also in terms of size and resources.

Indeed, both cities hosted the Network's Annual Conference, respectively in 2017 and 2019, welcoming delegates from member cities worldwide. During a few days, despite their relatively small size, they became the epicenter of the Network incarnating its mission and vision to promote globally sustainable development through cities. Meanwhile, Paducah, another member city of similar size acts as Coordinator of the Crafts and Folk Art sub-network, and coordinates joint UCCN activities of almost 70 member cities.

UCCN membership thus grants member cities equal opportunities to engage in city diplomacy - still often characterized by the polarization between a few, generally large cities capable of exploiting its full potential, and those intermediate and small cities without the resources to engage in a fully-fledged international strategy.

Fruitful bilateral and multilateral coordination within creative fields is among the added values identified by most of the cities surveyed. As mentioned in sections 3.1 sub-networks have demonstrated on several occasions that they are important drivers in strengthening pre-existing collaborations among member cities and forging new ones.

In the Design sub-network, several member cities, such as Curitiba and Singapore, testify to the excellent level of interaction within the sub-network.

For example, Creative Cities of design meet twice a year to share good practices, and projects, and foster peer-learning. As underlined by Singapore, one of the main objectives of the sub-network today is to measure the added value of design, and the creative industry in general, for sustainable urban development.

Since 2019, the Literature sub-network has strengthened interaction among member cities. The 42 Creative Cities of Literature now have regular meetings, designed primarily as opportunities to explore collaborations, exchange good practices and learn about each other's initiatives.

As illustrated by Reykjavík, such meetings allow members to explore collaborations with cities located on the same continent or sub-region, but also far apart. For instance, Reykjavík's dialogue with Dublin and Edinburgh led Reykjavík to organize its first Reading Festival inspired by the experiences of the other two cities. A transcontinental collaboration was also developed between the member cities of Reykjavík and Dunedin. Such collaboration allows cities to consult with each other and share advice on potential events and initiatives.[108]

Another notable example is the social media campaign 17 Books for 17 SDGs, the fourth edition of which took place in December 2022 with the participation of Dunedin, Iowa City, Manchester and Melbourne. Participating cities tweeted recommendations of fiction and nonfiction books with content aligned with one or more of the SDGs.[109]

108 Reykjavík interview
109 UCCN website

Sleipnir Travels[110] is a remarkable project which was born in one Creative City then spread out to the sub-network. The initiative, named after the mythological steed of Odin (the Norse god of poetry) was successfully implemented in Reykjavík to introduce children to creative writing, and was then used as part of the Melbourne and Bendigo literary festivals.[111]

In the Media Arts sub-network, several city-to-city projects are carried out, including a paid residency in which media arts practitioners from different cities collaborate to produce a virtual work. This system has also allowed artists to be supported during the hiatus related to the pandemic, with eight artists in residence in 2020.

The Media Arts sub-network also illustrates the added value of inter-city cooperation through organized events. Indeed, about 70% of the sub-network attended Enghien-les-Bains' Bains Numériques. Meetings between city representatives in such contexts have proven valuable for exchanges of good practices, as well as for developing new synergies and collaboration.[112]

The coordination of the Gastronomy sub-network has allowed for various events and conferences. Recent debates within the sub-network aim to develop skills transfer, create a range of thematic collaborations and develop capacity-building activities for the benefit of member cities.

Representatives and creative professionals from foreign cities are often invited to award juries, highlighting the strengthening of bilateral ties. For instance, the Singapore's President's Design Award is in fact granted by an international panel of jurors composed of representatives from influential cities in the field of design, such as Copenhagen, the 2023 UNESCO-UIA World Capital of Architecture.[113]

Although less frequent and structured than intra-sub-network collaboration, collaboration between cities across different creative fields is rapidly expanding

within the Network and represents a key UCCN added value. This is due to the common belief among UCCN member cities that dialogue between different creative fields is of mutual benefit.

Indeed, the Creative City of Enghien-les-Bains consciously fosters transversality through collaboration with cities from other creative fields.[114] Dakar, another Creative City of Media Arts, confirms that this dynamic has led to collaborations notably with Creative Cities of Film and Gastronomy.[115]

Moreover, within the framework of its music festivals, Kırşehir fosters collaboration with Creative Cities from the Crafts and Folk Art, and Gastronomy sub-networks concerning audience engagement. In parallel, the city encourages musical groups to participate in initiatives and events hosted by Creative Cities from other sub-networks.[116]

3.3 International cooperation in response to COVID-19

In response to the outbreak and ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the UCCN Secretariat collected member cities' culture-driven responses to the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery with the aim of disseminating good practices and facilitating inter-city knowledge sharing. Both initiatives led to the production of two dedicated publications gathering hundreds of initiatives worldwide from more than 120 cities. In addition, in 2021, the UCCN Secretariat organized an online meeting entitled 'UNESCO Creative Cities: Build back better from COVID-19', which offered a platform for more than 170 cities to share valuable experiences and collective projects leveraging culture in times of crisis.

As already mentioned, internal collaborations within sub-networks quickly adapted to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic (see sections 1.5, 1.8 and 3.2). This has enabled the continuation of exchanges

110 UCCN Literature sub-network, Sleipnir Travels, 2022

111 Melbourne MMR 2020

112 Enghien-les-Bains interview

113 Singapore interview.

114 Enghien-les-Bains interview

115 Dakar interview

116 Kırşehir interview

between city governments and provided international visibility and support for the creative sector.

For example, Singapore reports that several professionals from UNESCO Creative Cities of Design took an active part in webinars, conferences and workshops organized by the Design sub-network.[117]

Creative Cities of Media Arts consolidated many of their good practices and innovative actions undertaken to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with their commitment to reinforcing the creation, production and dissemination of media arts, these Creative Cities implemented a wide range of measures to further nurture hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for media art creators and professionals during COVID-19.

Moreover, Creative Cities of Music – including Llíria, Ambon, Mannheim and Praia – found new ways to celebrate International Jazz Day amid the outbreak of COVID-19. Through different virtual and creative means, the 2020 celebration sent a message of hope and recovery, helping communities reconnect through music in times of isolation. Cities from the sub-network also joined efforts to launch a social media campaign, weRculture, aimed at providing hope and messages of solidarity from musicians and artists during the pandemic. This collective action called on international artists and creative professionals to share a one-minute video message explaining why, more than ever, culture is of utmost importance during such challenging times.

