



# *Re-Shifting Centres and Peripheries*

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## *Towards a new sustainability paradigm*

**Civil Society perspectives for MONDIACULT 2022**

Global Open Mic Report, September 2022

Prepared by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)

Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture of Mexico



## MOMENTUM TO RETHINK THE STATUS QUO

Today, halfway through the implementation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we find ourselves in an age of uncertainties and emergencies. Climate change, pandemics, economic upheavals, increased inequities, conflicts, technological leaps – these and other challenges require innovative responses that embrace all sectors of the economy and encompass the whole of our society. For these solutions to emerge and be effective, **we need a diversity of actors, resources and tools that can unleash our collective imagination and consolidate communities in joint endeavours to change the status quo.** Culture and creativity play the role of a visionary connector, as they help us grasp the complex realities we live in and offer tools and spaces to design different, more sustainable ways of living together.

The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 gathers ministers of culture in Mexico, for the first time in 40 years, at a key moment to assess the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda as well as imagine the post-2030 sustainability paradigm. Therefore, this is a timely and unique opportunity for us to take stock of crucial developments and rethink the position of culture within national and international agendas.

Given the vital contribution artists, cultural workers, researchers, organisations, and networks bring to the advancement and promotion of sustainability, it is essential to integrate their perspectives and shared roles in this important debate. Moreover, civil society, as non-State actors, play a critical role in the multistakeholder approach required for the global participatory governance of culture.

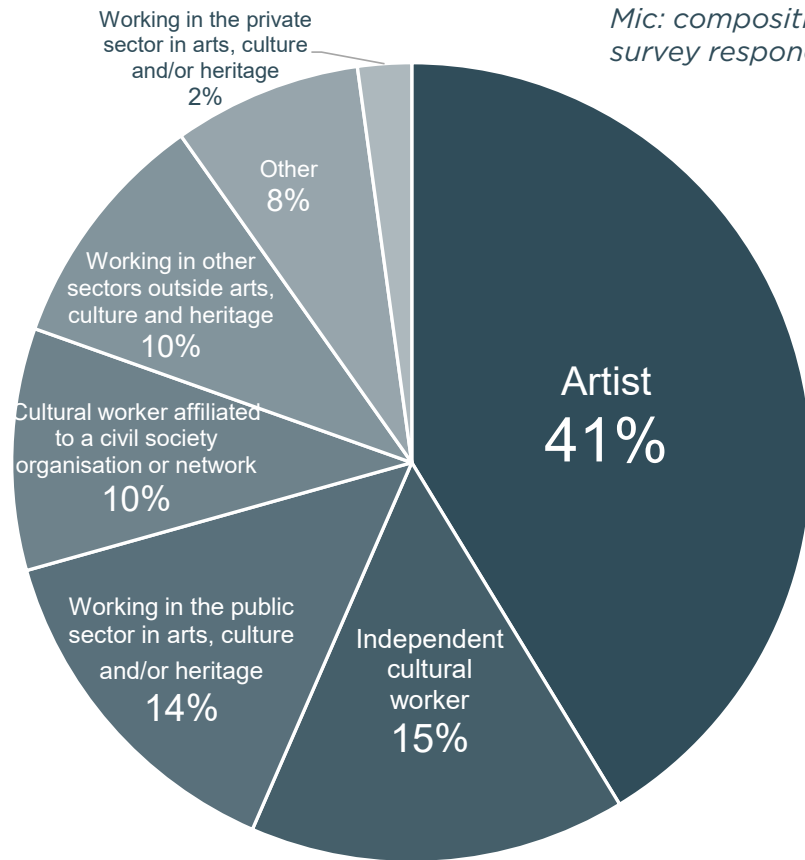
Therefore, in the preparation for MONDIACULT 2022, the Government of Mexico, through its Ministry of Culture, has been

keen to amplify civil society perspectives, insights, and experiences as well as to ensure tangible outcomes from the participation of non-State actors, an effort supported by IFACCA. Towards this end, the Government of Mexico is supporting various fora and processes to ensure the participation of civil society in relevant policy discussions and in offering policy recommendations to MONDIACULT 2022.

