

## CULTURAL POLICIES WITH A PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER EQUALITY: MONTEVIDEO GOING FORWARD IN ITS CULTURAL SHIFT



**GOVERNANCE** **INSTITUTIONAL** **SOCIAL**  
**EDUCATION** **EQUALITY** **GENDER** **WOMEN**  
**EMPOWERMENT** **INCLUSION** **IDENTITY**

### 1. Context

Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, is the most populated department in the country, with 40% of its population. The total number of people amounts to 1,319,108, of whom 705,014 are women and 614,094 men.<sup>1</sup> Montevideo is home to most arts facilities and training centres despite the decentralisation efforts in the last decade.

<sup>1</sup> Data from the 2011 Census.

Although in Uruguay women achieved rights such as the vote early on (1938), in a liberal democracy that shaped an imaginary of an integrated and homogenous society it is still difficult to acknowledge gender-based inequalities.<sup>2</sup>

As for political representation, Montevideo has few women in institutional positions. In the labour world, Montevideo women's salaries do not correspond to their education levels and they find themselves in an unfavourable position in terms of labour insertion, income and promotion. Afro-descendent and transsexual women are particularly affected in this respect.

Women suffer more physical and psychological violence. Along with this, there are cases of homophobia and transphobia. Moreover, they still face difficulties when fully exercising their sexual and reproductive rights. Culture has not been immune to inequality problems.

**SINCE 2002, MONTEVIDEO HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING EQUALITY PLANS AS CROSS-SECTORIAL STRATEGIC PLANS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND POLITICAL AND TECHNICAL TOOL. SINCE 2015, THE WHOLE CULTURE DEPARTMENT ASSUMES A LEADING ROLE IN THE DEFINITION OF THE GOALS, INCLUDING A SPECIFIC BUDGET ALLOCATION.**

## 2. Montevideo and culture

In Uruguay, the traditional socio-cultural representations are based and reproduce values, beliefs and expectations concerning the roles of women and men, revealing patterns that are particularly evident in sectors with fewer resources and in rural areas or areas further away from the capital. Along with the lack of systematised official data to make the cultural gendered gaps visible, there is another aspect to take into account: the lack of equality and parity between women and men.

In the cultural sphere, there are the so-called "implicit gender schemas" that entail valuing of male achievements over those of women. As pointed out by the former Director of the Department of Culture at the Municipality of Montevideo, Gonzalo Carámbula, the state's relationship with culture can be understood as a "hexahedron in motion", which features ideological, political, economic, institutional and especially gendered problems, a dimension that is usually absent in theoretical texts and local indicators on public cultural management. For this reason, it is paramount to emphasise gender mainstreaming policies in culture led by the municipal government, despite the resistance inherent in the status quo.

Uruguay ratified gender equality commitments in multiple world documents concerning Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), Women and Development (Beijing, 1995), Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, among others. Moreover, it supports the Sustainable Development Goals. In cultural matters, Uruguay took on international commitments that became guideline documents for the national and Montevideo governments. These are the "Iberoamerican Cultural Charter" (CCI) of 2006, the "Agenda 21 for Culture" of 2004 and "Culture 21 Actions" of 2015, which highlight the gender equality dimension as a principle.

The Department of Culture has one of the top three highest budgets and number of civil servants in the Municipality of Montevideo. It focuses on artistic culture, on traditional cultural infrastructure (stable ensembles, theatres, museums, and libraries) and the promotion of the artistic activity throughout the city. In the 21st century, the department has grown to carry out initiatives linked to the

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<sup>2</sup> Dominzain, Susana (2012). *Women in Culture*. Academic Observatory of Cultural Policies.

inclusive, democratic full enjoyment of the cultural rights of citizenship, the appropriation of public space, as well as the coexistence and development of local identities and community culture.

To provide gender perspectives in public cultural policies, priority is given to strengthening the institutional framework. An equality team is formed, composed of officials from all areas, a cross-cutting budget programme for gender equality is defined, the gender perspective is included in the institutional management commitments, and training and awareness-raising workshops are organised for civil servants.

### 3. Goals and project implementation

#### 3.1. Main aim and specific goals

The goal is to provide the public policies of Montevideo with human rights and gender mainstreaming, generating to this end the mechanisms and procedures that make their effective instrumentation possible.

The specific objectives are the result of the five-year planning of the Department of Culture in the framework of the 3rd Gender Equality Plan. These objectives also appear in the strategic planning of the Department and the institutional management commitments. All of these are measurable and standardised by the 49 branches of the Department and discussed with the cultural groups that receive support from public funds.

- Make visible gender gaps in the issues related to the public cultural management of Montevideo.
- Contribute to cultural and educational provision with a focus on human rights and gender mainstreaming.
- Ensure that the activities linked to the different Carnival contests and events are fields of exercise of citizenship and promoters of women's and men's rights.
- Make visible women's contribution to different artistic and cultural disciplines (see photo First Woman Conductor of the Montevideo Philharmonic Orchestra 2017).
- Develop gender capacity-building and awareness-raising plans so that civil servants become promoters of gender equality.
- Allocate a specific budget to fulfil the objectives envisaged.
- Make up a qualified Equality Team within the Department of Culture to promote the fulfilment of the objectives.

THE ACTION PLAN THAT ACCOMPANY THE STRATEGY ARE ORIENTED TO ALL CITIZENS, INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY PUBLIC SERVANTS. AMONG OTHERS, THEY INCLUDE CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOPS FOR THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT ON GENDER RELATED ISSUES, THE USE OF NEUTRAL LANGUAGE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON THE WORKPLACE.