Finally, Detroit and Kortrijk, both Creative Cities of Design, responded to the challenges resulting from COVID-19 by launching a collaborative initiative to identify programmes and projects from Creative Cities of Design that leverage design and innovation to cope with the trying situation and help citizens and creators alike.

3.4 Regional collaboration

Within the UCCN, member cities also highly value collaborations established on a regional scale. [118]

On the one hand, these collaborations feed on previous regional-scale exchanges and collaborations, often pre-existing the creation of the UCCN. Such relationships, in terms of dialogue and exchange of good practices and strategies, have been leveraged to provide increased impetus for the realization of the UCCN's Mission and objectives.

In addition, collaboration on a regional scale allows for closer interaction between a smaller number of participating cities with common experiences. This is generally seen as conducive to the creation of joint projects that require the active contribution of participating cities.

Finally, regional participation offers organizational advantages, making it quicker, cheaper and easier to plan joint projects and necessary travel. Since 2019, North American cities from the Network meet periodically in person. Following the pandemic, the cities resumed meeting in person in 2022.[119]

Although not formally structured, cooperation between Arab cities appears increasingly widespread, both multilaterally and bilaterally. Indeed, Al-Ahsa mentions the way exchanges occur across sub-networks. The city also explains how dynamic multilateral exchanges between Arab municipalities from the Network have encouraged Latin American cities to implement similar coordination strategies within their practices.[120]

Latin American cities from the Gastronomy sub-network have also established dynamic regional collaborations. One such regional initiative is 'Creative Latin Cities of Gastronomy of UNESCO, experiences with flavour and tradition', a webinar series organized in 2020 by the City of Popayán, with the participation of Focal Points and chefs from Creative Cities of Gastronomy in Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Colombia. Collaboration also took shape in 2021 in Portoviejo, with the creation of an Andean Creative Cities of Gastronomy sub-network, with the participation of Arequipa, Cochabamba, Popayán, Buenaventura and Mérida.

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117 Singapore interview

118 In this section, 'regional' indicates geographical proximity on collaborations established beyond the national scale.

119 Montréal interview

120 Al-Ahsa interview

In 2015, Bitola and Sofia, UNESCO Creative Cities of Film, collaborated with cities located in the region – notably Korcë, Blagoevgrad, Tirana, Plovdiv and Skopje – to launch the Balkan Cinema Cities Fund. The Fund supports knowledge exchange and collaboration to support regional creativity in the film industry.[121]

3.5 Global cooperation

Globally, there is an identifiable correlation between the level of decentralization and the involvement of municipalities and other local authorities in activities with a regional or global dimension. This dynamic, initially predominantly Euro-Atlantic, gradually expanded to become cross-continental in recent decades, thus rebalancing the geographical representativeness of global networks of cities and local authorities. Such a phenomenon can be observed in UCCN membership, which gradually works towards a more balanced geographical representation as the Network grows.

Beyond upholding the principle of geographic and demographic balance, current members of the Network support this dynamic because of the increased added value it brings in the long run, in terms of diversity of exchange of good practices and partnerships.

To enhance geographical balance and representation within the Network, the biennial two-yearly Call for Application includes a Cooperation Framework. First introduced to accompany applications from Africa in 2017, it was expanded to the Arab states in 2019. Indeed, this framework is intended to facilitate support and mentoring by member cities towards a candidate city located in these two regions.[122] For instance, the Creative City of Enghien-les-Bains supported both

Havana and Santiago de Cali in their applications to join the Network.[123]

Moreover, the North-South rebalancing process also benefits from the endorsement by, and support of, national governments. For example, France supports the sharing of experiences with candidates or recently designated member cities from the Global South. This support is implemented thanks to the collaboration of French embassies and institutes. Enghien-les-Bains collaborated with Dakar's French Institute to facilitate the consolidation of a strategic approach shaped by the creative cities' approach.

Concurrently, South-South collaboration appears to be one of the fastest-growing developments within the Network. Indeed, several member cities ranked it among their priorities, such as Essaouira,[124] Porto-Novo,[125] Campina Grande[126] and Bandung.[127]

This collaboration is structured both by the exchange of good practices – such as the positive influence of Bogotá's Ciclovía project on Cape Town's Open Streets Days project[128] – and by joint programming. Indeed, the 1st Andean International Meeting of Creative Cities of Gastronomy, held in Portoviejo in October 2021, allowed the participating Cities of Arequipa, Buenaventura, Cochabamba, Mérida, Popayán and host city Portoviejo to establish a local and thematic coordination aimed at building concrete collaborations in the field of gastronomy, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic.[129]

Finally, the cohesion of the Network and the multi-directionality of relationships are illustrated by several initiatives developed or promoted by Global South cities that have also benefited from the sustainable development of those located in the Global North.

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121 Bitola MMR 2019

122 UNESCO, "2023 UNESCO Creative Cities Network Call for Applications: Application Guidelines," 2023, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/default/files/uccn-2023-application-guidelines-en.pdf.

123 Enghien-les-Bains interview

124 Morocco interview

125 UCCN Secretariat, Porto-Novo, UCCN website, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/porto-novo

126 UCCN Secretariat, Campina Grande, UCCN website, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/campina-grande

127 Bandung Interview

128 UCCN Secretariat, "Open Streets Days Re-Think Public Spaces in Cape Town", UCCN website, 2018, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/open-streets-days-re-think-public-spaces-cape-town

129 Universidad San Gregorio de Portoviejo, "Primer Encuentro de Ciudades Creativas en Gastronomía de los Países Andinos", 2021, https://sangregorio.edu.ec/ciudades-creativas-gastronomicas/index.html

Examples include Phuket's first edition of its Gastronomy International Symposium held in 2017 and attended by representatives from 14 different Creative Cities of Gastronomy. A second edition was held in 2020. Among the participant cities were Dénia (2017), Macao SAR (2017), Östersund (2020), Popayan (2020), San Antonio (2020) and Zahlé (2017, 2020).[130]

Moreover, Buenos Aires invited Mexico City, Barcelona, Bogota and Lisbon to share digital content on the Ciudad(es) Cultura (Cit(ies) Culture) platform to broaden and diversify the cultural offering and strengthen intercity cooperation. With COVID-19, the initiative gained importance and allowed people to access a wide variety of digital content, boosting creativity through this unique digital ecosystem.[131]

3.6 Conclusions

In view of its position as a global network of cities, the UCCN has a considerable impact on international outreach of member cities. Member cities are involved in a myriad of bilateral and multilateral collaborations within and across creative fields as well as regions.

