



CITY OF REYKJAVÍK CULTURE POLICY

2009–2012



Reykjavíkurborg



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Cover: 'Strange Fruit' performing at Reykjavík Cultural Festival 2009.
Photo by Guðfinna Magnúsdóttir.

VISION

Reykjavík is to grow as Iceland's cultural capital. The city's self-image is to be based upon the cultural heritage, creative thinking and initiative.

Cultural life is to be characterised by diversity, and active participation by residents and visitors.



A RESOURCE FOR THE FUTURE

OBJECTIVES

Reykjavík is to play a leading cultural role as capital of Iceland, and nurture its cultural self-image. Culture is to be recognised as an important factor in the city's economic life.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The culture and arts of the city contain a potential for development and a resource which will be the basis for future growth. Cultural life in Reykjavík springs from the initiative and creativity of residents and visitors, and is powered by a multitude of individuals, organisations and bodies of various kinds, which make their own contributions. The cultural life of the city is diverse, and a key factor is to nurture that diversity, as it lies at the core of the city's cultural self-image.

Reykjavík plays a leadership role as capital of Iceland. Hence it is important for Reykjavík to establish its unique place as an energetic and creative city which attracts talent, values training, experience and expertise in the arts, and is characterised by a vibrant, exciting environment.

Emphasis must be placed upon the direct and indirect contribution of culture, arts and other creative activities to the economy. It is also important to nurture the relationship between the city and the regions in the cultural field, and thus to promote flourishing, diverse cultural life throughout the country.

A vibrant cultural scene enhances the quality of life of city-dwellers, and is conducive to social and economic wellbeing.

APPROACHES

- Cultural collaboration with artists' organisations, public bodies, other local authorities, and business.
- The City authorities are to provide assistance to creative economic sectors by bringing together artistic creativity, business and production.
- Research into the economic effects of artistic activities.

METHODS

- The city is to nurture its cultural self-image, based upon the drive of individuals and cultural bodies, thriving grassroots, energetic voluntary organisations, and collaboration among them.
- The city is to seek to attract talented people in the field of the arts, and provide spaces and conditions to enhance the fertility of culture and human resources in the city.
- The city is to provide scope for unexpected development and energetic growth in the field of culture and the arts.
- The city is to promote initiative by stimulating creative work of all kinds.



CHILDREN AND CULTURAL EDUCATION

OBJECTIVES

Children and their families are to be active participants in cultural life, and children's contribution to culture is to be justly valued. Culture and arts are to be vital aspects of education and teaching of children at all educational levels.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A modern society requires flexibility and open-mindedness in order to respond to ever-changing conditions. Energetic and systematic education in culture and arts is the premise for the development of a society of creative individuals. It reinforces consciousness of the cultural heritage, and promotes creative and original thinking.

Collaboration between cultural bodies and schools in the city is a valuable way to strengthen the individual for active participation in culture at all stages of life. The same is true of general teaching in the field of culture and arts in the schools system, and art training for children in specialised schools, where specialist teachers and professional artists share their knowledge and experience. Arts training for children helps them to utilise and develop their talents in all contexts.

In the work of cultural bodies under the aegis of City authorities, and planning of festivals by the Culture and Tourism Division and collaborative partners, emphasis is to be placed upon families spending time together, and participation by children and youngsters. It is important to be constantly alert to new ways of reaching children, youngsters, and their families, in collaboration with other divisions of the City administration.

APPROACHES

- Educational role of cultural bodies, and cultural participation by children in collaboration with other divisions of the City administration.
- Emphasis in educational activity on cultural literacy¹, aesthetic appreciation and art history.
- Artists to be involved in arts education of children.
- Systematic imparting of information on culture to children and youngsters.
- Youth culture to be visible in the city's cultural landscape.

METHODS

- Support from the City's specialist committees for artistic groups, individual artists, and bodies in the field of arts promotions to be linked to arts education of children.

¹ According to the National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools (age 6-16), cultural literacy may be defined as the ability to enjoy culture and the will to process certain parts of it in a creative, ethical manner.



CITY OF REYKJAVÍK CULTURAL BODIES

OBJECTIVES

The cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration are to play their many-sided role to a high standard, and are to be an important aspect of the lives of inhabitants and visitors in the city.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The formal cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration are the Reykjavík City Library, the Reykjavík Art Museum, the Reykjavík Museum of Photography, the Gerðuberg Culture Centre, Reykjavík Museum, Visit Reykjavík (also responsible for tourism), and in addition Viðey island². The bodies under the aegis of the Culture and Tourism Division form a strong unit, collaborating closely together and performing diverse functions, each in its own field. Most are defined as museums, and are thus subject to legislation, regulations, resolutions and codes of ethics. ICOM (the International Council of Museums) defines a museum as “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

According to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) public library manifesto, a public library is “the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.” In addition to museums and libraries, the role of the Culture and Tourism Division is wide-ranging, especially with respect to events in the city.

