

## Inter-institutional collaboration and cultural management as strategies for corporate social responsibility for the sustainable development of culture.

La colaboración interinstitucional y la gestión cultural como estrategias de la responsabilidad social empresarial para el desarrollo sostenible de la cultura.

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**Laura Dueñas Aragón**

Anáhuac University Cancún. Mexico

[laura.duenas9461@alumnos.udg.mx](mailto:laura.duenas9461@alumnos.udg.mx)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7853-7066>

### Abstract:

In recent years, sustainability has transcended its environmental, economic, and social dimensions to also incorporate the cultural sphere, understood as the social root and basis of human development. Cultural sustainability implies a community's ability to preserve, promote, and renew its cultural expressions so that they endure over time and contribute to improving its living conditions, work, economy, and social integration. Consequently, the cultural environment shapes people's education, practices, and ways of life. When culture is managed collaboratively between institutions, it is possible to generate significant impacts on social development, both locally and globally. This article examines how inter-institutional collaboration between public bodies, companies, NGOs, and civil society, articulated through appropriate cultural management, can become a central strategy of corporate social responsibility, aimed at strengthening a sustainable culture. This includes the formulation of culturally sensitive business policies, the preservation of traditions, the promotion of creative work, and the promotion of innovation with social and economic profitability criteria. The analysis shows that cooperation between entities is essential for culture not only to be preserved but also to flourish in an inclusive and lasting manner.

**Keywords:** Inter-institutional collaboration. Cultural management. Corporate social responsibility. Sustainable development. Cultural sustainability. Cultural policies.

### Resumen:

En los últimos años, la sostenibilidad ha trascendido sus dimensiones ambiental, económica y social para incorporar también la esfera cultural, entendida como raíz social y base del desarrollo humano. La sostenibilidad cultural implica la capacidad de una comunidad para preservar, promover y renovar sus expresiones culturales de manera que perduren en el tiempo y contribuyan a mejorar sus condiciones de vida, trabajo, economía e integración social. En consecuencia, el entorno cultural configura la educación, prácticas y modos de vida de las personas. Cuando la cultura se gestiona de forma colaborativa entre instituciones, es posible generar impactos significativos en el desarrollo social, tanto a nivel local como global. Este artículo examina cómo la colaboración interinstitucional entre organismos públicos, empresas, ONG y sociedad civil, articulada mediante una gestión cultural adecuada, puede convertirse en una estrategia central de la responsabilidad social empresarial, orientada a fortalecer una cultura sostenible. Esto incluye la formulación de políticas empresariales sensibles al ámbito cultural, la preservación de tradiciones, el impulso al trabajo creativo y la promoción de la innovación con criterios de rentabilidad social y económica. El análisis demuestra que la cooperación entre entidades es esencial para que la cultura no solo se conserve, sino que prospere de manera inclusiva y duradera.

**Palabras clave:** Colaboración interinstitucional. Gestión cultural. Responsabilidad social empresarial. Desarrollo sostenible. Sostenibilidad cultural. Políticas culturales.

## Introduction

The concept of sustainability, which we normally associate with caring for the environment, is now expanding to other areas, such as culture. In this sense, cultural sustainability means that a community can maintain, promote and renew its cultural expressions in a way that lasts over time, benefiting both society and the economy. Cultural management is key to this process, and when different institutions work together collaboratively, they can become a very powerful tool for creating an ecosystem that promotes creativity, providing resources, spaces and opportunities that enable long-term sustainable cultural development.

This document is based on the importance of a definition of culture focused on the progress and coexistence of a society and its own sustainability. It also aims to analyse how inter-institutional collaboration and cultural management models can strengthen strategies aimed at the sustainable development of culture, continuing with the study of the merits of inter-institutional collaborative alliances, whether in the public, private or social sector, as tools that enable companies to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of culture, enhancing resources, knowledge and capacities.

The research approach is descriptive, which, according to Hernández Sampieri (Sampieri et al., 2014), consists of presenting the information as it is, indicating the situation at the time of the research, analysing, interpreting, printing and evaluating what is desired, in this case, to understand the positive effect of inter-institutional collaboration and adequate cultural management, both factors that favour the sustainable development of culture. Additionally, this study is developed under a mainly qualitative approach, as it is based on the understanding and analysis of social and cultural phenomena, the actions and behaviours of those involved, based on the review of academic works and case studies, to identify different practices and experiences that allow us to characterise key points that must be considered in order to achieve successful synergy.