As expected for an international city network, Europe and North America are overrepresented in the UCCN. However, efforts have been taken within the framework of the Calls for Applications to provide technical assistance to candidate cities from Africa and the Arab States, as illustrated by the Cooperation Framework. Such measures will eventually enable the Network to become more balanced and geographically representative.

Finally, city-to-city cooperation has proven a valuable support during trying times, notably in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when initiatives and good practices were widely shared among the Network. What is more, member cities demonstrated solidarity with fellow cities affected by disasters, highlighted by member cities' support to Beirut following the August 2020 port explosions, or to Gaziantep and Hatay after the February 2023 earthquake.

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130 Phuket MMR 2019

131 Buenos Aires MMR 2020

4. The future of the UCCN: challenges and opportunities

Based on the analysis of UCCN's impact across the local, national and international level, this concluding chapter delves into the challenges and opportunities identified regarding the Network's future development. This chapter will therefore provide a solid foundation for better understanding how to address challenges and harness opportunities within the Network to further improve its effectiveness, alignment and long-term development.

4.1 Strengthening multilateral cooperation between Network members at all levels

Partnerships within the Network are generally reported as a central added value of UCCN membership and one of the main areas that member cities seek to strengthen in the future. For example, Sharjah, a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, has undertaken successful cross-cluster partnerships with Milan, a Creative City of Literature (see section 1.12), and hopes to keep cultivating cooperation in the years to come. To stimulate relevant and mutually beneficial partnerships, the UCCN Secretariat will play a more important role in further connecting and supporting member cities in their collaborations, provided that cities approach UNESCO's Culture Sector should they wish to establish these partnerships.

Member cities play an equally crucial role in harnessing the potential of inter-city collaboration, particularly regarding the identification of appropriate resources and infrastructure. Dubai for example reports that the city is actively working towards strengthening its logistical and organizational facilities to facilitate the hosting of Network-related international conferences, creating opportunities for strategic collaborations.

UNESCO, and the entire United Nations system, has recognized multi-level collaboration – understood as the collaboration between the national government and its local and regional authorities – as an essential tool for achieving the shared goals of the international community. Indeed, it is explicitly referenced in the New Urban Agenda,[132] as well as in Our Common Agenda, published by the UN Secretary-General in 2021.

The UCCN is precisely a realization of this principle, fostering reflection and collaboration between different levels of government for the common goal of supporting sustainable development through the unique avenues offered by culture and creativity. The interviews for this report conducted with both UCCN member cities and National Commissions for UNESCO revealed a good level of collaboration between them and a willingness on the part of both to strengthen cooperation further.

During interviews, member cities place the UCCN's participatory approach as a key priority for elaborating and implementing local development strategies. Indeed, they recognize it's the unique added value in terms of impact and sustainability provided by the involvement of creative sector actors, as well as the broad public in the local governance of development processes. Therefore, the goal of several cities in this regard is to further strengthen the co-construction of ambitious local policies through participation, transforming the international development agenda and national policies into concrete local plans and actions.

For example, the city of Mumbai stresses the importance of further engaging the film industry to support the local creative sector in partnership with the municipality, particularly with regard to young

132 New Urban Agenda (2016), paragraph 87: "We will foster stronger coordination and cooperation among national, subnational and local governments, including through multi-level consultation mechanisms and by clearly defining the respective competences, tools, and resources for each level of government."

talent. This dynamic is linked to the importance of communicating the founding principles of the Network locally and incorporating them into joint development opportunities.[133]

As the Korean National Commission for UNESCO points out, this is a complex objective, requiring specific and highly skilled professionals. For this reason, the Commission supports the objective through an Advisory Committee of academics and experts, and capacity-building activities for Korean cities.[134]

4.2 Expanding capacity-building opportunities

Several UCCN member cities and creative fields also attach great importance to increasing opportunities for capacity-building and believe this to be an area for future improvement. For example, the City of Bradford issues a warning about the lack of training for those member cities that may need support to fully achieve their commitment to the Network's goals.[135]

In this regard, the City of Fabriano suggests that involving more international experts and academics could further assist cities. Indeed, based on their demonstrated added value for the organization of UCCN Annual Conferences, such as the one Fabriano hosted in 2019, this Italian Creative City believes international experts and academics constitute natural facilitators between theory and practice. This makes them well-suited for assisting the local implementation of sustainable development through culture and creativity. Moreover, according to Fabriano, experts and academics, in dialogue with member cities' Focal Points, prove to be highly instrumental in the sharing of good practices, thanks in particular to modelling, synthesis and transmission work.[136]

In the case of the Gastronomy sub-network, according to Popayán internal discussions revealed a widespread desire for a capacity-building programme capable

of strengthening thematic action and coordination among cities.[137]

To complement this, some cities stress the importance of expanding the opportunities offered by the UCCN website to integrate an authentic knowledge portal, understood as a space for online learning and sharing projects and appeals. The implementation of such an approach would likely require additional collaboration between the UCCN Secretariat and member cities as well as the necessary resources.

Moreover, some member cities are committed to strengthening the training of cultural and creative sectors actors, often acting in collaboration with their university and education sectors. This approach has already been applied in Rome and Mumbai. The two Creative Cities of Film partnered up with local cultural and educational institutions (NABA - New Academy of Fine Arts and the Cinema per Roma Foundation and the University of Mumbai) to provide training opportunities and visibility to aspiring young talents in the film industry[138].[139]

4.3 Mainstreaming UCCN action within member municipalities

In the context of expanding and evolving expectations associated with the Network's membership, it is understandable that several member cities desire to mainstream their action within the municipality. This goal is generally implemented through the creation of internal synergies within the municipality, capable of strengthening its coherence and impact on UCCN action. In this regard, cities interviewed for this report refer to the building of bridges between political and technical-administrative components, as well as between different departments and services of the municipality.