The Ministry of Culture of the Government of Mexico (IFACCA National Member) invited IFACCA to partner in designing and delivering the *Share Your Voice for MONDIACULT: Global Virtual Open Mic* civil society consultation process and capture the key outcomes of the same in this report. This civil society consultation has been supported by a cohort of important Mexican partners: the Tijuana Cultural Centre (CECUT), the Universidad Panamericana (Mexico), the Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico) and the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI), all of whom have helped amplify the voice and participation of civil society. Specifically, the IFACCA role – as a trusted stakeholder strongly connected with both State and arms-length institutions – has been to provide oversight, curate the online virtual dialogues, analyse the civil society contributions received and prepare this report, which is to be presented to UNESCO and the official delegates of MONDIACULT 2022 as well as be publicly disseminated.

The Global Virtual Open Mic consultation process began with an online survey for civil society (including from the cultural sector) and the public at large, with a specific focus on youth. The survey invited the **public's views on their most urgent concerns regarding the future and sustainability of arts, culture and heritage, encouraging them to share examples of existing solutions and offer policy recommendations that address these concerns.**

*Public survey for the Global Virtual Open Mic: composition of survey respondents*



More than 170 civil society representatives from 47 countries across the world submitted their written, audio and video contributions through a specially dedicated platform created by the Tijuana Cultural Centre. Around 55 percent of survey respondents were artists and independent cultural workers.

To conclude the consultation process, IFACCA organised two public virtual gatherings, which gave the floor to eight civil society voices from different parts of the world - Tere Badia (Belgium/Spain), Aaluk Edwardson (USA), Khadija El Bennaoui

(Morocco/France), Saba Khalid (Pakistan), Dr. Frances Koya Vaka'uta (Fiji), Patrick Sam (Namibia), Phina So (Cambodia) and Prof. Cesar Villanueva (Mexico). As thought leaders in their fields and communities, these speakers reflected on the analysis of the material gathered through the Global Virtual Open Mic consultation process, highlighting the major factors affecting the sustainability of arts, culture and heritage, as well as sharing their vision for the development of more resilient cultural policies. The public also contributed questions to inform the dialogue with the speakers.

This report draws on key insights from the contributions to the global survey and the knowledge shared during the two virtual discussions.

The central messages conveyed in this report and echoed across the multiplicity of contributions received from civil society is that: **the new sustainability paradigm should not be built within old, dysfunctional frameworks that stem from deeply ingrained colonial legacies, dominant narratives as well as outdated definitions of 'centres' and 'peripheries'**. Culture has a powerful role to play in regenerating the potential of diverse communities and contexts and connecting them at the global level for the benefit of all and the planet. For this to happen, **culture must be integrated in the concept of sustainability, both as an autonomous backbone of sustainability and as a contributor to its many dimensions.**