## Culture: a sustainable driver of social change

It is well known that culture is a key factor in sustainable development and in ensuring the success of social change. Culture represents heritage, which is the basis for determining the future. But why do we take this for granted, when there are still societies in the 21st century that do not include the cultural sector among their priorities for social and economic growth? For this reason, it is necessary to clarify what culture means, as the concept is not limited to art, but encompasses the ways of thinking, acting and living together that characterise a society. By understanding it in a broad sense, it becomes clear how

influences the way people perceive change, adopt new practices and participate in collective processes, which are decisive in driving any development-oriented initiative.

Let us begin with the concept of culture as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2012): "The set of distinctive spiritual, material and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. Culture encompasses not only the arts and letters, but also ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, beliefs and traditions."

Culture shapes individuals and societies, fostering unity through shared values and traditions. In the face of global challenges such as conflicts, epidemics, climate change and technological advances, UNESCO insists on the need to preserve culture for both individuals and societies. Its cultural initiatives include safeguarding historical sites, promoting creativity, supporting artistic innovation, preserving diversity through living and intangible heritage, and addressing the importance of maintaining cultural jobs and livelihoods in the creative economy (UNESCO, 2012).

UNESCO is convinced that no development can be sustainable without a strong cultural component. In fact, only a human-centred approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue between cultures can lead to lasting peace.

It is interesting to mention the sustainability perspective of these concepts, as they contribute to the integral development of human beings in the economic, sociocultural and environmental spheres, as well as promoting their preservation for future generations. An important reference point for this is Agenda 21 for Local Culture, approved in 2004 in Barcelona, Spain, where cities and governments from around the world participated in the drafting of the document, defining principles and actions that local governments should consider in the design and implementation of their public policy with the aim of promoting cultural and sustainable development at the local level (Mariscal Orozco et al., 2024). This document is based on the recognition of culture as a key element for social well-being, for which it is important to consider, among other things, diversity, citizen participation, creativity and territorial cohesion. It has served as a frame of reference in the design of cultural policies in various countries over the last twenty years.

Therefore, when discussing cultural policies in Ibero-America, it is essential to recognise the multiplicity of actors and processes that contribute to the configuration of culture in the region, beyond the actions of the state. From this starting point, it is relevant to consider García Canclini's (2001) definition of cultural policies:

Recent studies tend to include under this concept the set of interventions carried out by the state, civil institutions and organised community groups in order to guide symbolic development, satisfy the cultural needs of the population and obtain consensus for a type of social order or transformation. However, this way of characterising the scope of

cultural policies needs to be broadened, taking into account the transnational nature of symbolic and material processes today (p. 65).

In addition to its social relevance, culture also has a considerable influence on the economy and economic policy, making creative industries a benchmark that has generated higher economic growth rates in many countries in recent decades. For this reason, it is important that cultural integration also be activated in local communities, as in the following example.

In a small community of artisans in Oaxaca, Mexico, a group of local entrepreneurs faced the challenge of attracting tourists without losing the essence of their culture. By implementing a cultural integration programme, the Los Colores de Oaxaca cooperative not only managed to increase its income by 30% in one year, but also created a space where visitors could learn about the tradition of weaving and the art of pottery. This effort not only benefited the artisans, but also increased a sense of community, allowing the values and stories of each member to stand out in a collaborative environment. The experience of "Los Colores de Oaxaca" underscores that by promoting cultural integration, businesses can find a sustainable approach that respects and celebrates local traditions while generating a positive economic impact (vorecol.com, n.d.).

Here we can see how the joining of forces between different sectors allows for the creation of synergies that multiply the resources available to generate, in addition to economic development, a strengthening and positioning of their identity as the essence of their community.

In a globalised world, it is clear that working with others, developing joint projects and sharing approaches is essential to achieving a significant impact. At the cultural level, inter-institutional collaboration is particularly valuable, as it can become a key tool for the artistic empowerment of a society. From this perspective, understanding culture as a dynamic network of shared practices, values and meanings allows us to recognise its central role in the processes that will be explored later in this article, where culture will operate as a connecting thread to understand how collective initiatives are generated, strengthened and transformed in the artistic and social context.

### Inter-institutional collaboration and its benefits

According to the reference in the previous example, which mentions the successful case of cultural tourism involving artisans in a Chiapas community based on the initiative of a group of entrepreneurs, i.e., non-governmental organisations (NGOs) , it can be observed that today, it is more common for these types of organisations to recognise the importance of strategic collaborations for community development and the ripple effect they generate in the economy, society and the active environment of a population, forming part of an inter-institutional collaboration.