With respect to the first point, the active involvement of the mayor appears to be essential for the full

133 Mumbai interview

134 Korea interview

135 Bradford interview

136 Fabriano interview

137 Popayán interview

138 UCCN Secretariat, "Rome launches the first edition of the Z-Pitch Contest", UCCN website, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/rome-launches-first-edition-z-pitch-contest

139 Mumbai interview

implementation of goals resulting from a city's Network membership. In the words of Enghien-les-Bains, 'if the Focal Point of the Creative City is far from the Mayor, it does not work'.[140]

First, several member cities consider it essential to initiate long-term processes capable of involving subsequent administrations, which may belong to different political parties or coalitions. This is pointed out for example by the City of Popayán, designated in 2005, which has been able to observe how several processes carried out by Creative Cities stopped when the Mayor's term came to an end.[141]

This also proves essential in terms of public communication. Indeed, elected officials play a leading role in the accomplishment of the UCCN's Mission within cities. Undeniably, the outreach capacity of municipal officials is also crucial in consolidating the creation and management of partnerships between cities in the Network, as well as in the exchange of experiences.

On the other hand, creating synergies among different departments of municipal administration is challenging given heterogeneous educational and professional backgrounds, and tasks within municipalities. This is widespread globally and directly related to the institutional mandate of municipalities: from civil records to water and electricity networks, public transportation and urban planning, each municipal administration is called upon to ensure a wide range of services that significantly differ from each other. This undeniably creates challenges in terms of internal communication where a programme requires that different sectors of the municipality collaborate.

By linking culture and creativity to sustainable urban development, the UCCN encourages member cities to establish collaboration between different departments, starting with those in charge of culture and education, social services, economic development, international relations, heritage and urban planning. As San Antonio reports, these collaborations are necessary for localizing

the guiding principles of the UCCN's action, including the local implementation of the SDGs.[142]

This is an inescapable challenge which Creative Cities tackle with the support of local and international allies. This is particularly the view of Enghien-les-Bains, which believes that the academic sector can play an essential role in assisting in the deployment or re-deployment of this holistic approach within municipal administration, particularly through training and capacity-building services (see section 4.2).

Public communication can, in turn, provide valuable answers. In this regard, the City of Auckland emphasizes how membership in the Network can inspire the strengthening of the public debate on the arts' role in society. In fact, the UCCN participatory methodology must be embraced in its true nature, thus resulting in what the Creative City of Music calls a true 'philosophical mind shift'.[143]

4.4 Optimizing the Network's communication through different angles

Communication within the Network has also been affected by recent challenges. In this regard, one regular topic of discussion within the Network is how communication and exchange could be better conducted. Awareness of the impact of international travel in terms of greenhouse gas emissions is a significant concern for many member cities, such as Montréal and Angoulême.[144]

At the same time there is a widespread awareness of the added value of in-person meetings notably in the post-COVID period, which have repeatedly proven to be enablers of bilateral and multilateral projects among members of the Network. For example, Reykjavík believes that attending the Annual Conferences makes a difference for cities in terms of exchange and interaction with other members, particularly between those belonging to different creative fields.[145]

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140 Enghien-les-Bains interview

141 Popayán interview

142 San Antonio interview

143 Auckland interview

144 Respective interviews

145 Reykjavík interview

Although the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of online meeting practices, a few interviewees doubt they can fully replace in-person meetings, as people interact in a different way online and so outcomes differ. therefore, for cities that prefer to limit international travel, the challenge lies in identifying more effective and impactful ways to communicate online. This is a difficult task on which several cities are keen to work, as mentioned by Montréal.[146]

In terms of external communication, among other relevant opportunities, the Network offers enhanced methods of communication, according to UCCN member cities. Three main avenues for the Network's communication strategy could be developed in the future:

1. **Local communication.** Support for UCCN member cities in communicating to citizens the vitality, impact and international ties embraced through membership. This includes, as highlighted by Montréal and Angoulême, the need to explain clearly to populations the reason for participation and representativeness related to UCCN membership, including participation in the Annual Conference – a commitment made by each member city in their application – as well as participation in bilateral and multilateral projects with other members of the Network.[147]

2. **Intra-Network communication.** In terms of local governance, intra-network communication provides access to good practices that can inspire municipal policies and, in some cases, be directly adapted to the local context (see Chapter 3).

3. **International communication and branding.** The Network provides the opportunity for members states to give their cities' local programmes and events international visibility, thus boosting participation and disseminating the programme's Mission and objectives (see section 1.3).

Cities therefore identify the need to further leverage communication as a tool for fulfilling cities' potential

and advancing the Network's Mission and consider communication as one of the main opportunities lying ahead. According to Ensenada, the Network's communication could also be broadened, going beyond the sharing of good practices and success stories to include communication regarding challenges faced. Indeed, the Creative City of Gastronomy recognizes the importance of strengthening 'flexibility, openness, and vulnerability', and broadening discussions to include the sharing of challenges and problems encountered by UCCN member cities and opportunities for creatively exploring solutions.[148]

In addition, it is undeniable that participation in the Network brings numerous benefits in terms of branding as well as opportunities for concrete action. Both dimensions stem from UCCN's participatory approach, which allows cities to involve residents and actors in the creation and implementation of local strategy.

Typically, the two dimensions – branding and action – should coincide. However, it is apparent from interviews with UCCN Cities that while the former is systematic and inherent to the designation itself, the latter demands sustained action informed by a thorough understanding of the Network's vision and Mission. The result, then, is a tendency for some cities to limit themselves to the more immediate branding component, particularly if the availability of additional assistance is limited, a concern expressed by Reykjavík and the Brazilian National Commission for UNESCO.[149]

At the 2022 Conference in Santos, Enghien-les-Bains voiced this debate, stating that the UCCN 'is not a label, it is a commitment',[150] terms like those used in Montréal's 2019 MMR: 'The UNESCO designation was neither a label nor a form of recognition. It was an invitation to develop Montréal around its creative forces in design.' This aligns with the UCCN Mission Statement, which reports how member cities are expected to fulfil their commitment, namely by 'sharing best practices, developing partnerships that promote creativity and the cultural industries, strengthening