The City administration collaborates closely with many other cultural bodies

² Viðey island, though not formally classified as a cultural body, is managed by the Culture and Tourism Division through a project manager.

located in the city, such as the Reykjavík Theatre Company at the Reykjavík City Theatre, the Korpúlsstaðir Visual Arts Centre and the Tjarnarbíó theatre; the City of Reykjavík is the principal sponsor of these bodies. Other bodies include the Reykjavík Arts Festival, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and the Reykjavík Maritime Museum (Víkin). The city also has shorter-term collaborative agreements with many other bodies, and in addition it contributes to the cost of facilities for various cultural activities.

Cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration should be part of the daily life of residents and visitors. Cultural experience is thus not a one-off event, but an all-round experience: the company, the journey, the learning, the discussion afterwards: experiencing something which stimulates the imagination and takes people beyond the boundaries of the everyday.

APPROACHES

- Systematic promotion of the activities of cultural bodies to city-dwellers and visitors.
- The activity of cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration is to extend beyond their walls and appeal to all age groups.
- Cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration are to promote conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage.
- Collaboration between cultural bodies and other bodies, organisations, educational bodies and business, in Iceland and abroad.

METHODS

- Cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration are to perform diverse, systematic professional work in the fields of service, presentation, research, collection and conservation.
- Cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration are to achieve enhanced collaboration and coordination among them.
- Consultation with city-dwellers, by means of regular surveys of their views and wishes.



ARTS

OBJECTIVES

Arts in the city are to be characterised by energy and high standards, and are to have the opportunity to flourish on their own terms. Facilities and spaces are to be provided for vibrant arts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The basis of innovation and vibrant arts is the broadest possible participation in cultural life.

In order for art to serve its social purpose as a source of new and original ideas, it must have the freedom to develop on its own terms. Art should not only be a source of pleasure; its role is also to disrupt, to surprise, and to point out what we might otherwise not notice, or even not wish to see.

In order for arts in the city to flourish, suitable workspaces and exhibition venues must be available at reasonable rates for artists, both young and older.

It is important that the City authorities' grants to the arts should take account of the constantly-changing boundaries between art forms and different cultural spheres. In addition to supporting projects which have proved themselves and are established, the City must also nurture grassroot and experimental work, which may have great potential for the future.

APPROACHES

- Diverse facilities for artistic creation, performance, exhibitions and other cultural activities.
- Collaboration with artists, cultural bodies and organisations.
- Support for artists at all stages of their career.
- Support for both new and established art forms.

METHODS

- Service agreements and grants for arts groups, festivals, individual artists and arts bodies to reflect the diversity of cultural life.
- Arts bodies under the aegis of the City administration are to uphold arts events of a high standard.



SOLIDARITY AND EQUALITY

OBJECTIVES

Cultural activities in the city are to be accessible to all, and characterised by diversity, liberality and respect. Cultural life is to attract people to the city, encourage broad participation, and conduce to positive social development.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The City of Reykjavík is guided by equality between citizens and by human rights in all its work, as stated in its Human Rights Policy. Cultural activities in the city are to be open to all, so that each individual is conscious of his/her share in cultural life, and can participate on his/her own terms. Cultural activities under the aegis of the City authorities should stimulate creative thinking, and encourage active participation.

Culture, arts and history can be conducive to a sense of solidarity, and a constructive curiosity about the life and culture of others. It is important to be on the alert for opportunities of this nature, and to make use of them in the interests of the community, which is based upon reciprocal understanding, respect and equality. A key factor here is collaboration, i.e. that people from different cultures, art forms and generations should be encouraged to come together, share their experiences, and provide insight into each others' lives.

APPROACHES

- Enhanced access to cultural bodies under the aegis of the City administration and other cultural activities.
- Reliable provision of promotional material in foreign languages.
- People of different generations and cultures come together and share their experience and knowledge.
- City-dwellers and visitors encouraged to participate in cultural activities, regardless of physical and mental abilities.

METHODS

- The City of Reykjavík Human Rights Policy is to be honoured in all the City administration's cultural activities.
- Diversity in cultural life is to be acknowledged and supported.



ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORY

OBJECTIVES

In the ambiance of the city, the historical and cultural heritage is to be upheld, and a people-friendly environment is to be the aim. Culture, arts and history are to play an important role in the development of the city's ambiance.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

In Reykjavík, culture, arts and history are key to the development of a living image of the city and enhanced living conditions. Awareness of the city's history can deepen the understanding of all of us: of the environment, where we come from and who we are. City authorities are committed to seeking to protect and conserve the cultural heritage³. In accord with the City of Reykjavík Environment Policy, the ambiance and image of Reykjavík are to reflect the creative thinking of the city's people, and human life and the environment are to be paramount.

