



Annual Report

2023

WORLD
CITIES
CULTURE
FORUM

ABU DHABI	CHENGDU	HONG KONG	MILAN	SÃO PAULO	VANCOUVER
AMSTERDAM	CHICAGO	İSTANBUL	MONTRÉAL	SEOUL	VIENNA
AUSTIN	DUBAI	KYIV	NANJING	SHENZHEN	WARSAW
BARCELONA	DUBLIN	LAGOS	NEW YORK	STOCKHOLM	ZÜRICH
BENGALURU	EDINBURGH	LISBON	OSLO	SYDNEY	
BRASÍLIA	GUANGZHOU	LONDON	PARIS	TAIPEI CITY	
BRUSSELS	HAMBURG	LOS ANGELES	RIO DE JANEIRO	TOKYO	
BUENOS AIRES	HELSINKI	MELBOURNE	SAN FRANCISCO	TORONTO	



Supported by



MAYOR OF LONDON

A note from our Chair



Photo by Rankin

I am delighted to introduce the World Cities Culture Forum Annual Report.

Over the past ten years, our global movement has established the principle that culture is a golden thread in cities: supporting our communities, our health and wellbeing, attracting tourists and boosting economies. We are now 44 cities, spanning six continents. Collectively we represent a population of 245 million and 60 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The past year has been an exciting one. We became an independent registered charity, an important milestone. We welcomed five new cities: Bengaluru, Chicago, Kyiv, Rio de Janeiro and Shenzhen and we have grown our regional leadership across Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America. And we held our Summit in Latin America for the first time, in the fabulous city of São Paulo.

Our City Partners continue to traverse the globe for deeper learning and exchange through our popular Leadership Exchange Programme, generously supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. We have built new partnerships with leading academic institutions and launched new research.

All the while our leaders around the world continue to show courage in addressing challenges old and new, as they build the sustainable and equitable cities of the future.

Over the next decade, culture can play a growing role in driving positive change in cities. City leaders must be ready for both the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead if we are to unlock the deep potential of culture.

Our plans for the future are ambitious but our priority remains preserving the authenticity and generosity of the network that our cities tell us they value. We are excited about this chapter and building our work with our dedicated cities, partners and friends – our collective power is making a genuine positive difference in the world.

Thank you.

Justine Simons OBE

Founder and Chair
Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, London



© City of Rio de Janeiro

“

Global cities are at the forefront of tackling some of the biggest issues the world faces today – from powering our economies and creating high quality jobs for our citizens, to working hand in hand across borders to solve the climate crisis – we lead the way, working together to build a better and more prosperous future for all.

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
Patron, World Cities Culture Forum

Our Purpose

Founded in 2012 to coincide with the London Olympic Games, World Cities Culture Forum is a network of global cities supporting dynamic government leadership and championing culture as an essential driver for the social and economic success of sustainable cities.

In 2012 the Mayor of London convened eight cities who agreed to undertake joint research, share common challenges and learn from each other.

We have grown to a partnership of more than 40 cities whose leaders value the important role that culture plays in creating more prosperous and sustainable cities.

OUR VISION

We are building a world where culture is at the heart of thriving cities.

OUR MISSION

We are civic leaders sharing our best ideas and designing culture policies that change lives. World Cities Culture Forum is a network of more than 40 global cities spanning six continents. Together, we are meeting the challenges of the 21st century by placing culture at the heart of city planning and investment.

OUR VALUES

We believe in the power of culture to transform people, place and planet. We empower global civic leaders to create the equitable, prosperous and sustainable global cities of the future. We are generous with our ideas and collaborate to drive change.