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146 Interview

147 Montréal and Angoulême interviews

148 Ensenada MMR 2019

149 Respective interviews

150 Enghien-les-Bains interview

participation in cultural life and integrating culture in urban development plans'.[151]

4.5 Strengthening impact assessment

The implementation and thus the impact of the Network's Mission and objectives by its member cities are notably assessed through the submission of Membership Monitoring Reports, quadrennial documents aimed at illustrating and assessing the importance and the impact of being a UNESCO Creative City at the local, national, and international levels.[152]

Many cities interviewed, such as Bandung, consider particularly useful the further strengthening of mechanisms to evaluate the Network's impact and added value. Specifically, this is seen as beneficial in clarifying the impact resulting from active participation, to inspire greater involvement in less active cities in the Network and to guide the actions of new and future member cities.[153]

With a few notable exceptions, such as the Creative City of Bogotá,[154] the City of Bandung,[155] nine Italian Creative Cities[156] and the Chinese Creative Cities and the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO,[157] most member cities and countries are yet to develop a comprehensive quantification of the impact of city membership in the Network and, in general, the impact of CCIs on sustainable development on an urban scale. One potential additional tool to strengthen impact assessment comes from the National Commission of Türkiye. The latter calls on UNESCO to leverage the reporting expertise of National Commissions to support in assessing the tangible impact of their cities' designation as members of the Network.[158]

As mentioned above (section 1.1), UNESCO's Culture Sector is undertaking a global revision of its reporting activities across its programmes following the World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022. In line with this, the UCCN Secretariat has been revising its Membership Monitoring and Reporting Exercise to ensure member cities' full engagement and active contribution to achieving the Network's objectives and UNESCO's mandate and priorities, as well as to implementing the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration.

The revised reporting exercise will be composed of existing member cities' quadrennial reports and a supplementary online survey aimed at further measuring and assessing the impact of member cities' cultural policies, assets and activities in light of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration. Furthermore, the information collected through the survey will contribute to the comprehensive Global Report on Cultural Policies to be developed and published in 2025, which will help support evidence-based global advocacy for culture in the international post-2030 development agenda. This Report will also, among others, feed and support the debates organized during the World Forum on Cultural Policies – MONDIACULT 2025.

Finally, in order to strengthen impact assessment, UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) launched an independent external evaluation of the Network in February 2023. The overall purpose of this evaluation is to systematically reflect on and learn about past experiences and further identify areas of improvement for the UCCN programme. The findings of this evaluation are expected to be presented at the UNESCO Executive Board in March 2024 and the 2024 UCCN Annual Conference.

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151 UNESCO, "UNESCO Creative Cities Network Mission Statement," 2023, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/creative-cities/files/Mission_Statement_UNESCO_Creative_Cities_Network_1.pdf.

152 UNESCO, "UNESCO Creative Cities Network Guidelines for the Membership Monitoring Report," April 2021, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/default/files/membership_monitoring_reporting_guidelines_2021.pdf.

153 Bandung interview

154 MMR 2017

155 Bandung interview

156 UCCN Secretariat, "LAB.2030 | Measuring the Impacts of Creativity in Local Development", UCCN website, 2018, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/lab2030-measuring-impacts-creativity-local-development

157 China interview

158 Interview

4.6 Funding member cities' participation and activities

Many cities report that fundraising for creative and cultural activities is a very complex activity. Dakar, a Creative City of Media Arts, emphasizes how this is a particular concern for cities in the Global South.[159]

Thanks to the UCCN designation, member cities have more possibilities and opportunities for fundraising. For example, the Italian Ministry of Tourism published a Public Notice in March 2022 regarding the 'identification of projects aimed at the enhancement of municipalities with a tourist-cultural vocation in whose territories are located UNESCO World Heritage Sites and municipalities belonging to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network'. This tool allows Italian UNESCO Creative Cities to submit a funding application for 'initiatives concerning digital tourism enhancement and promotion tools, tourist itineraries, tourism marketing projects, as well as building, structural or plant engineering works and functional installations to increase the use and tourist attraction'.[160]

Moreover, the UCCN Secretariat helps several projects piloted by member cities in obtaining funds. For example, in 2022, the UCCN aided the City Scale Up project led by the Creative Cities of Graz, Kortrijk, Thessaloniki and Torino. This project constituted a joint application to the European Commission's Call 'The New European Bauhaus – shaping a greener and fairer way of life in creative and inclusive societies through Architecture, Design and Arts'. The UCCN Secretariat supported the application through a letter of endorsement.

During interviews, several Creative Cities reported that in the future, additional funds made available to cities would greatly support them in the development of projects and strengthening of partnerships. Curitiba, a Creative City of Design, suggests a strengthening of the Secretariat's workforce. Similarly, to the action of city networks such as C40 in the area of climate change, this would allow the Secretariat to assist with funding opportunities, while facilitating any international connections between member cities that might be needed to implement them.[161]

While the importance of participating in the Annual Conference is universally shared, several member cities commented on the considerable financial difficulties it poses. Indeed, despite being part of member cities' principal commitments mentioned in the Network's Call for Applications,[162] the Annual Conference involves taking on the cost of travel and accommodation.

In the context of funding member cities' activities, national governments have sometimes contributed directly through in-kind contributions, such as when the national government hosted Canadian cities in the Canada Pavilion at the SXSW Festival in Austin (see section 2.1). These are, however, primarily one-off collaborations.

In this regard, Creative Cities should be encouraged to fulfil their commitment to the UCCN by allocating necessary resources to their teams for participating in major events, and in particular, the UCCN Annual Conference.

4.7 Ensuring a sustainable UCCN membership

During their respective interviews, many cities identified a paradox within the Network which for some has become a growing concern. While close inter-city collaboration is encouraged and supported, the increasing size of the Network in recent years is creating more difficulties in managing and organizing these relations (as reported by several National Commissions for UNESCO interviewed, such as those of China and France[163]).

