

# *Analysis of the Evaluation Criteria of UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy*

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**Abstract:** The Creative Cities Network created by UNESCO is a great model for urban transformation nowadays. Cities with unique gastronomic culture are expected to keep pace with international developments in the field of gastronomic creativity and to lead their local gastronomic culture to the world. In this paper, In accordance with the eight criteria specified by UNESCO for cultural assets in the field of gastronomic creativity in 2008, we analyze the applications from Bendigo and Portoviejo with the method of text analysis, Creative Cities of Gastronomy in 2019, to explore the changes in the evaluation criteria of the bids in recent years, and to revisit the elements of the evaluation. The result shows that proportion of the eight criteria of Creative Cities of Gastronomy in the declaration has largely changed with the shift of strategic objectives, from emphasizing local traditional culture to encouraging multiculturalism. Also, they focus more on the sustainability description of the local food industry, heritage and ecology.

## 1. Background of Creative City Network

As the culinary culture most closely related to residents' daily life, with the improvement of people's living standards and consumption concepts, it has become a major industry that cannot be ignored in urban development. Innovation on the basis of traditional cooking is the only way to stimulate the vitality of cuisine to meet the contemporary pursuit of food diversity and freshness, and to promote the high-quality development of the catering industry and even drive the development of the city's economy. Li Wuwei (2014)[1] pointed out that cultural and creative industries can not only promote the expansion of the cultural consumption market, but also facilitate cultural inheritance and innovation.

In the era of "content is a top priority", creativity is the core competitiveness and the core force that can promote the development of human civilization. The Creative Cities Network, launched by UNESCO in 2004, has become a major model for urban transformation, focusing on activating the cultural potential of cities through creativity. By emphasizing the fundamental nature and significance of the cultural diversity of humankind in the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO has also given the Network of Creative Cities the following basic mission: to protect and promote cultural diversity globally, with a view to reducing the trend towards "cultural imperialism"; Member states have the right and

obligation to protect cultural diversity, share the creativity brought by their own cultures, form creative cultural industries, and drive social and economic development.

Studying the evaluation criteria of the Creative Cities Network and exploring the development path of creative cities have become important issues for many cities. Cities with profound culinary culture are actively approaching the Creative Cities Network, hoping to maximize the use and integration of resources through collaboration and sharing of creative assets with the members after joining the network, leading the local culinary culture to the world, and feeding new vitality into the development of the cities.

## 2. Shift in emphasis of assessment criteria

### 2.1 From emphasizing local traditional culture to encouraging multiculturalism

1) In 2008, a document "How to Apply to UNESCO's Creative Cities Network"[2], published by UNESCO, specifies eight criteria for cultural assets in the field of gastronomic creativity.

The eight criteria of early cultural assets emphasize the preservation of local traditional culinary culture and make specific requirements on the embodiment of assets, which is an important reference basis for the city's bidding for creation. Zhan Yihong and Cheng Xiaomin (2016)[3] also explain this evaluation standard with more detailed dimensions and more quantitative indicators, providing a clearer construction direction for the bidding of Creative City of Gastronomy.

However, combining the relevant materials of successful cities in recent years, it is found that the proportion of the assessment criteria of Creative Cities of Gastronomy in the declaration has largely changed with the shift of strategic objectives. In accordance with the criteria and the measurement dimensions demonstrated in Zhan and Cheng, the application of Bendigo[4] is reorganized and analyzed in this paper. It is found that the eight criteria did not occupy much space in the application material. The results of text analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Comparison of Cultural Asset Criteria and declaration of Bendigo

Cultural Asset Criteria	Comparison Results of Bendigo	Focus level (five stars)
Criteria 1	Lack of accessibility and convenience of food outlets, active description of consumption and penetration of the industry.	★★
Criteria 2	Lack of gastronomic class diversity.	★★★
Criteria 3	Very little reflection of the indigenous nature of the source of the ingredients and a lack of reflecting uniqueness.	★
Criteria 4	Local cooking tips and techniques are not explicit	★
Criteria 5	Lack of localization and industrialization of traditional foods.	★★
Criteria 6	Lack of number of culinary competitions hosted and awards won.	★★★
Criteria 7	Lack of heritage that reflects the atmosphere of production.	★★★
Criteria 8	A comprehensive and detailed presentation of the various dimensions of the creative and cross-national, cross-organizational and cross-disciplinary culinary projects, with a strong focus on the concept of sustainability.	★★★★★

Text analysis reveals that the indigenous characteristics of Bendigo's gastronomic culture are not explicit in the application, but rather the application highlights the fact that, under the impact of diverse cultures that came in during the wave of gold mining, the indigenous culture was completely transformed and then re-adapted and fused into the present multicultural characteristics. In the application materials, traditional gastronomic characteristics such as indigenous ingredients, chefs, cooking techniques and methods, which are related to the uniqueness of indigenous cooking in the "eight criteria of cultural assets", are no longer emphasized in the application form.