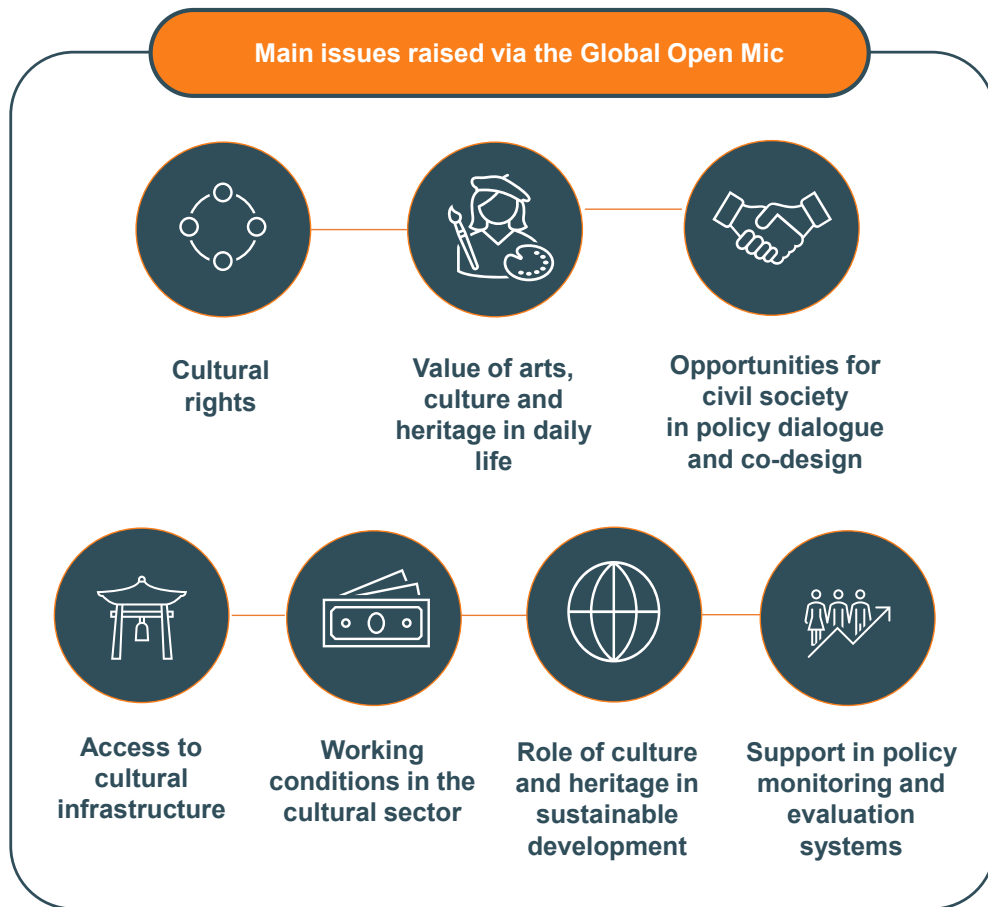
Today, as we take stock of the policies and actions undertaken to meet the 2030 UN Sustainability Agenda and address the gaps and deficits, an open, horizontal and forward-looking dialogue between civil society and policymakers is more vital than ever. MONDIACULT 2022 is an opportunity to rethink intellectual frameworks and bring policymakers and civil society closer to each other in a productive dialogue based on the shared aspiration to build a better world for all.





# SHIFTING POWERS, CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES

Contributors to our Global Virtual Open Mic process voiced that the dominant definitions of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ affect access to resources and visibility, while also sustaining power disparities. **It is important to be mindful of why some places, voices or sectors are considered ‘central’, while others are not, and thus, become marginalised.**



Solutions for rebalancing unfair relationships and addressing recognition gaps lie not only at the level of undoing perceptions and biases attached to the concept of ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’, but also in practical actions aimed at creating equity and a level-playing field. Peripheries can offer unique and viable solutions; hence, it is important to recognise their value and richness, and at the same time, it is essential to work towards overcoming structural inequalities that often leave them marginalised.

## OVERCOMING COLONIAL LEGACIES

Many contributors to the Global Virtual Open Mic process are convinced that before envisaging the post-2030 agenda for sustainable development, **we must scrutinise current power disparities and the ways in which they are embedded in policies, cultural practices, societal mindsets, values and international relations.** In post-colonial realities, there is a consistent undervaluing of local ways of being and doing. Solutions from the Global North continue to dominate global discussions and often serve as passcodes to enter transnational projects and programmes.

Colonial legacies and segregating paradigms deprive people, places, and cultures of the voice and resources they deserve. Such paradigms are unjust and unsustainable; they do not address the true concerns of historically oppressed cultures and communities and disregard their knowledge and potential for sustainable development. Colonial structures tend to remove culture, arts and heritage from local communities or to put them in marginal positions, and subject them to external codes and behaviours.

Rethinking the dominant narratives that define access to resources, decision-making and visibility are crucial to building a more sustainable world. This process **must include**:

### DECOLONISING POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

- placing people and local communities at the heart of regional, national, and local cultural policies; replacing commodification of culture as an asset for developing tourism by policies which perceive culture as a resource of and for local communities and focus on cultivating local participation in the arts
- embedding local experiences, needs and values in designing policy responses to sustainability concerns; unleashing the potential of diverse local communities across the world to offer viable solutions to global challenges and integrating them in international debates when shaping global agendas
- overcoming linguistic boundaries created and perpetuated by colonialism; Indigenous art should be regenerated through reviving Indigenous languages
- basing international relations on the values of plurality and mutual respect:
  - rethinking cross-border collaborations as an ecosystem embracing diverse cultures and nature as a globally shared resource, rather than as a geopolitical construct dividing the world into North, South, West and East
  - validating peoples' rights to benefit from their countries' resources and cultural heritage; this includes the repatriation of cultural heritage assets to where they belong