Our Principles



World Cities Culture Summit 2022 © City of Helsinki

SEOUL DECLARATION

As signatories to The Seoul Declaration, our cities commit to the following:

- To ensure that culture is a golden thread in all aspects of city policy, whether that might be housing or transport, health or education.
- To make culture available to and empowering for all citizens (like we have seen in Seoul). Recognising that world cities are the workplaces, inspirations, safe harbours and homes of outward-looking, open-minded citizens.
- To generate and learn from evidence and research, in pursuit of an enlightened and progressive approach to policy development and implementation.
- To act as leaders in our field and to continue to collaborate in the face of shared challenges and shared opportunities, as identified by the World Cities Culture Forum through its events, publications and networks.

While also being dedicated to:

- Pressing ahead with Making Space for Culture: to protect and preserve the places that make our cities what they are
- Seeking out cultural responses to climate change, recognising that artists help us to comprehend the challenges we face.
- Speaking as one voice on behalf of all global citizens. To represent those who value humanist values of openness, exploration and free enquiry. Global citizens value free expression and understand that art does not respect national boundaries.
- Developing the work of the World Cities Culture Forum through its Leadership Exchange Programme.

Our cities have the following commitments:

1

A commitment to culture

by integrating culture as a golden thread into their cities, making culture accessible and empowering for all.



Tokyo Met Salad Music Festival © TMSO

2

A commitment to the vision, mission and values of World Cities Culture Forum

by signing up to the Seoul Declaration and collaborating to drive change.



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo

3

A commitment to anti-racism and inclusivity

by ensuring that everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of our cities.*

*In accordance with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity | OHCHR.

Report from the Director



© Pau Ros

As rapid urbanisation continues to be a global trend, the role of cities to implement solutions to today's challenges becomes now more urgent and relevant than ever.

At World Cities Culture Forum, we bring together 44 cities from 6 continents; our city leaders are experts in their field and are generous with their ideas. We believe that by working together, our global cities can achieve more, more quickly.

This year has been pivotal for the World Cities Culture Forum. With the support from our Founder and Chair, our Board of Trustees, our City Advisory Committee and our strong network of city leaders, we have:

1. Become a UK registered charity - this means we are now an independent not-for-profit organisation and we are growing partnerships and collaborations with funders, sponsors and philanthropists that share our values and will support our aims.

2. Strengthened our global representation

- we welcomed new cities including Bengaluru as our first Indian city; we led research in 12 Sub-Saharan African cities with the British Council and Andani.Africa; and we strengthened our presence in Latin America led by Magdalena Suarez, seconded from the city of Buenos Aires.

3. Translated into more languages than ever before - 'A Goal for Culture: São Paulo Manifesto' was published in eight languages: Arabic, English, French, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese and Mandarin; we offered simultaneous translation into five languages at our annual Summit - the most of any Summit to date; we offered webinars translated into English and French; and our City Prospectus was translated into Arabic, English, French, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish.

We have delivered a programme to advance our goals and priorities, building a core service for our cities and sharing city solutions more widely:

PEOPLE

Supporting city leaders

We brought together senior city leaders to share their best ideas; our people participated in study visits and exchanged solutions with our flagship Leadership Exchange Programme, and for the first time, leadership support at our annual Summit. We will build on this strand of the programme developing Fellowships and working towards a World Cities Culture Forum Academy.

PLACE

Making the case for culture in cities

We published '*Creative Recovery? The role of cultural policy in shaping post-COVID urban futures*' new research with King's College London. We launched a new website focusing on storytelling and sharing data and city projects to promote our principle that culture is a golden thread in cities: supporting communities, health, attracting tourists and boosting economies. At our 2023 Summit, we covered topics from the impact of AI to supporting the night time economy, growing affordable workspace and increasing diversity in the public realm; and we welcomed Kyiv's moving testimony on culture providing solace and hope in a time of war. Over the coming years, we will grow our digital resources for cities and build towards our next World Cities Culture Report.

PLANET

Championing culture as a positive global force

We joined the global campaign to call for a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal for culture post 2030 with 'A Goal for Culture: São Paulo Manifesto' signed by 21 cities. We have taken part in a number of key global events and we use our social channels to highlight city projects and champion culture's role in creating a prosperous and sustainable world. As we evolve, we will develop our external communications and grow our influence on the global stage.