Inter-institutional collaboration is the sum of the joint efforts of different organisations, governments, companies and communities to achieve common goals. The trend of wanting to participate in meaningful experiences is a positive step towards a deeper impact on the community. By selecting and managing these collaborations appropriately, not only are the benefits maximised, but it also ensures that the work done is truly meaningful. Furthermore, having the ability to identify and manage these collaborations can be a great competitive advantage for all involved. In this context, with culture being recognised as a fundamental pillar of social and economic development, institutions, companies and other actors have an increasingly important role to play in promoting and protecting cultural heritage. Corporate social responsibility has evolved beyond philanthropic actions to incorporate strategies that seek to have a positive impact on the community and the cultural environment.

Although partnerships may change and evolve over time, it is advisable to begin the process with a clear idea of what you want to achieve. In short, each stakeholder involved should begin by reviewing their identity and defining the strategic value that collaborative partnerships have for them, the famous value chain, where collaboration is seen as another tool for achieving their organisation's objectives, becoming a strategy for projecting social responsibility that also enhances their public image and how they perceive themselves and relate to their environment.

The motivations for undertaking collaborations are varied and include, among others, the following: 1) Opportunity to increase resources, both financial and in terms of skills and competencies, to put inactive resources into motion; 2) Opportunity to build institutional capacity by pooling resources towards a common goal, exploiting complementary approaches and generating innovation, mutual learning and the dissemination of good practices; 3) Opportunity to access previously neglected areas of action (expanding coverage) and new contacts, partners and even funders; and 4) Opportunity to reinforce the legitimacy of a cause by establishing it more firmly in the public arena. (Communication and Development (ICD) of Uruguay, 2015).

In short, collaborating with various organisations (such as civil society organisations, government entities, international organisations and private companies) provides attractive advantages in areas such as legitimacy, social visibility, efficiency, effectiveness, quality of interventions, expansion of areas of action and access to a greater number of resources, skills and competencies.

In this vein, La Piana Consulting (2015) offers a clear graphic representation, designated as a collaborative map, of the variety of collaboration options available, as shown below:

Figure 1. Collaborative Map



Source: Taken from La Piana Consulting (2015).

This collaborative map starts from the outside and moves inwards towards the circle; each option represents a greater degree of long-term commitment. The most basic form, visible in the outer circle, is simply designated as collaboration; this is followed by coordinated actions, alliances and strategic restructuring.

As discussed in this article, alliances formed by different groups, whether from the public or private sector, become catalysts for economic growth, identity and social cohesion within a community. such as, for example, the annual DiverseCity Multicultural Festival, held every year on Prince Edward Island, Canada, and organised by IRS (Immigrant and Refugee Services Association) in collaboration with founders, sponsors, volunteers and community partners from the government and municipality. The Festival celebrates the diversity of cultures living on the Island and showcases food, live music and dance, talent and skill demonstrations, and arts and crafts representing the cultures of immigrants and indigenous nations, on the initiative of a small group of entrepreneurs. Since its first edition in 2007, this event has attracted more than 15,000 visitors and has grown annually, celebrating the diversity of more than 50 different cultures. A crucial aspect of its success has been

collaboration with community organisations and leaders from diverse communities. The key lies in creating an inclusive space where people can not only share their traditions and cuisine, but also learn from each other. These events have been vital not only in fostering social cohesion, but also in reducing social conflict by 30% in communities that celebrate their diversity. (DiverseCity Multicultural Festival - Immigrant and Refugee Services Association of PEI, n.d.)

This case shows that there are other organisations seeking partners to join forces in pursuit of shared goals, such as foundations, cooperation agencies, and even companies that have set out to act as catalysts for collaboration processes. These organisations are formed under a vision that is aligned for all involved, analysing their cost-benefit ratio their competitive value, develop strategic planning for their joint actions, consider conflict management and resource transparency tools, and evaluate their results to be in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Inter-institutional collaboration in the cultural sector is no exception, as these synergies with companies and organisations from both the public and private sectors result in adequate resources and spaces for artistic creation, as well as facilitating access to training and mentoring programmes that enhance the creative skills of young people. In this way, new artists are born, finding a conducive environment where their ideas can flourish and be valued.

The more partnerships and collaborations increase in this area, the more platforms can be created where emerging talents can showcase their work and connect with other audiences. By organising joint cultural events, exhibitions and workshops, opportunities are created for young people to become actively involved in their communities and share their unique perspectives. Such initiatives not only enrich the local cultural landscape, but also promote a sense of belonging and pride among young creators. Ultimately, by working together, institutions can contribute significantly to the development of a creative and innovative generation that drives social change through art.