- creating balanced transnational alliances and collaborations; this should imply reforming visa policies to eliminate heavy restrictions jeopardising South-North collaborations
- improving mobility infrastructure to facilitate physical connections between cultures and people, including within the same country and region

### DECOLONISING PRACTICES AND MINDS

- challenging dominant definitions and perceptions of quality and enriching them with diverse artistic values and aesthetics – propelling artistic expressions and practices of Indigenous peoples, migrant and ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities, and other structurally marginalised groups
- using education as a pathway to shape a more versatile and inclusive vision on culture
- rethinking the ways in which institutions create, programme and curate their content in order to shift cultural codes and embrace underrepresented voices
- supporting and promoting smaller – emerging or traditional – artistic disciplines, cultural practices, and sub-sectors, including in rural and remote areas, alongside popular culture and large institutions based in capital cities. This balance should be reflected in education systems, funding and financial schemes, and programming strategies.





## RECLAIMING RECIPROCIITY BETWEEN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Culture is a vital part of society; it is a source and resource for social resilience and advancement. At the same time, society is the natural habitat for culture and the arts to exist, develop and thrive.

This **reciprocity is fundamental for building vibrant and cohesive communities**. However, mutuality appears to be broken on both sides. On one hand, some social groups are deprived of the possibility to play an active part in cultural life, both as consumers and shapers of culture and the arts. Meaningful investment in people in the form of cultural mediation is rarely a priority of cultural institutions, and audiences are too often perceived merely as ticket-buyers. On the other hand, culture's contribution to various fields of society and other sectors is not always properly and structurally acknowledged. This recognition deficit affects the sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs).

*Seeds and flowers [are] metaphor[s] for culture [as they] emphasis[e] the need to not just take but to put back (plant seeds) in order to regenerate the crop/value.*

Submission by Yumi Watanabe, Japan

Today, **we need forward-looking and inclusive conversations to reinstate the multiple values of culture that are continuous and go far beyond the impact of a cultural product.**

**Embedding culture as a public good** in a wider policy ecosystem and reclaiming its link with the whole of society **requires:**

### PROMOTING ACCESS TO CULTURE FOR ALL

- ensuring everyone's access to participation in the arts through educational programmes and funding schemes, such as 'culture vouchers', grants for projects that promote inclusion, and subsidies tailored for underrepresented communities
- diversifying the cultural workforce by creating equity in pursuing artistic and cultural careers, improving working conditions in the CCSs and democratising access to arts and culture education
- investing in mediation practices that offer a space for dialogue among communities, artists, and institutions, and help build deeper relations with diverse audiences
- harnessing and cultivating co-creation and active participation in the arts, to involve people in shaping and creating culture; and overcome tokenism in inclusion and diversity projects and policies
- involving communities in cultural practices through the channels that are most relevant for them and integral in their life, rather than through top-down formats that block genuine participation and a sense of ownership



## EMBEDDING CULTURE IN KEY POLICY AGENDAS

- designing sustainability frameworks that include culture both as a full-fledged driver of sustainability and as a transversal source and resource for other dimensions and goals of sustainability
- adopting whole-of-government approaches, which mean that culture is transversally integrated as part of the national response to current and future challenges and is given tools and resources to contribute to the development and implementation of joint strategies and plans, along with other ministries and public administration bodies, as well as in all tiers of government
- establishing effective and continuous dialogue between cultural institutions and other public bodies, with a view to undertake joint actions in domains that affect the CCSs
- supporting civil society to build data evidence on culture's impact on society and contribution to the economy as well as creating awareness across policy portfolios about the specificity of the culture value chain. Policymakers across various portfolios should better understand the elements that make a vibrant creative economy. At the same time, this awareness must be reciprocal: the capacity of artists and cultural professionals to understand policies and decision-making modalities must also be strengthened
- generating resources from other sectors and industries to invest in the CCSs.



