UNESCO Creative Cities Network Gastronomy Group, summarizing COVID-19 Actions February – June 2020

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network UCCN), composed of 246 cities from over 90 countries, gather cities that have recognized culture and creativity as a driving force for sustainable development in seven creative fields, Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Literature, Media Arts, Music and Gastronomy. The UCCN Gastronomy Group (COG) have currently 36 members globally working to improve our cities, regions and nations in a sustainable way within the 2030 Agenda.

This report aims to summarize the actions of the UCCN COG after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020, to be used as inspiration and a foundation for cooperation in different themes and actions of UCCN members and external organisations.

Dag Hartman 2020, Focal Point of Östersund UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

Innehållsförteckning

1. Summary

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), is composed of 246 cities from over 90 countries. The UCCN Gastronomy Group (COG) have currently 36 members from 22 countries globally working to improve our cities within the 2030 Agenda. This report aims to summarize the actions of the UCCN COG after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020, to be used as inspiration and a foundation for cooperation in different themes and actions of UCCN members and external organisations. In an attempt to structure to showcase the actions, they have been divides in to five main themes applying to all sectors of society, Monitoring and regulations, Medical and health, Communication, Economy and business, Social support. The COVID-10 pandemic is global, we all have the same challenges in our cities and our responses of actions are quite similar, despite our different cultures, logistics and traditions. It is therefore meaningful to share information and work together to find a way out of the consequences of the pandemic. The recommendations made in the report are that we continue with digital meetings to share our experiences of COVID-19 actions organized by our COG coordinator, continue sharing document of our best actions how we handle the challenges of COVID-19 to have an overview of the actions and to communicate to external stakeholders and focus on the themes that are most vital for our group, Communication, Economy and business and Social support. A final recommendation is to keep an eye at the horizon, no matter the present difficulties, sooner or later we will be out of the pandemic to face new challenges. What will the post-corona society look like, will it be back to normal, or do we have a new normal to face?

2. Preface

The COG works with exchange of ideas, inspirations and project cooperation in different partnerships. The core value of the COG is cooperation in international partnerships, a mission that is supported by the UCCN secretariat, and follows the strategic guidelines of the UCCN Mission Statement,[1] and the COG guidelines.[2] The cooperation projects are compiled in a 6-month work plan shared with UNESCO and followed up in the yearly annual meeting of the Network, as well as in the regular reporting mechanism, the four years "Membership Monitoring Report" (MMR).

After the global spread of the COVID-19 beginning early 2020 the normal activities in the COG members cities were mostly suspended and measures taken to fight the consequences of the pandemic. The immediate responses were medical to take care of infected persons, establishing new routines of social distancing and to ease the economic impact of the business sector mainly for food and restaurants.

The change of policies and actions in the members cities the UCCN COG Action Plan is for the next year is converted to a UCCN COG COVID-19 Activities Plan, to be used as a knowledge base and a platform for cooperation for UCCN COG members and external stakeholders and organisations. Östersund Focal Point has been appointed by the UCCN COG Coordinator to compile the COVID-19 information from UCCN COG members to work in a dialogue with COG members Thereby, it seeks to share good city practices and understand lessons learnt for better preparedness for future emergencies.

3. Background

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was founded in 2004 to support global sustainable city development[3]. The UCCN works within the strategic framework of UNESCO[4] and UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.[5] UCCN is divided into 7 sub-networks corresponding to the 7 creative fields, *Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Literature, Media Arts, Music and Gastronomy,* provide a platform for cities within a creative area to exchange knowledge and experience.

Since 31st October 2019, UNESCO Creative Cities Network is part of the UCP-UNESCO Cities Platform with eight global city networks, (UNESCO Global Cities of Learning Cities, Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, World Heritage Programme, Media and Information Literacy Cities, UNESCO-Netexplo Observatory Cooperation on Smart Cities and UNESCO Creative Cities Network).[6]

The UCCN Gastronomy Group (COG) consists of 36 members in 22 countries cooperating based on the 12 themes in the COG Memorandum of Agreement agreed on in the UCCN Annual Meeting in Enghien-les-Baines in France 2017. The countries and member cities in the UCCN Gastronomy group are 2020 as follows: Australia (Bendigo), Bolivia (Cochabamba), Brazil (Belém, Belo Horizonte, Florianopolis, Paraty), China (Chengdu, Macao, Shunde, Yangzhou), Colombia (Buenaventura,

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[1] UCCN Mission Statement, UNESCO 2014, http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/sites/creative-cities/files/Mission_Statement_UNESCO_Creative_Cities_Network.pdf

[2] UCCN COG Memorandum of Agreement, 2017, working paper

[3] UNESCO Creative Cities Network, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home

[4] UCCN New Strategic Framework, 2017, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home

[5] UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN 2015, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/

[6] https://en.unesco.org/unesco-for-sustainable-cities

Popayan), Ecuador (Portoviejo), India (Hyderabad), Iran (Rasht), Italy (Alba, Bergamo, Parma), Japan (Tsusruoka), Lebanon (Zahlé), Mexico (Ensenada, Mérida), Norway (Bergen), Panama (Panama City), Peru, (Arequipa), South Africa (Overstrand Hermanus), South Chorea (Jeonju), Spain (Burgos, Dénia), Sweden (Östersund), Thailand (Phuket), Turkey, (Afyonkarahisar, Hatay, Gaziantep) USA (San Antonio, Tucson).