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159 Dakar interview

160 Repubblica Italiana, Ministero del Turismo, "Avviso pubblico riguardante l'individuazione di progetti volti alla valorizzazione dei Comuni a vocazione turistico-culturale nei cui territori sono ubicati siti riconosciuti dall'UNESCO patrimonio dell'umanità e dei Comuni appartenenti alla rete delle città creative dell'UNESCO", 2021, https://www.ministeroturismo.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Avviso_citta_UNESCO_FINAL_04-03.pdf

161 Curitiba interview

162 UNESCO, "2023 UNESCO Creative Cities Network Call for Applications: Application Guidelines."

163 The French National Commission reports how in 2022, it interacted with about ten French cities interested in joining the Network. This implies a scrupulous screening operation in view of the fact that each Call for Applications allows only two candidate cities in two different creative fields per country to apply.

Indeed, in line with UNESCO's priorities related to cultural diversity, the Network has gradually strengthened its efforts towards ensuring greater geographical representation of cities across all world regions. Between 2017 and 2023, in the space of three Call for Applications, more than thirty new Member States have seen their cities become members of the Network. As of 2023, the Network counts 350 cities in more than 100 countries.

However, some regions such as Africa and the Arab States remain under-represented. To address this concern, the UCCN Secretariat has developed a Cooperation Framework in the context of the Call for Applications, pairing applicant cities with member cities with a view to technically supporting the former in the preparation of their applications. This has led to a rise in applications and designation of cities from these regions. Following the 2023 UCCN Call for Applications, five cities from Africa and two in Arab States joined the Network. The UCCN Secretariat aims to intensify its efforts in this respect to further improve the geographical representation of under-represented regions.

While this work has reflected UNESCO's commitment to enhancing cultural diversity and geographical balance, the programme's expanding size is simultaneously posing constraints for internal collaboration and communication.[164] UCCN member cities like Montréal (member since 2006) have witnessed the evolution of the Network over the years and note that the increase in member cities makes it more complex to organize global events, as well as to create deep connections at such events.[165]

As previously discussed, one of the main added values of the UCCN is its ability to provide its members with a global platform for exploring new collaborations between cities which might not have otherwise connected, as illustrated in section 3.6.

It is important to note that the spread and evolution of new modes of virtual teamwork and communication, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, seems to provide more opportunities for frequent and cooperative interactions between a greater number of member cities.

4.8 Strengthening links with universities, training and research institutions

It is clear to many member cities interviewed that taking full ownership of the vision and Mission of the Network, as well as the ability to harness its opportunities, requires skills in terms of content and project design that municipal governments may not entirely possess internally, particularly for new members who lack first-hand experience. This is emphasized, for example, by Dakar, which highlights the need for several African cities to be technically assisted in implementing the Network's Mission, and the city of Reykjavík, which stresses the importance for such cities to have assistance in this area.[166]

Therefore, the relationship between member cities and their academic, teaching and research institutions is identified by multiple cities as instrumental in achieving the Network's goals.

For instance, the X UCCN Annual Conference, hosted by the city of Östersund in 2016, was coordinated with Mid Sweden University's (MIUN) research conference on the theme 'Valuing and Evaluating Creativity for Sustainable Regional Development (VEC)'. The VEC conference was designed to support and open the UCCN Annual Conference.

In line with this approach, Mumbai believes that the involvement of universities in technological advancement is an area that has so far been little explored but holds an exceptionally high potential for benefiting the entire Network.

The city-academia partnership is also seen as the subject of strong ambitions. For example, Angoulême considers this partnership a valuable instrument for advancing social sustainable development. Indeed, Angoulême believes that the integration of the UCCN's goals in schools – particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods – can create added value, especially

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164 Montréal interview

165 Montréal interview

166 Respective interviews

if it emphasizes dialogue and collaboration between different cities.[167] Motivated by similar considerations, Bradford, a Creative City of Film since 2009, has successfully collaborated with the University of Bradford in relaunching its Master's in filmmaking. This degree, open to students from around the world, includes teaching about UNESCO and the UCCN, encouraging students to focus on the work of the Secretariat and reflect on the Sustainable Development Goals.[168]

City-academia collaboration is also very beneficial in strengthening the impact of UCCN membership when it involves foreign training and research centres, particularly when they collaborate with local universities The City of Curitiba provides an example of this: the École de Chaillot in Paris is collaborating with the Fundação Cultural de Curitiba and Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná to provide a course entitled 'Patrimônio, Arquitetura e Cultura', with the goal of training professionals in the preservation of built historical heritage, a highly sought-after skill in Brazil.[169]

The City of Al-Ahsa stresses the importance and added value of involving experts in assessing the impact of UCCN membership on sustainable urban development, as well as the relationship between member cities, and between them and UNESCO.[170]

In addition, several cities have appealed to academia on a global scale for much-needed contributions to the post-pandemic revitalization of the creative sectors, particularly the performing arts. One example is the City of Kırşehir which convened a hybrid international conference for this purpose in May 2022. 62 academics from around the world participated, as well as representatives from the Creative Cities of Music of Hannover, Kansas City, Mannheim, London and Pesaro.[171]

Finally, a city's membership to the Network can have a positive impact on the internationalization of its universities. Enghien-les-Bains bears witness to this, mentioning the involvement of Paris Lumière – an association of universities and higher education institutions in the Île-de-France region of France – in exchanges with universities in other Media Arts Cities such as Austin and Toronto.[172]

Several National Commissions for UNESCO have also demonstrated the favorable impacts of establishing city-university collaborations. For example, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO has created an Advisory Committee composed of academics and experts to support the membership application processes as well as provide Korean UCCN members with capacity-building opportunities (see section 2.2).

4.9 Reinforcing connections with other UNESCO activities

Several cities in the Network have formal relationships with UNESCO in other frameworks besides the UCCN. This includes, for example, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities,[173] the World Heritage Cities Programme, or other programmes of the Organization, such as UNESCO Chairs.[174]

Being a UCCN member city opens the door to many opportunities to strengthen the connection with, and collaboration on, activities related to different UNESCO designations and programmes. This happens notably through the UNESCO Cities Platform (UCP), which gathers eight UNESCO programmes and Networks dedicated to cities, including the UCCN, and reflects the Organization's transversal approach.[175] The UCCN

167 Angoulême interview

168 Bradford interview

169 Curitiba interview

170 Al Ahsa interview

171 UCCN Secretariat, "Kırşehir invites Creative Cities of Music to its International Music Conference", UCCN website, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/kirsehir-invites-creative-cities-music-its-international-music-conference

172 Enghien-les-Bains interview

173 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, UNESCO website, 2023 https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities

174 UNESCO, UNESCO Chairs List, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/list-unesco-chairs.pdf

175 The UNESCO Cities Platform gathers the following programmes: UNESCO Creative Cities Network, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, Media and Information Literacy Cities, Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate, World Heritage Cities Programme, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme and UNESCO-Netexplo Observatory.