*The arts are a sleeping giant—that can be awakened to address the most pressing social concerns. This potential goes far beyond making powerful artworks about the climate crisis and disaffected youth and more. Teaching artists/participatory artists/community artists can activate the artistry of all people and that is one of the greatest forces for positive change on earth. Social practice artists are almost invisible in the public eye and in funders' attention, but they are the future.*

Submission by Eric Booth, USA



# ACHIEVING SYSTEMIC AND SUSTAINED TRANSFORMATION

Positive, systemic, and sustained transformation can be achieved when the status quo is challenged, and the approach is enhanced by concrete change – namely, actionable measures that introduce and institutionalise new models and processes. Moreover, these **measures must imagine and place culture in a long-term and sustainable manner that values human, economic, social, and natural resources.**

*Cultural practices have been separated from the education curricul[a] over a long period of time, it's a systematic error that needs to be reversed... Th[e] art [of percussion] will die if a radical education program is not put in place.*

Submission by Mutuma Kinoti, Kenya

## BUILDING TANGIBLE SPACES

Building a new paradigm of sustainability is impossible without having enough room for reflection, learning and developing alternative practices and models. Many participants in our consultation pointed out that there is a deficit of frameworks in which the existence of a sector, organisation or an artist does not have to be justified solely by outputs, products and immediate appreciation. The social value of art can sometimes manifest in a long-term perspective as it depends on the variety of stakeholders and changing realities, and this lack of instant validation should not discourage artists from creating. Artists

and cultural workers do not have enough ‘**space to breathe**’ – namely, to access support, time, agency and infrastructure to innovate, experiment, fail, build long-term relationships with communities and other sectors, practice new models, and imagine the future together with the whole of society.

## OVERCOMING COLONIAL LEGACIES

More concretely, **tangible spaces that the CCSs need are:**

- education, capacity-building and training programmes for artists and cultural workers, including programmes developing mediation and innovation skills, as well as competences to work across sectors
- legislative systems supporting working conditions in the CCSs such as tax exemptions and copyright legislation
- events and platforms for enhancing visibility
- organisations, structures, and assessment and governance models that give agency to underrepresented voices
- sustainable and context-relevant channels for dialogue with civil society
- cultural infrastructure accessible to all and resilient against environmental changes
- funding and investment for a diverse range of activities: not only production, but also research, innovation, experimentation, mediation, and other activities which are not directly oriented to producing tangible outputs, and
- platforms for networking, collaboration, peer-learning and collective reflection.



## INSPIRING SUSTAINABLE THINKING

Rethinking socio-economic paradigms in an age of emergencies and fast-paced changes is a substantial yet achievable challenge. **For new models to become a reality and have long-term impact, it is essential to inspire and apply sustainable thinking in all dimensions, policies, and actions.** Civil society representatives that contributed to our survey and online discussions advocate shaping long-term strategies, building and caring for continuous connections, and investing in the meaningful potential of communities. While regenerating values and being attentive to the pulse of contemporaneity, we need to invest our resources in sustainable actions and relationships that can bring long-term impact.

*Financial security is a must for the resilience of the cultural sector in the Global South. [...] We need to support the creation of local, country-based shields – both financial and social system shields. Building capacities for resource mobilisation and financial strategy development within Ministries in charge of arts and culture as well as other relevant ministries, is a priority to help policies move from a ‘spending a budget’ approach to investing in resources to help the sector flourish.*

Submission by Ouafa Belgacem, Tunisia

More concretely **meaningful continuity is about:**

- giving space and agency to displaced artists to pursue their careers, artistic processes, and practices, in line with their values, visions and aesthetics
- sustainable frameworks for artists’ working conditions, including fair remuneration standards, status of the artist laws, basic income schemes and legal protection for intermittent workers
- consistent, long-term, and forward-looking policies and investment schemes that allow artists, cultural workers, and organisations to pursue coherent multi-annual strategies and holistic visions
- continuous development of data capital by supporting the elaboration and standardisation of indicator and measurement systems
- annual awards and competitions with inclusive and transparent assessment processes that recognise the diversity of the cultural ecosystem, and
- support to cultural and artistic practices that cultivate deep and continuous relationships with audiences, especially young people and children.





## CONCLUSION

The material collected through the Global Virtual Open Mic process reflects a great diversity of perspectives, definitions and priorities. Speakers at our two virtual gatherings also highlighted that realities differ greatly, and that all concerns and solutions that were put forward must be contextualised. At the same time, all contributions, to some extent, convey the urgency to:

- shift powers
- decolonise cultural policies and practices
- redefine the notions of ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’
- reclaim a prominent place for culture within a wider policy ecosystem.