The COVID-19 actions taken by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is led from the global level by UNESCO connecting experts and policy makers. The 25th June an online global meeting for the UNESCO Cities Platform "Urban Solutions: Learning from cities responses to COVID-19" concluded[7]:

"During the acute phase of the emergency, cities led the way in implementing national or regional regulations and guidelines at the local level. Whereas the acute phase—often in the form of a lockdown—focused on the cities' inhabitants, deconfinement also reignited a cities' central role within a broader region, drawing workers and commuters, but also students, shoppers, visitors and tourists for example."

"More than 4 months after the global outbreak of the pandemic, many cities around the world have started easing measures and working towards early recovery. Cities are often in the lead for translating deconfinement rules into practical measures adapted to local needs. By doing so, they also start moving towards new adaptive measures to resume their activities, that often admits restrictions. Guiding these actions is usually a need for returning to normal, giving inhabitants' perspective, allowing people to safely meet and come together."

"As cities manage their immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and are looking ahead to plan and resource long-term recovery efforts, there is an opportunity to transform cities in meaningful ways that not only protect vulnerable people from immediate threats but also build resilience for the looming climate crisis and other emergencies how cities can rethink their urban policies to strengthen their risk preparedness and response capacity, and become more resilient by making cities smarter, greener, more inclusive and resilient."

4. UCCN COG COVID-19 Actions

The UCCN COG represents 36 member cities in 22 countries on all global continents with different cultures, political systems and public and private organisations. The measures towards the global COVID-19 pandemic is remarkably similar in policies and actions. This common ground could be a platform for inspiration and cooperation. There is a variety of actions taking place reflecting the different stages of the pandemic, the acute phase, the opening up phase and the post-corona phase.

In an attempt to showcase and structure the actions, they have been divides in to five main themes. The actions apply to all sectors of society and has been divided into the following headlines, Monitoring/regulations, Medical and health, Communication, Economy and business, Social support. The different actions could be aligned to the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cF66viJ4Mok

Monitoring and regulations

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, UCCN COG members have taken action to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus in a way that reflects internal laws, logistics and traditions. All members have introduced lockdowns in the early phases of infection to limit exposures introducing social distancing. Some members have enforced curfew while others rely more on recommendations with the same purpose, to restrict social interaction and spread of COVID-19 infection.

The restrictions of movement and control of social distancing in the member cities are usually implemented by national and local authorities and closely followed by specially formed local advisory teams led by the political authorities. The regulations are constantly updated and changing depending on the immediate situations because of the ongoing damaging impact in the society economically and socially. Some members are using extensive information sharing through app in mobile phones, which due to different regulations is not possible in all countries.

Medical and health

All members react to the pandemia taking care of infected people in their health care systems depending on logistics, resources, availability and other factors in the local area. The unpredictability and general lack of knowledge of COVID-19 affects the efficiency of the ability of health care systems to take care of COVID-19 patients.

Sanitizing public areas is something that is done by all members, but differently with examples of schedules sanitizing streets, public institutions and. Wearing facemask in the public and personal sanitizing washing hands is on everyone's agenda in different protocols.

Members in their public and private organisations are supportive of their health care organisations in many ways, producing medical equipment to the hospitals, acting as volunteers in testing programs, supporting medical workers with free meals.

Communication

Communication on different levels plays an important role in the work of the pandemic.

Authorities communication of COVID-19 facts based on infected and tested people, deaths, hospitalized are usually part of a health care or governmental organisations. Up to date regulations based on current status, possibilities for businesses of support, open phone lines for affected persons regarding social problems like domestic violence.

Different media channels are used for networks of food logistics where food producers and restaurants together with local private and public organisations are part.

A huge development in all member cities is the very quick transfer of physical interaction between people to digital platforms, education, work meetings, sharing of information. There is still a lot of learning how to use digital platforms, technology is there but content and management has to be developed.

Economy/business

During the pandemic and the following lockdowns and social isolation regulations, economy is suffering. Travelling industry and tourism is down to a fraction of earlier business volumes, members has undertaken a number of actions to keep the business sectors viable.