#### 3.2. Development of the project

##### Main actions carried out

**Gender observatory:** identification and creation of relevant indicators for a gender analysis in the established arts centres (National Theatre, Symphonic Band, Philharmonic Orchestra), arts training schools (Multidisciplinary Drama School and School of Music), Subte Exhibition Centre, Juan Manuel Blanes Museum, Locaciones Montevideanas (cinema), Juan Carlos Onetti Literary Award, and Programme for the Strengthening of the Arts.



**Inclusion of clauses to promote gender equality** in calls and contests: Juan Carlos Onetti Literary Award, Regulations of the Carnival Official Contest (see Photo of winners of the Special Mention), Competitive Fund for the Strengthening of the Arts.

**Reinas del Carnaval (Carnival Queens):** in line with the 18 Neighbourhood Councils and their Committees on Culture and Carnival, possible revisions of an event criticised for contributing to giving women a place of subordination and promoting gender stereotypes was discussed. This led to changes in the regulations: opening the event to women over 18 with no age limit, and to transsexual and disabled women. In 2017, another step was taken and the contest changed its name and became: Figuras del Carnaval (Figures of the Carnival).<sup>3</sup>

**Carnaval de las promesas (Carnival of the promises)** (with the participation of children and teenagers of both genders): changes in the regulations were made so that gender stereotypes are not stressed.

**Talks on gender-based inequality in the field of film production and direction:** series of talks and film screenings (see Annex: Programme of the Film Season "Dos Mujeres Hablan" 2017).

**Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in Drama:** along with the debate and reflection, a report was produced featuring recommendations and proposals to be implemented both in public and private theatres.

**Gender budget:** allocated for specific actions within the general budget (US\$34,500, currency rate December 2017). The budget allocated for gender equality is even larger because it does not cover other expenditures in cultural policies (education programmes, theatres, museums, established companies, Carnival, and so on) in which although the central objective is not the promotion of gender

<sup>3</sup> Video Event Election Figures of the Carnival (former Reinas) 2018: <https://vimeo.com/252382795>

equality insofar as they include this approach, they achieve a transformation in these policies that also has favourable impacts in terms of equality.

**Gender Team:** a Gender Team was created within the Department of Culture fully qualified to promote and monitor cross-over gender approaches.

The partner organisations working in coordination on the implementation of these actions comprise the Municipal Equality Teams and Committees of Neighbours and meetings with professional arts groups, CSOs and the Universidad de la República.

## 4. Impacts

### 4.1. Direct impacts

#### Impact on the local government

At the local government level, the impact has been generally positive, mainly with the involvement of groups of actors within the institution, bringing them closer to citizens and involving them in an issue questioned by the residents in the area and different organisations (Committees on Culture and Carnival and the media, etc).

#### Impact on culture and local cultural actors

This has also been a controversial issue and has generated an arduous debate. Moreover, the repercussion in the media has been marked by controversial opinions on the implementation of the changes favourable to gender equality in cultural policies.

#### Impact on the territory and its population

Supporting this approach empowered neighbourhood groups and promoted cultural changes. Examples: request by transsexual women to be included in arts facilities (Self-Fiction Pilot Project in the Teatro Solís); access to theatre productions for women who have been victims of trafficking in persons; popular initiatives aiming at changing carnivals' regulations; increased number of women in performing arts programmes, etc. However, in the sectors with greater privileges and professional visibility, the interaction between the different actors was tense and revealed resistance.

At an international level, the presentation of the initiative in fora (UCCI) awoke interest.

**IN THE CULTURAL FIELD, AN ARDUOUS DEBATE WAS GENERATED ON ASPECTS ROOTED IN OUR SOCIETY AND THAT MOBILISE THE GRASSROOTS OF A CONSOLIDATED STRUCTURE ADVOCATED BY GROUPS BENEFITTING FROM IT.**

### 4.2. Assessment

In the framework of the 3rd Gender Equality Plan, in 2017 the Department of Culture defined 33 annual goals with their respective indicators. To monitor the 3rd Plan goals we use the same computing system as the one used by the Municipality. Out of the 33 goals, 27 were achieved in 2017 and 6 are pending for the next year. For 2018, 32 annual goals have been defined.

The creation of a gender observatory will enable us to assess whether the policies implemented manage to have an impact on the gender gaps identified. The reflection meetings and the discussion tables generate qualitative inputs for the previous and later assessment of the policy.

### 4.3. Key aspects



The possibility that many female artists have platforms that include and support them with resources and, the possibility for the groups of community women to achieve spaces of promotion and support, and the fact that transsexual women or women who have been victims of gender violence can be subjects of cultural policies, sometimes a larger percentage than professional artists, are some of the key factors.

In the design and definition of its operation budget, the Department of Culture gives priority to the line linked to the decentralization and action of gender policies and human rights.

#### 4.4. Continuity

Continuity is ensured by the fact that the gender mainstreaming approach emphasises the cultural components while generating transformative gender-based policies as part of the Municipality's policy and strategic guidelines and not only on positive actions that seek modifications limited to the transformation of some types of needs and differential interests. The Equality Plans and their development in terms of governance guarantee insofar the public cultural gender mainstreaming policies have the global scope desired and involve a real social change.

ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS IS THE DESIGN OF ACTIONS AND POLICIES BASED ON THE EQUITABLE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ADVOCATED BY UNESCO'S SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON CULTURAL RIGHTS, FARIDA SHAHEED.

### 5. Other informations

Montevideo was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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