### Cultural management: a tool for sustainable development

The term cultural management is relatively new, and it is important to address it in order to understand its *raison d'être*, as it serves as a mediating bridge for creating inter-institutional collaborations in favour of the realisation of different cultural and artistic expressions.

During the last ten years of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI) promoted the professionalisation of cultural agents using the term cultural management to group and articulate different profiles and their ways of understanding and carrying out cultural action (Zuribia, Abello and Tavares, 2001), such as animation, promotion, mediation and production, among other terms present in the cultural sector that emerged from various institutional contexts (Rodrigues, 2012).

Cultural management is a neologism resulting from the appropriation of the Anglo-Saxon concept of cultural management, referring to the administration of cultural services, whether by government institutions or private companies, in terms of a field of action for other professions and disciplines or simply as a social mandate (Martinell Sempere, A. 2001).

Thus, throughout Latin America, professionalisation was promoted with the support of national governments and various universities through the emergence of the first university training programmes in Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Spain, Mexico and Portugal; and subsequently, from 2010 onwards, they spread to Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Mariscal Orozco et al., 2024).

With this methodological advance that cultural managers now have at their disposal, it is essential to study concepts in order to assess their scope in the process of developing cultural projects and the line of collaboration that is sought to bring them to fruition. One of these concepts is cultural participation, which, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in its document UNESCO Culture Indicators for Development: Methodological Manual (2017), is understood as the ability of individuals or social groups to access cultural activities, both in terms of creation and consumption. In general terms, four levels of participation can be identified in cultural action, according to the Model for Guiding Cultural Action with a Focus on Human Rights and Sustainability (Mariscal and Guerra, 2021, p. 23):

1. Knowledge: The first level is based on citizens being aware of the existence of a cultural offering or good (I know it exists). Timely, high-quality information is key to achieving this goal.
2. Access and accessibility: This implies that citizens are aware of its existence, but can also access it based on their physical, economic, educational and spatial capabilities (I can access it).

3. Content: In this sense, it is not enough to be able to access the cultural offering; the content generated must also be relevant and meaningful to the individual, groups or communities (there is content that is relevant to me).

4. Management: Finally, the last level of participation refers to the possibility for individuals to actively participate in the management of activities whose content and formats are relevant to them (I can propose and do).

At these four levels, in addition to the participation of society, a key player in generating the momentum that starts the movement is precisely the cultural manager, who today more than ever seeks out different actors to create collaborations and strategic alliances, such as government institutions, community cultural organisations, companies and cultural enterprises, as well as the education sector, with the aim of implementing the aforementioned levels. For example, the first level, which refers to content, which tells us about information and dissemination of cultural expressions to the community. Here we can add collaborations with communication companies and other allies involved in social media campaigns. Depending on the type of event, greater support and dissemination will be required to raise awareness of the cultural offering.

Government institutions must definitely support the second level mentioned, that of access and accessibility, 100%, designing everything from cultural policies and programmes to creating and facilitating spaces equipped for such cultural activities, accessible, with optimal infrastructure and providing safety for the existing public, in addition to promoting free admission to as many events as possible, since part of the government budget must be allocated and well planned for the growth of the cultural and artistic sector.

At level three, concerning content, it is undoubtedly the education sector and community cultural organisations that provide training and guidance to young creators who are specialising in their areas, provided that they find ad hoc learning spaces for the discipline they wish to pursue and are specialising in creating different cultural products for different audiences and also in developing audience formation. Here, government support plays a major role in supporting these spaces for learning and artistic initiation in all segments of the fine arts so that they are available to the creative community.

And finally, level four, related to cultural management, which is precisely to link inter-institutional participation between government, cultural organisations, educational institutions and companies, in order to achieve collective patronage and enable the cultural project to be carried out.

The connection of synergies between the sectors of government, education, culture and civil society, as they adapt to new contexts, becomes an essential element in achieving sustainable development through a more efficient use of available resources, in addition to financial or monetary resources, through the appropriation of public and private resources in a variety

of contributions: in kind, in labour, in knowledge, in care, among others, which stimulate initiatives, in order to guarantee the continuity of long-range cultural processes.