It's been a great year! We look forward to continuing to work with our city leaders to deliver on the areas that matter to cities.

We want to thank our supporters, in particular the Mayor of London for his patronage and ongoing support, and Bloomberg Philanthropies for their support of the Leadership Exchange Programme and their continued pro-bono advice.

Laia Gasch

Director
World Cities Culture Forum

44

cities

600

webinar attendees

180+

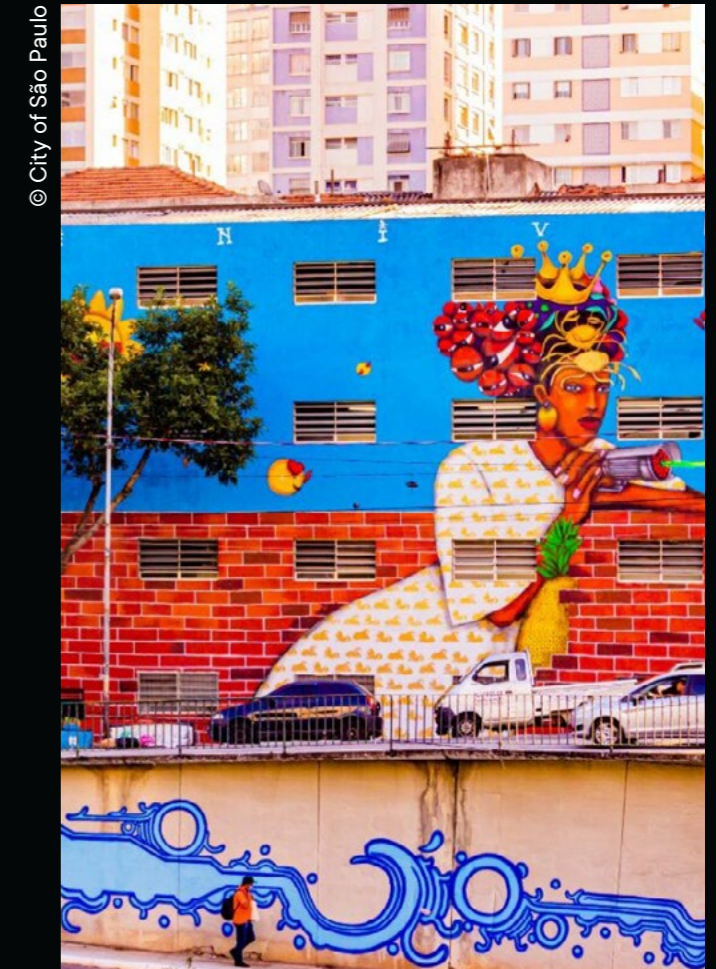
leaders convened
through our Leadership
Exchange Programme

2

city secondments



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo



© City of São Paulo

“

The 19th century was a century of empires.
The 20th century was a century of nation states.
The 21st century will be a century of cities.

Wellington E. Webb
Former Mayor of Denver (US)

Key Achievements



© City of Rio de Janeiro

01

NETWORK

Welcomed five new cities: Bengaluru, Chicago, Kyiv, Rio de Janeiro and Shenzhen and brokered relationships between more than twenty cities on issues from funding models, to accessibility, and tourist tax to the night time economy.

02

WORLD CITIES CULTURE SUMMIT SÃO PAULO 2023

Held the World Cities Culture Summit in Latin America for the first time.



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo

03

RESEARCH

Commissioned 'Creative Recovery? The role of cultural policy in shaping post-COVID urban futures' with King's College London. Commissioned 'African Alternatives: the Future of Creative Cities' with the British Council and Andani.Africa.



DESCOLA. Image courtesy of City of Lisbon © José Frade

04

COMMUNICATIONS

Reached new audiences through our social media channels growing our following by over 60% and shared stories and data from the World Cities Culture Report.