Members work closely with business to support them during the crisis, most affected are food and tourism sectors together with the cultural sectors. Economic measures, postponed taxation, soft loans

and direct monetary support. Other measures can include consultancy and legal support to help business coping with logistic difficulties.

Stimulus of economy can also be given to consumers in different forms, one example is citizens consumer cheques aimed for shopping in affected business sectors.

Many businesses are facing bankruptcy causing possible unemployment. Some members experience that the national and regional government are upholding employment by paying the salary of persons facing unemployment, some members are working with matching programs, since some business sectors needs to hire more people.

Businesses in the tourism sector are opening up for digital visitors, digital tours are arranged in museums and galleries, something that is also for benefit for persons experience social isolation in the pandemic.

COG members have many food and culture festivals and arrangements which have been cancelled in the pandemic and therefor are transferred to digital media, many experiments are going on in different digital platforms.

Online catering services is being developed, restaurants not able to be open for the public have switched to home delivery and delivery to hospitals, schools and elderly care homes, often with the help of the regional and city governments.

In the food chain logistics from producers to consumers, many members experience a lack of food being delivered to consumer, the usual logistics are broken. Both private and public initiatives are in place to match the demand of consumers with producers in different markets, both physical and digital. There is a new awareness that food is no longer taken for granted and is actually more than a part of tourism packages.

Social support
The longer the pandemia is going on the more members feel the pressure on the social sector, social distancing and failing logistics are affecting vulnerable groups, the poor, women and children. Keeping the vulnerable groups safe and secure during the pandemia is a n important focus area.

Closing of schools forces education to go online where there are all sorts of challenges. Motivating students needs attentive teachers and digital platforms with good content. It also puts focus on inequality, not all households have access to computers and internet, and also it can be tensions if there are many students in a family and only one computer.

Social distancing and self-isolation mean that there can be increased tensions in non-functional families with increased domestic violence and abuse and there has to be support systems in place to detect abuse and support families in this situation.

Vulnerable groups are the first that suffers from a crisis, the ability to feed themselves can be suffering. Food delivery and public kitchens are activities many members are involved in, there are many examples of cooperation between governments, restaurants and NGOs.

Public health is another issue for members, not all families now finding themselves in social isolation are able to cook healthy food for their families, different educational programs are in place, some of them include online teaching from famous chefs how to cook cheap and healthy food.

In a crisis people are willing to help each other in different ways and in many members cities volunteers are working with different activities of community awareness under leadership of public and private organisations.

5. Conclusions

The COVID-10 pandemic is global, we all have the same challenges in our cities and our responses of actions are quite similar, despite our different cultures, logistics and traditions. It is therefore meaningful to share information and work together to find a way out of the consequences of the pandemic.

The COG is a group of mainly operative organisations that take actions to meet challenges in our cities and regions, documenting and sharing good practices in relevant themes could help our members and also other stakeholders and organisations outside the COG.

To be effective in supporting each other in the different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, we should together structure our work in themes and working groups to maximize the benefit of our joint work, we have experiences in our group we should put to work for the common good.

6. Recommendations

Continue with digital meetings to share our experiences of COVID-19 actions organized by our COG coordinator which has worked very well so far. It is important to make us function as a group and to understand and learn from other members.

Document our best actions how we handle the challenges of COVID-19. Share experiences to all members in the group as before and continue to send activities in the enclosed Excel-form. This will make it easier to have an overview of the actions and to communicate to external stakeholders.

Focus on the themes that are most vital for our group. Regulations and monitoring and medical actions are mostly outside of our mandate of actions in the COG, recommendations are that we focus on the themes: communication, business and social inclusions specified as below which corresponds to our global agenda and internal guidelines (SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities and 17 – Partnership for the Goals apply for all recommendations):

1. Food logistics, sustainable supply of healthy food through different supply chains to consumers, Responsible consumption and production of food – logistics, health, biodiversity, life on land and in water (SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing, 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production, 13 – Climate Action, 14 – Life Below Water, 15 . Life on Land)
2. Economy and business, supporting the food and culture sectors rebuilding the economy with actions to promote the food and culture sectors (SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, 9 – Industry Innovation and Infrastructure)
3. Social support, actions to support vulnerable groups dealing with unemployment and poverty, effects of social distancing like domestic violence, children and education (SDG 1 - No Poverty, 4 – Quality Education, 5 – Gender Equality, 10 Reduced Inequalities, 16 – Peace Justice and Strong Institutions)

A final recommendation is that we try to keep an eye at the horizon, no matter the present difficulties, sooner or later we will be out of the pandemic to face new challenges. What will the post-corona society look like, will it be back to normal, or do we have a new normal to face?

7. Appendix

- COG COVID-19 Action Plan Jan-June 2020