In this same perspective, understanding social organisations, collectives and cultural agents as the centre of a sustainable model, in a network of cooperation and exchange that is strengthened by other economies (local, circular, solidarity-based and popular) to articulate community and institutional processes. According to Deheinzelin (2011), sustainability in cultural work involves considering the resources and capacities available in communities, both intangible and tangible, in their four dimensions, as shown in Figure 2 below:

1. Tangible assets and capabilities: a). Techno-natural: considers biodiversity, raw materials, equipment, and existing technologies in communities. b). Monetary-solidarity: considers financing, calls for proposals, working hours, and other forms of currency and commercial exchanges.

2. Intangible assets and capabilities: c). Symbolic-cultural: considers beliefs, values, spirituality, knowledge, experiences, languages, and creative skills. d). Sociopolitical: considers mechanisms for collective management, community organisational forms and structures, rights, regulations, and policies that enable cultural action.

Figure 2. Dimensions of Culture



**Source:** Taken from Deheinzelin 2015, cited by Mariscal Orozco et al., 2024, p. 72).

One success story that deserves mention because it has a major positive impact on all dimensions of sustainable cultural development and a wide reach in its collaboration with different institutions is the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), which was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that recognise culture and creativity as a

strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The 350 cities around the world that currently form part of this network work together towards a common goal: to place creativity and cultural industries at the centre of their local development plans and to cooperate actively at the international level. Here are some more details about its particularities:

Cities pool their resources and expertise in support of the objectives set out in the Network's Mission Statement, covering seven creative fields: crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts and music, and promote cross-sector collaboration between the different creative fields. The focal points address cultural diversity, for members from all regions and all demographic, economic, social, cultural and environmental backgrounds. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (UNESCO, 2023).

Another example that demonstrates the success of linking community collaborations with good cultural management is the Cultura Viva Comunitaria (CVC) programme in Latin America, which emerged as a social and cultural movement that promotes the active participation of communities in the creation, management and development of their own culture. It focuses on the culture that emerges from communities as part of their daily lives and territories, rather than cultural policies imposed from above.

This movement was inspired by experiences such as the Puntos de Cultura (Culture Points) in Brazil, which promoted the creation of spaces for cultural and artistic encounters in communities. Some of its principles are the participation and autonomy of communities as protagonists in the definition and management of their cultural practices; collectivity at the community level and decentralisation, where culture is promoted at the local level, in territories and neighbourhoods, recognising its richness and diversity, and also recognises the link with public policies, with the creation of ad hoc proposals that recognise the importance of community culture and promote its participation in the cultural management of its territories and communities (Benavides, 2023b).

In addition to these cases, there are other similar examples in the rest of the world, so we can affirm that one of the main strategies for the sustainable development of culture is to appropriate and assume the approach to culture as a human right. This implies that all cultural action must be based on the vision that all people have the right to participate at different levels in the cultural life of their community, to express and enjoy their identity, values, beliefs and cultural practices, without discrimination or exclusion.

In order for this to be implemented and action to be taken, it is essential to design local government policies that include agreements and cooperation between social organisations and collectives that generate cultural projects that can be evaluated at different stages of their management (diagnosis, design, implementation and evaluation) in order to measure

their impact and innovate community participation in them. Within these policies, it is important to diversify and streamline administrative processes to facilitate access to resources.

Another substantial strategy will be the training and professionalisation of cultural managers who build a cultural axis aligned with legal frameworks and sensitive to the needs of the community itself.

### Conclusions:

Inter-institutional collaboration and cultural management are consolidated as fundamental pillars within corporate social responsibility to promote the sustainable development of culture. The coordination between companies, public institutions, civil organisations and cultural agents allows for the creation of more solid, inclusive and far-reaching projects by combining complementary resources, capacities and visions. In turn, cultural management provides the necessary tools to plan, coordinate and evaluate initiatives that strengthen identity, participation and creativity in communities. When companies incorporate these strategies into their social responsibility framework, they not only contribute to collective well-being, but also promote the preservation, innovation and continuity of a community's cultural expressions. Thus, culture becomes a strategic element in building more equitable, resilient and sustainable societies.

Even so, the scope of these strategies opens up new research possibilities that allow for a more detailed examination of their real impact. Future research could explore how these partnerships are formed and sustained in the long term, which cultural management models generate greater social and cultural benefits, or how CSR can be adapted to specific community contexts to respond to their cultural needs, adding greater value to their business nature. Similarly, it is essential to review the metrics and indicators that allow for the assessment of the cultural sustainability of projects promoted by companies, incorporating respect for cultural rights and access to opportunities for labour and social participation. It is also key to examine the role of digital innovation in the articulation between public, private and community actors. Further research in these areas will provide a clearer understanding of how culture can be consolidated as a strategic axis for social development and for strengthening corporate responsibility in the future.

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