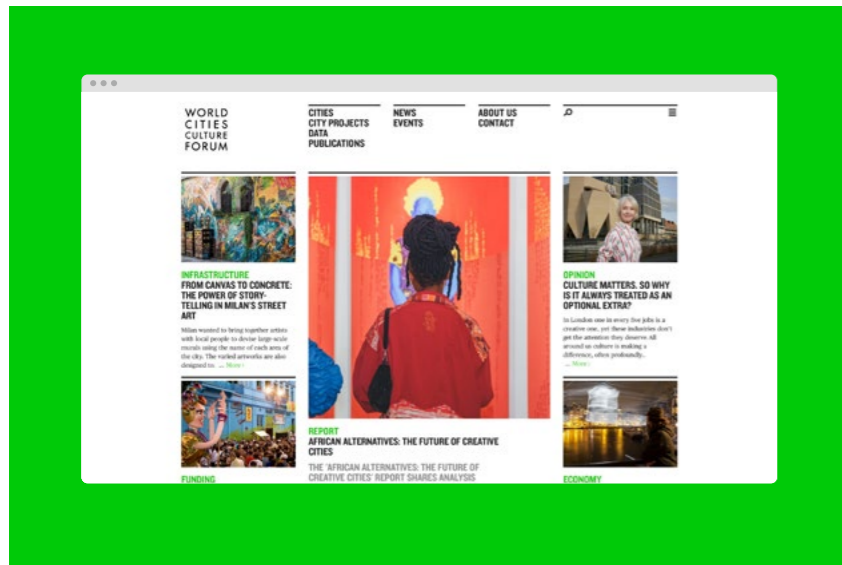
05

CITY EXCHANGES

Completed second Cohort of our flagship Leadership Exchange Programme and launched our Impact Report.



© James O Jenkins



06

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Launched our new website and accepted onto Bloomberg Philanthropies' **Digital Accelerator Program** to support our digital transformation.

07

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Africa: engaged 12 African capitals including in-person roundtables and an online event attended by over 300 people from 93 cities.

Latin America: Regional Director based in Buenos Aires established new partnerships including with Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI) and Itaú Cultural.

Asia Pacific: hosted two roundtables attended by eight cities.



© Marta Michalak

09

GOVERNANCE

We became a registered charity, regulated by the UK Charity Commission – which means we are independent and can become financially self-sustainable.



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo

08

GLOBAL ADVOCACY

Launched 'A Goal for Culture: São Paulo Manifesto'. Participated in events in Busan, Chengdu, Delhi, Mexico City, Montréal, Nanjing, Paris (UNESCO) and Rabat.



World Cities Culture Summit 2023 © Image Courtesy of City of São Paulo

10

TRANSLATION

Increased languages of key documents including:

- World Cities Culture Forum Prospectus in Spanish
- A Goal for Culture: São Paulo Manifesto in 8 languages
- More translation at the 2023 Summit
- Published the 'African Alternatives: the Future of Creative Cities' in French