Work is in progress to establish a fund, comparable to the national Public Art Works Fund, whose role will be to provide art works for public buildings and their surroundings, thus promoting artistic creativity. The Culture and Tourism Committee is also to formulate a policy on works of art in public spaces, in collaboration with the Planning Committee.

By the same token, the potential of public parks and other open spaces in the city should be better utilised to encourage communal activities and promote social bonding. Transport too plays a major role in the city's vibrant cultural activity, not least in facilitating access to the city's many districts and their cultural events. Every district has its own potential for cultural activities, outdoor life and leisure activities. The people of the city will benefit from the highlighting of the potential and advantages of individual districts.

³ Consequent on Iceland's ratification of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO, 1972).

APPROACHES

- Conservation of heritage sites in the city.
- Systematic presentation of city history through information signs and other educational activities.
- Facilities for cultural events in open spaces, squares and parks.
- Artists to be involved in creating structures for the City authorities.
- Emphasis on the downtown area as the heart of Reykjavík in a cultural-historic context.
- Emphasis on cultural character of individual districts.

METHODS

- City of Reykjavík Environment Policy to be upheld in all cultural activities under the aegis of City authorities.



INTERNATIONAL CITY OF CULTURE

OBJECTIVES

The Culture and Tourism Division is to uphold the city's status as a meeting-place of different trends and influences. Cultural life is to be characterised by the atmosphere of a cosmopolitan city, along with cultural uniqueness.

Brief description

In Reykjavík the oldest relics of habitation in Iceland are conserved. The city also has unique opportunities to grow and evolve. It is young, energetic, with an admirable uniqueness. The city's special features and its self-image are fundamental factors in Reykjavík's image as an international city of culture. The city has already established itself as a vibrant centre for music, and other art forms are constantly developing.

The Culture and Tourism Division seeks to promote Icelandic culture abroad through various individual projects such as cultural festivals, grants and collaborative agreements, working with various bodies in Iceland and abroad. Emphasis is also placed upon culture in connection with tourism in Iceland, in accord with the City's Tourism Policy: promotion of the Reykjavík cultural scene is carried out via the Visit Reykjavík tourist services, and marketing of the City of Reykjavík.

Many more cultural and arts festivals are held than in the past: these offer new opportunities for international collaboration, and also attract visitors from abroad. Participation in such festivals by artists from abroad also provides a boost to arts in the city.

APPROACHES

- Promotion of Reykjavík, its cultural scene and artists, in collaboration with cultural bodies, organisations, businesses and individuals, in Iceland and abroad.
- Collaboration of bodies under the aegis of the Culture and Tourism Division in promoting and marketing Reykjavík as a city of culture.
- Collaboration between Icelandic and foreign artists.
- Systematic collaboration with bodies in other countries in the cultural field.
- More emphasis on international cultural festivals in Reykjavík.

METHODS

- In allocation of grants and preparation of service agreements, possibilities for promoting international connections to be borne in mind.



ROLE OF CULTURE IN CITY OF REYKJAVÍK ADMINISTRATION

OBJECTIVES

The importance of culture in the City administration is to be undisputed. Organisation of cultural matters is to be clear, and management systematic.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Culture and arts are by their nature living, vibrant phenomena, and it is important that organisation of culture should reflect this.

The Culture and Tourism Division is part of a whole. Culture policy must thus take account of many factors, such as other policy formation in the City administration, by the national government, and in the international arena. It is important to uphold the importance of cultural life in all areas of City administration. Thus the Culture Policy must be taken into account in other policymaking in the City administration.

Effective administration and financial management by City authorities are paramount. In carrying out cultural projects, consideration must be given to legislation, regulations, policy formation and resolutions. Rules of procedure for the Division have been drawn up on this basis, with the needs of diverse cultural life in mind.

APPROACHES

- Collaboration between specialised divisions of the City administration on cultural projects.
- Systematic collaboration and consultation between the City administration and national government on cultural matters.
- Greater collaboration with other cultural bodies, businesses, individuals and organisations in the cultural field.

METHODS

- The role of culture in the City administration is to be safeguarded.
- Clear allocation of powers and responsibilities in cultural matters in the City administration.
- Policy formation on cultural matters for the City administration to be handled by the Culture and Tourism Committee.
- The work of the Culture and Tourism Division is to be characterised by transparent organisation and rules of procedure.
- The Culture and Tourism Division is to formulate clear objectives and realistic plans which will ensure good utilisation of financial resources and regular monitoring.