Secretariat currently coordinates the UCP, therefore providing Creative Cities with additional opportunities.

Furthermore, the UCCN Secretariat offers member cities opportunities to learn about other UNESCO Culture Sector programmes and conventions in order to gain a better understanding of UNESCO's mandate. As an example, in 2022, the UCCN Secretariat shared with member cities a survey developed by the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on 'Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts'. The survey aimed to contribute to preparing guidelines and methodologies for safeguarding living heritage in urban contexts.

Similarly in June 2022, in order to broaden and diversify stakeholders involved in the governance of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, the UCCN Secretariat consulted member cities through another online survey, with a view to involving micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises in the consultation mechanism.

Member cities are also privileged to benefit from a closer connection with UNESCO International days, such as International Jazz Day, International Mother Language Day, World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture,[176] or other yearly designations, such as World Book Capital or World Capital of Architecture.

The importance of coordination and consistency within UNESCO's various programmes and initiatives with urban dimensions is also shared by National Commissions. For example, the French and Italian National Commissions encourage their relevant cities to strengthen connection and collaboration between activities related to different UNESCO designations and programmes.[177]

A recent example of cities implementing such a connection comes from Heidelberg, a Creative City of Literature. Between November 2022 and January 2023, this city organized a series of literary activities dedicated to young audiences in the natural setting of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Grube Messel and the UNESCO Global Geopark Bergstrasse-Odenwald.

Additionally, the cooperation between the Creative City of Heidelberg and the UNESCO sites allowed the development of two online journalism writing workshops at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, led by two Heidelberg authors.[178]

4.10 Conclusions

The Report also examines the challenges but also opportunities available for further enhancing the Network's activities in coming years, thereby reflecting UNESCO's and its Creative Cities' aspirations for the future of the programme. The interviews conducted as part of this research confirmed an alignment between what member cities perceive to be the Network's added value and their ambitions for the Network's future, both in local and international terms.

First, cities share the determination to strengthen the Network's main impact at local level, which can be summarized as enhancing sustainable urban development through the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors. To this end, the UCCN is exploring different methodological, communication and resources opportunities. In particular, this chapter has featured cities' ambitions to strengthen the coordination of this local dynamic by the municipality, by developing solutions that coherently accompany concrete actions on the ground, aided by the international visibility provided by the Network.

From an international point of view, the future of the Network relies on strong levels of interaction and collaboration, especially in the context of its growing size. In this regard, reflection within the Network on developing new forms of interaction, including digital sharing and coordination practices, will complement and reinforce in-person meetings. This will also be matched by coordination among UNESCO's various urban initiatives, brought together within the UNESCO Cities Platform, coordinated by the UCCN Secretariat.

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176 https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-creative-cities-celebrate-world-day-african-and-afrodescendant-culture

177 Respective interviews

178 UCCN Secretariat, "Heidelberg organised literary activities for youth in UNESCO Sites", UCCN website, 2022, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/heidelberg-organized-literary-activities-youth-unesco-sites

Conclusion

Twenty years after its creation, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) stands as a transformative force, playing a decisive role at the local, national, and international level in fostering sustainable development through culture and creativity. As this comprehensive report highlights, the impact and added value of the UCCN are extensive, contributing to economic growth, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others, all of which are evidenced by the selection and analysis of good practices and the collection of diverse testimonies.

At the local level, the UCCN serves as a dynamic platform for local authorities and stakeholders to collaborate and implement innovative cultural projects. It not only facilitates institutional innovation and crosscutting coordination but also proves to be a catalyst for inclusive and resilient urban development. Through the lens of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of member cities - irrespective of their size or socio-economic conditions - this report demonstrates the relevance and effectiveness of the UCCN's approach to development, and its appeal to city decision-makers, therefore advocating for increased investment in the culture and creativity to the benefit of residents and local stakeholders.

The UCCN's influence extends beyond local scale, fostering effective cooperation at national level and with local and regional governments. Indeed, the emergence of national coordination mechanisms plays a key role in advancing a culture and creativity led sustainable development. Moreover, the growing importance of the UCCN designation and action further encourages Member States to devise city-focused national strategies and maximize the potential of the UCCN membership. In a nutshell, the Network supports a broad scope of action at the national scale, inspiring greater coordination between cities and national authorities, with concrete results in terms of advancing the mission and objectives of the UCCN.

At an international level, the UCCN strengthens the global reach of member cities, and facilitates city-to-city collaborations, contributing to bilateral and multilateral initiatives, within and across creative fields and notably in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Such initiatives underline the Network's commitment to exchange and collaboration on the global scale, echoing fully UNESCO's mandate for solidarity and co-development. The Network will therefore benefit from continuing to increase its geographic representation, especially in under-represented regions, for more extended international cooperation.

Looking ahead, the UCCN is set to continue its journey by strengthening coordination efforts at the local level, focusing on sustainable urban development through the cultural and creative sectors. The Network's commitment to innovation is reflected in the exploration of new communication tools and collaborative practices, including data collection and knowledge sharing, to further improve its effectiveness and impact.

To consolidate its role as a laboratory of good practices, the Network will harness the potential of the most innovative and effective initiatives that address the UNESCO s priorities and objectives. Through the revised UCCN Reporting Exercise, tangible impacts of the UCCN will be better monitored with a view to sharing knowledge and building capacity. It will also showcase Creative Cities' contribution to sustainable urban development through culture and creativity, supporting the inclusion of culture as a stand-alone goal in the post-2030 development agenda.

Ongoing reflections within the Network on new forms of coordination beyond the burgeoning national scale hint towards the need for enhanced connection with different stakeholders through UNESCO's Field Offices. Moreover, the Network's active involvement in the coordination of the UNESCO Cities Platform, illustrates its capacity to continuously adapt and its

commitment to remain at the forefront of sustainable urban development initiatives. In the years to come, the Network is expected to expand its collaboration with other international institutions and programmes in relevant thematic areas.