The new, post-colonial paradigm must be inspired by sustainable thinking at each level, to ensure meaningful continuity of practices and policies that are designed for the benefit of all. For the post-2030 sustainability agenda to be viable, tangible spaces – namely, time, infrastructure, legal frameworks, recognition – must be offered to the cultural and creative sectors and all those engaged in art and culture so that they can be courageous and explore their potential to the fullest.

*The pandemic has exposed the ways in which most countries do not value artists and creative workers as being essential to culture – or rather, that culture itself is not valued as being essential to social and economic prosperity. MONDIACULT has the opportunity to assert valuable new propositions for all nations to take to their legislatures, ensuring that the people who create our culture are protected by law and invested in with great ambition.*

Submission by Esther Anatolitis, Australia

*Sustainability and resilience must include cultural and biological diversity integrated into art to encourage creative processes but in support of education and knowledge. It is essential at global, regional and local levels to accompany art and culture with fair, dignified and equitable socio-environmental and economic public policies, as well as policies for research from a biocultural, participatory and applied perspective and from the territories.*

Submission by Noé Jiménez Lang, Mexico

## PARTNERS

The Share Your Voice for MONDIACULT: Global Virtual Open Mic civil society consultation process was hosted and co-convened by the **Ministry of Culture of the Government of Mexico**. The Ministry of Culture was created by a presidential decree in December 2015. It is the institution responsible for the promotion and dissemination of the artistic and cultural expressions of Mexico as well as the projection of the country's cultural presence abroad. It promotes education, artistic and cultural research, provides cultural infrastructure and works in favour of the protection and promotion of heritage and cultural diversity. In addition, it supports artistic creation and the development of the creative industries. More information: [www.cultura.gob.mx](http://www.cultura.gob.mx)

The Share Your Voice for MONDIACULT: Global Virtual Open Mic civil society consultation process was designed and co-convened by the **International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)**. IFACCA is the global network of arts councils and ministries of culture, with member organisations in over 70 countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. Our shared vision is a world in which arts and culture thrive and are recognised by governments and peoples for their manifold contribution to society. The Federation represents plural voices and perspectives, unified in the belief that arts and culture are a public good – with the potential to further inclusive social transformation – to be shaped and accessed equitably by all peoples. More information: [www.ifacca.org](http://www.ifacca.org)

The Share Your Voice for MONDIACULT: Global Virtual Open Mic civil society consultation platform was developed by the **Tijuana Cultural Centre (CECUT)**, Mexico. The Tijuana Cultural Centre is a cultural centre and an organisation of the Ministry of Culture, Government of Mexico. Since its establishment in 1982, it has undertaken to meet the artistic and cultural needs of the population through services in different art forms and themes of contemporary culture. More information: [www.cecun.gob.mx](http://www.cecun.gob.mx)



The Share Your Voice for MONDIACULT: Global Virtual Open Mic civil society consultation process was also supported by:

The **North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI)**, a multidisciplinary partnership that brings together academics, policy makers and practitioners from North America and beyond. Its goal is to establish cultural diplomacy as a critical practice: by questioning and promoting cultural diplomacy, it aims to raise its profile as a valuable tool for advancing international and intercultural relations, that is, to measure and mobilise it to inform public policy development and implementation. More information: [www.culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com](http://www.culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com)

**Universidad Panamericana (UP)** is one of the best universities in Mexico, recognised for being a person-centered educational institution. For this reason, it has a wellness ecosystem through which it provides attention to the main needs of students: emotional support, integral development and university life. More information: [www.up.edu.mx](http://www.up.edu.mx)

**Universidad Iberoamericana** is recognised in Mexico and abroad as one of the most important private higher education institutions in the country. Universidad Iberoamericana offers a wide range of academic programmes, designed to meet the demands of human and professional training demanded by our students and society. More information: [www.ibero.mx](http://www.ibero.mx)

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**GOBIERNO DE  
MÉXICO**

**CULTURA**

SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

*‘Culture is made by artists and audiences. [We need to c]reate more instances to find each other, see each other’s faces and put ourselves in the place of the other. The peripheries need to be accepted as a new normality; culture is a tool with which these equivalences can be achieved.’*

Submission by Roberto Rosique, Mexico