Financial Overview

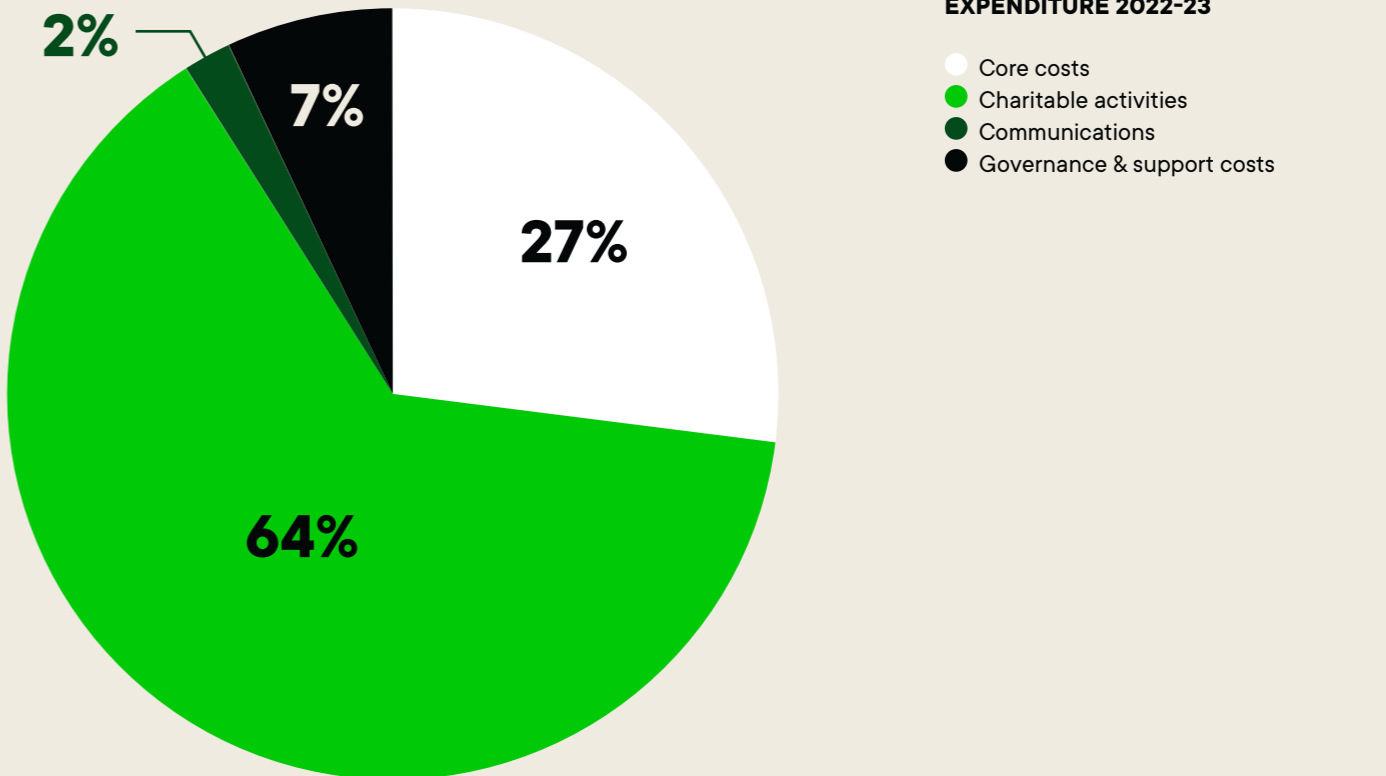
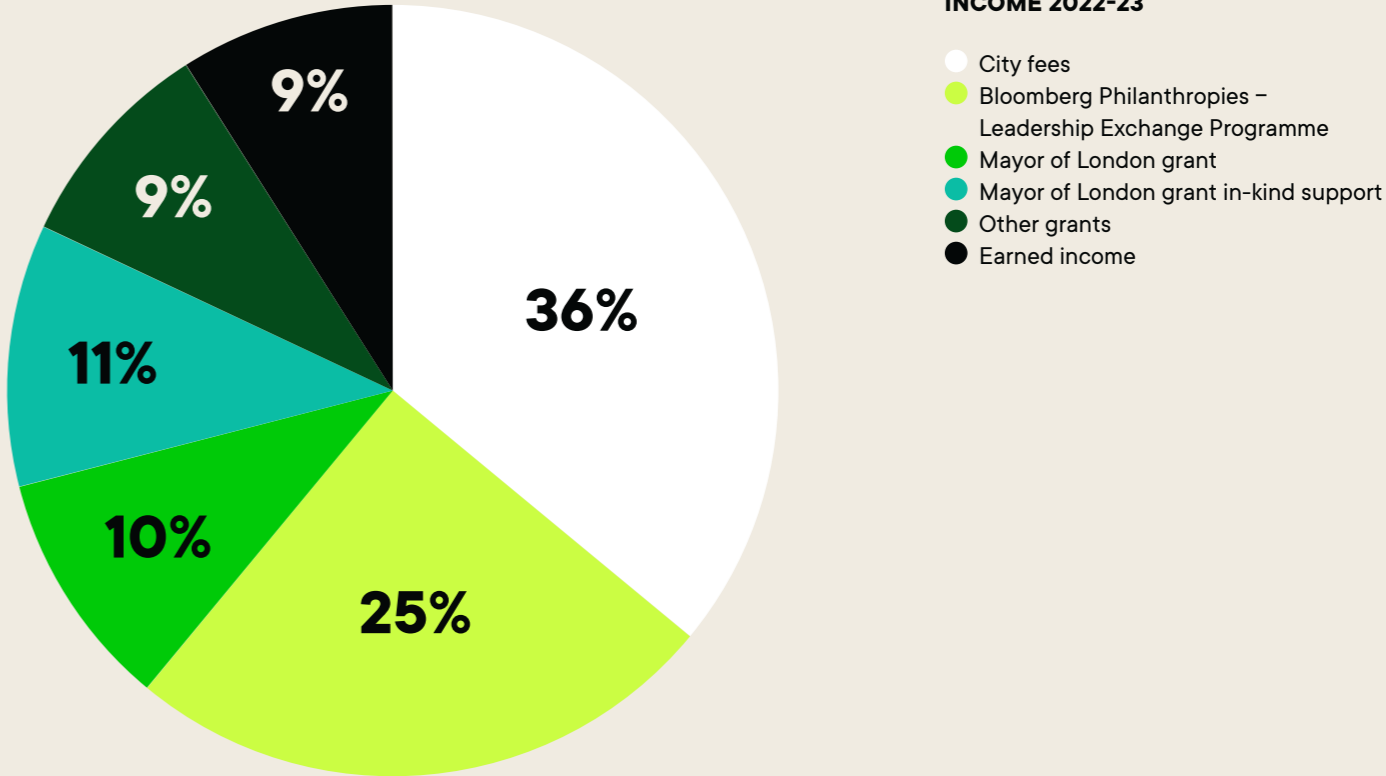
In 2022-23, World Cities Culture Forum's operational costs were covered by City Partner fees, philanthropic donations, and in-kind support.