Overall, the present report highlights that the UCCN serves not only as a hub of innovative ideas and good practices, but also a driving force for the development of creative solutions to contemporary urban challenges. With member cities sharing a common objective to strengthen the contribution of culture and creativity to development and sustainability, the UCCN is well-positioned to continue to galvanize the efforts of cities, national governments, and international partners for years to come.

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Annex

Interviews with UCCN Secretariat

The interviews were held on:

- 9 March, 2023 (online)
- 14 March, 2023 (in person at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris)

Interviews with UCCN Cities

UCCN City	UCCN Sub-networks	Member since	Person(s) interviewed	Date
Mumbai	Film	2019	Ms Shashi Bala, Chief, Business Development, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation	June 22, 2022
Angoulême	Literature	2019	Mr Sylvain Pothier-Leroux, Focal Point	July 4, 2022
Bandung	Design	2015	Dr Dwinita Larasati, Focal Point	July 4, 2022
Montréal	Design	2006	Mr Patrick Marmen, Team Leader, Design Office, Economic Development Department, City of Montréal	July 7, 2022
Reykjavík	Literature	2011	Mr Kjartan Már ómarsson, Project Manager, City of Reykjavík	July 7, 2022
Istanbul	Design	2017	Ms İlayda Çağla KOÇOĞLU	July 7, 2022
Fabriano	Crafts and Folk Art	2013	Mr Vittorio Salmoni, Focal Point and National Coordinator of the UCCN in Italy; Ms Maura Nataloni, Deputy Mayor for Culture	July 13, 2022
Curitiba	Design	2014	Mr Guilherme Zuchetti, International Affairs Officer, Office of the Mayor Rafael Greca, City of Curitiba	July 14, 2022
Sapporo	Media arts	2013	Kanai Hoshi, UCCN Focal Point, Cultural Promotion Department, City of Sapporo	July 15, 2022
Dubai	Design	2017	Eng Asem Alqasim, Director of Executive Planning Department, City of Dubai	August 18, 2022
Singapore	Design		Yeo Piah Choo	Senior Consultant	Corporate Development & International Relations	DesignSingapore Council Chen Guanyou, Senior Assistant Director, International Strategy, DesignSingapore Council	August 23, 2022
Al-Ahsa	Crafts and Folk Art	2015	Mr Ibrahim H Alshubaith, Al Ahsa Focal Point	August 24, 2022
Kırşehir	Music	2019	Mr Oylum Öztaş, on behalf of Focal Point Nuri Araz (Deputy Mayor), Officer in the Foreign Relations Department of Kırşehir Municipality	September 1, 2022
Enghien-les-Bains	Media Arts	2013	Mr Dominique Roland	September 2, 2022

Macao SAR	Gastronomy	2017	Ms Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Director, Communication and External Relations Department Macao Government Tourism Office	September 6, 2022
Popayán	Gastronomy	2005	Ms Monika Ximena Anacona Quilindo Focal Point, Popayán Creative City of gastronomy, Tourism coordinator, Popayán Mayor's Office	September 7, 2022
Bradford	Film	2009	Prof David Wilson Director Bradford UNESCO City of Film	September 13, 2022
Auckland	Music	2017	Mr Mark Roach, Director, Auckland City of Music	September 16, 2022
San Antonio	Gastronomy	2017	Ms Colleen Swain Director, World Heritage Office Ms Arisa Larios. Project Manage City of San Antonio	September 16, 2022
Santos	Film	2015	Ms Selley Storino, Municipal Secretary of Entrepreneurship, Creative Economy and Tourism of Santos	September 23, 2022
Dakar	Media Arts	2014	Mr Jean Louis Rahir Diouf, UCCN Focal Point Mr Ibrahime Cissé, Head of the arts and culture division of the City of Dakar	November 25, 2022

Questions to UCCN Cities:

What have been the primary added values of your city's designation as a UNESCO Creative City in terms of its local, national, and international action?

What expectations for the future from your city's membership in the Network, in terms of your local, national, and international action?

What is likely to be your city's additional contribution to realizing these ambitions, notably in line with UNESCO's mandate and priorities?

Does your city have any suggestions to further reinforce the Network's added values through its priority areas and main activities?

Interviews with National Commissions for UNESCO

National Commission	Person(s) interviewed	Date
Canada	Ms Vanessa Poulin-Gladu, Manager, Public Affairs; Canadian National Commission for UNESCO Ms Barbara Filion, Programme Officer for Culture, Canadian National Commission for UNESCO	October 18, 2022
Morocco	Mr Aissam Kebdani Daoudi, Secretary General, Head of the Division of Decentralized Cooperation, General Directorate of Local Authorities (DGCT) Mr Abdelhak Andaloussi, City of Tétouan Ms Karima Haoudy, City of Essaouira	October 18, 2022
Türkiye	Mr Alperen TOSUN, Assistant Secretary-General	October 20, 2022
United Arab Emirates	Ms Hend Al Mansoori, UAE National Commission for UNESCO Ms Farah Nasri, UCCN Focal Point, City of Sharja Ms Mariam Sharif, UCCN Focal Point, City of Dubai	October 24, 2022
China	Ms Cui Ying, Deputy Secretary-General of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO	November 16, 2022
Italy	Mr Enrico Vicenti, Secretary General, Italian National Commission for UNESCO	November 21, 2022
France	Mr Alexandre Navarro, Secretary General, French National Commission for UNESCO	November 29, 2022
Brazil	Mr Bruno Palazon Imparato, Deputy Secretary General, Brazilian National Commission for UNESCO	December 5, 2022
Republic of Korea	Ms Seunghyun Baek, Senior Programme Specialist in charge of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network at the Korean National Commission for UNESCO	January 6, 2023

Questions to National Commissions for UNESCO:

What is your country's global strategy and vision with regard to its Creative Cities?

What kind of interaction or coordination do you have with your cities that are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network?

What has been the added value of the UCCN membership in the sustainable development of your cities and the entire country? Please kindly provide one or several examples.

What has been the added value of the UCCN membership in your country's international relations? Please kindly provide one or several examples.

What has been the role of the UCCN membership in the pursuit of the common goals of the international community, starting with Agenda 2030?

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