

# CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT. EVIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS

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Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, prominent international initiatives had made clear the importance of culture and creativity to urban development. In 2017, the European Commission debuted the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM), a tool designed to generate various synthetic, weighted, and normalized measures of cultural performance. In 2019, UNESCO published its Culture 2030 Indicators to measure and assess the contributions of culture to the Sustainable Development Goals. Later, the United Nations declared 2021 to be the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

The research presented here seeks to reinforce arguments in favor of culture and its links with sustainable development. We have examined the 81 Spanish cities with between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants, measuring their cultural and creative dynamism through an *ad hoc* adaptation of the 29 indicators and 13 synthetic measures contained in the CCCM. Also, as relates to indicator 8 (Cultural Companies) of the UNESCO CI/2030, we have obtained and analyzed a sample of 13,204 companies from 14 creative and cultural sectors. The so-called C3 index – the principal measure obtained through application of the CCCM – has proven effective in showing that the cultural and creative ecosystems of the cities under study are quite heterogeneous, with compelling and decisive distinctions drawn around those Spanish cities that form part of large metropolitan areas and those non-metropolitan cities that serve as the capital of their province or autonomous region.

Data mined from the sample of 13,204 companies located in the 81 cities and joint analysis with the main CCCM indicators enable verification that the C3 index is efficient in capturing business dynamism: concentrations of cultural companies and jobs are greater in the groups of cities presenting higher index values. We have taken this result as evidence of the relationship between cultural dynamism (expressed by the C3 index value) and business dynamism (indicated by the concentration indices). Moreover, data from the sample of companies shows diversity within this business group in terms of employment, assets, and profits, confirming certain structural deficiencies highlighted in the sector during the pandemic. In fact, strong asymmetries are found among the companies and the cities in the sample as regards the distribution of both cultural dynamism and business activity. For example, when the cities are ordered according to percentages of employment and by population deciles, the 10th decile (with the most cultural activity) concentrates more employment, assets, and profits within its cultural companies than all the others combined. Also striking is that the 7,000 smallest companies (53% of total) account for just 10% of total assets, while the 26 largest companies concentrate over 40%. Nevertheless, encouraging aspects have been found for cities with lower cultural dynamism, where in recent years, cultural companies have shown behavior similar to those in the most dynamic cities in terms of both size and rate of appearance.

When launching this work, we assumed that culture would carry great intrinsic value, driving creative dynamics in both society and the local economy. The research has yielded consistent evidence of such interdependencies (i.e., reliable validation of public support for culture in its many facets). The results also offer certain keys that may prompt informed reflection by citizens on the present and future of culture and its role within the local territory.

## References

[1] Cultura y territorio (<http://www.culturayterritorio.com>).