Our thanks go to Bloomberg Philanthropies for their generous support through the Leadership Exchange Programme and the Digital Accelerator Programme, and for their support - alongside the Mayor of London and The City of Edinburgh Council - of Kyiv's participation in the Forum.

We are also grateful for in-kind support from the Mayor of London, the city of São Paulo and the British Council; and the city of Buenos Aires, Dubai Culture & Arts Authority, and London & Partners for supporting staff secondments.

Over the coming year, we'll diversify income streams, prioritising fundraising activity. This involves: streamlining City Partner fee payments; expanding programmes and services to attract funding and sponsors; and pursuing service contracts and tenders.

Our fundraising efforts will focus on: **strengthening partnerships to deliver joint programmes; collaborating with philanthropic bodies; seeking support from trusts and foundations for programmes with broad public benefit; and developing programmes aligned with environmental and social governance.**



What our cities say

We asked our city leaders about their experiences of the World Cities Culture Summit...

“The São Paulo Summit was an extraordinary experience, transcending beyond the insightful panel discussions to forge meaningful connections with fellow delegates.”

“It’s a vital and relevant Forum from which we learn so much.”

“The Summit is unparalleled in its support to global cultural practitioners.”

“A world stage to share the value of culture and best global practices.”

“It was inspiring, thought-provoking and encouraging.”

“One of the best learning experiences of my public service career.”

“Standing on the shoulders of giants; using the knowledge gained by those who have done it before in order to make rapid progress, summarises how the exchanges create impact.”

“Our exchange was a career defining moment.”

“Both teams have a deepened respect for the vital role of strategic partnerships for building clarity within roles and goals.”

“The exchange was absolutely invaluable in terms of giving us different perspectives, lessons learned, identifying gaps in our capacities, sharing successes, and building stronger relationships between our cities to continue the shared dialogue.”

And the Leadership Exchange Programme...



A Goal for Culture: São Paulo Manifesto

As Mayors and Deputy Mayors of some of the world's greatest cities and city partners of the World Cities Culture Forum, we support the call for culture to be a dedicated **UN Sustainable Development Goal post 2030**.

The World Cities Culture Forum is the leading global network that spans **44** cities and six continents with a combined population of more than **245 million**, over **60** UNESCO World Heritage sites and attracting **217m** visitors each year. Our leaders share ideas and solutions to build a world where culture is at the heart of thriving cities, driving an equitable, prosperous and sustainable planet.

We believe that culture is a **golden thread**, supporting communities, improving health and education, reducing inequality, and driving economic growth and peace and prosperity in our cities now, and into the future. We believe that culture and creativity are critical to addressing the challenges that lie ahead and are essential to a successful sustainable future.

World Cities Culture Forum will work with UNESCO and other city networks including United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) to achieve a Goal for Culture.

Governance

With thanks to...

| PATRON

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

| FOUNDER AND CHAIR

Justine Simons OBE

| BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jeff Jacobs CB (Chair)

Kevin Austin (Treasurer)

Lynne Halfpenny

| CITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(a non-executive group that advises the Board of Trustees)

Addes Tesfamariam Berhane, Milan

Alexandra Sabino (alumni), Lisbon

Araf Ahmadali, Amsterdam

Branislav Henselmann, Vancouver

Danielle Brazell (alumni), Los Angeles

Daniel Tarica, Los Angeles

Jackie McNerney, London

Justine Simons OBE (Chair), London

Lori Martin (alumni), Toronto

Magdalena Suarez (alumni), Buenos Aires

Maria Jansén, Stockholm

Peter Haerle (alumni), Zurich

Polly Alakija (alumni), Lagos

Ralph Remington, San Francisco

Shonagh Manson, London

Silvia Tarassi (alumni), Milan

Xi Song, Chengdu

| CITY SECONDMENTS

We are grateful to the following cities for seconding staff members to World Cities Culture Forum in 2023:

City of Buenos Aires Magdalena Suarez,

Regional Director, Latin America

Dubai Culture Mariam Ali Yousef, Summit Coordinator

Why a dedicated Culture Goal?

BECAUSE culture is a fundamental **human right**

BECAUSE culture gives us **identity**, resilience and joy

BECAUSE culture underpins all three pillars of **sustainability**: economic, social and environmental

BECAUSE culture is key to the **behaviour change** we need to fight the climate crisis

BECAUSE appreciating each other's culture contributes to **world peace**

What will a Culture Goal achieve?

IT WILL unlock culture's civic force to deliver sustainable development

IT WILL engage people's hearts as well as their minds in building a sustainable future

IT WILL encourage governments and city administrations to strategically invest in culture

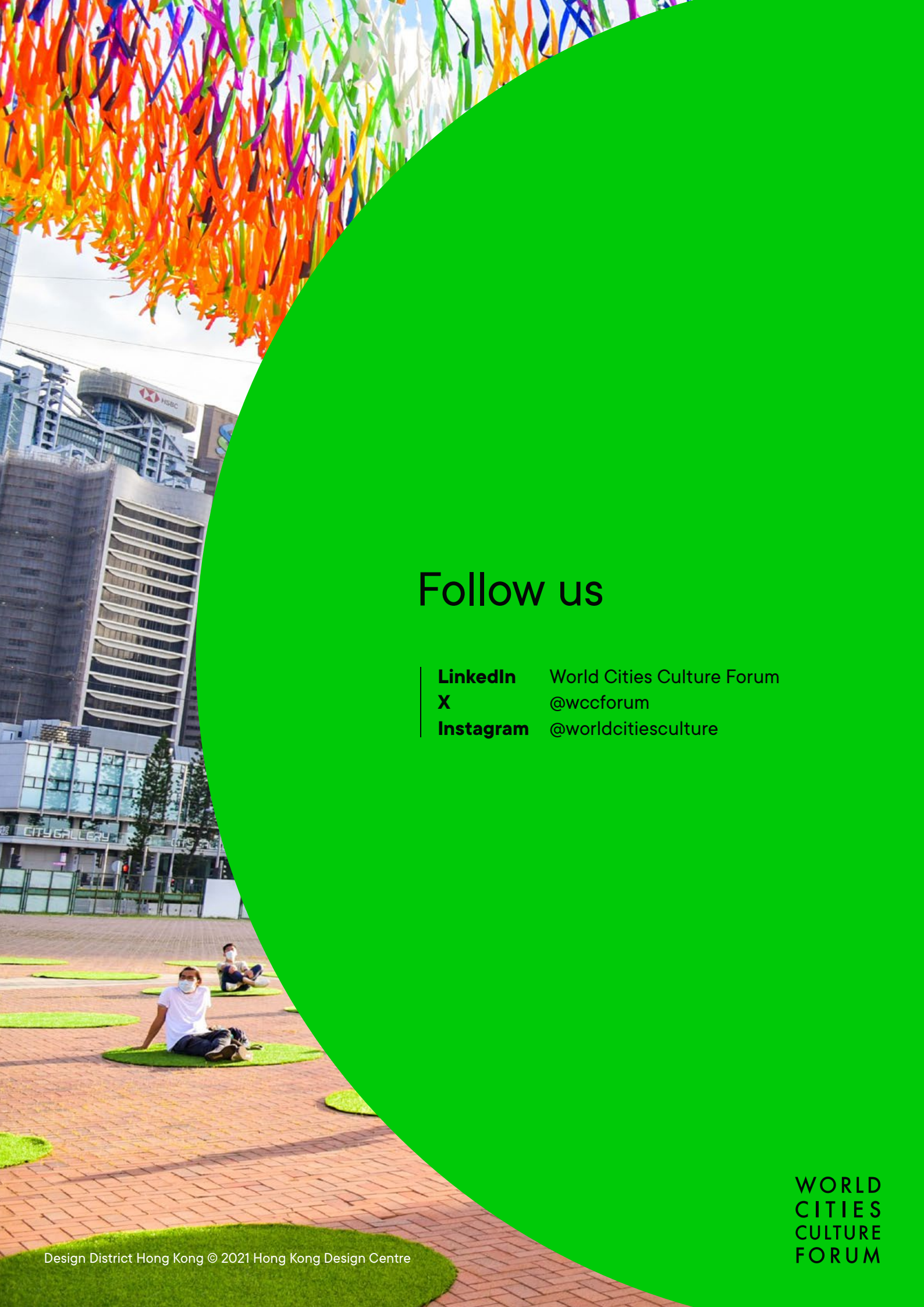
IT WILL inspire culture organisations to play a part in achieving sustainability

IT WILL unleash creativity and the human imagination towards a better future

Why now?

The 2030 Agenda that inspired the Sustainable Development Goals was developed at a time of global integration and growth. But today, international tensions, fragile growth and the accelerating climate crisis confront us with a different future. The ability of culture to build bridges, promote peace and understanding, inspire innovation and give communities a sense of pride and identity now acquires new significance and relevance.

Without a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal for Culture, we risk culture becoming an ancillary tool overlooked by broader agendas. A dedicated Sustainable Development Goal for Culture will realise the full potential of culture and ensure its rightful place in the global development agenda.



Follow us

LinkedIn	World Cities Culture Forum
X	@wccforum
Instagram	@worldcitiesculture