Bendigo's tolerance, acceptance and adaptability to cultural diversity, resulting in a unique multicultural identity, is also very much in line with the Creative Cities Network's original aim of preserving cultural diversity. In addition, Macau, which was successful in its bid in 2021, has a remarkable multicultural character, with a fusion of Cantonese and Portuguese cuisines to form Macau's local cuisine. The recently elected cities are not even as distinctive in terms of local traditional cultural characteristics as Popayán or Chengdu in the early days.

This shows that the Creative Cities Network has gone from emphasizing local traditional culture to recognizing and encouraging multiculturalism.

## 2.2 From the concept of sustainable development to specific strategic objectives for sustainable development

Based on the textual analysis in Table 1, it is also found that the Bendigo and Portoviejo[5] declaration focuses more on the sustainability description of the local food industry, heritage and ecology, by explicitly demonstrated how they strictly keep up with the 17 goals[6] proposed in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Specific initiatives and corresponding objectives are listed below:

Table 2: Experiences in building with the concept of sustainable development

Portoviejo	Bendigo	sustainable development goals
The project "Love 7.8" with brigades to feed more than 3,000 people affected in the city's shelters.	Foodshare focuses on assisting community members to climb out of food poverty.	Goal 1
	1. BRFA are working together to promote and develop the local food system; 2. Coordinate the creation of a network of linked food precincts across the region	Goal 2
1. The "FUEGOS" offer workshops on innovation for traditional cooks, with a vision that's mindful of individual and environmental health; 2. Workshops on gastronomic innovation within vulnerable populations to promoting nutritious food; 3. "Cultural Café Argos" have managed to coordinate with the cooking academy and local population to produce an encyclopedia and cookbook of Manabita cuisine and eating habits in the city.	1. The region schools and early learning centres are using kitchen gardens to educate young people about healthy food; 2. "Eat Well@IGA" program conducts successful pilot interventions; 3. Healthy Heart of Victoria partnership works hard to tackle poor health; 4. Coordinate the creation of a network of linked food precincts across the region.	Goal 3
1. In addition to the Gastronomic School of Manabí the Technical University of Manabí in Portoviejo offers the Nutrition and Dietetics major, and the Gastronomy major is planned; 2. The San Gregorio University of Portoviejo offers a Masters in Tourism and Hospitality, as well as Gastronomy and Tourism.	1. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program teaches children to grow, harvest food and helps to form positive food habits for life; 2. Lifelong learning offering creative courses for older people ranging from cookery and gardening to wine appreciation.	Goal 4
1. organizes festivals to empower women and vulnerable groups; 2. A project of around one-million dollars to achieve the empowerment of women with craft knowledge.		Goal 5

The provision of drinking water and sewage system in the most vulnerable communities	1. Water sensitive city initiatives; 2. Water in Sport Project; 3. Greening Greater Bendigo.	Goal 6
1. Employ 2000 families of recovery of the city; 2. Offered training in innovation of quality agricultural products and gastronomic; 3. Business ventures with the Post-Disaster Reactivation Program "Re-Emprende".	1. The City's Economic Development Strategy unites key stakeholders from local government, business, education, health, Traditional Owners, youth and civil society to embrace and act on an inclusive and sustainable growth model; 2. Groups from a variety of backgrounds are able to participate in or engage in gardening, culinary and natural environment restoration projects; 3. PepperGreen supports people with disabilities to gain skills and work experience; 4. Coordinate the creation of a network of linked food precincts across the region.	Goal 8
1. Invested post-disaster solidarity funds in infrastructure, which is better than before; 2. Provide 60 spaces for individual food vendors, thus avoiding the precarization of the culinary undertakings.	Coordinate the creation of a network of linked food precincts across the region.	Goal 9
	1. The City's guiding strategy is Council's Community Plan, endorsing the globally-recognised One Planet Living principles as key to inclusive and sustainable growth; 2. Coordinate the creation of a network of linked food precincts across the region.	Goal 11
The Experimental Station of the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIAP) that together with the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO) has trained agricultural producers in production, consumption, circulation and sustainable food distribution.	1. Supports from The Bendigo Regional Food Alliance, Food Fossickers Network, Farmers Markets, Sustain: Australian Food Network, winegrowers associations and other industry and professional organizations; 2. The proposed precincts will be hubs of local, healthy, sustainable food and beverage production, distribution and consumption; 3. schools in the region are supported with seedlings grown by inmates at the local prison in conjunction with a vocational training institute.	Goal 12
	"Drawdown" event addressing climate change.	Goal 13
	1. Share region's Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, the only such strategy in Australia, with the UCCN gastronomy cities to build knowledge and innovation; 2. Invite other cities of Gastronomy to join us and share learning from their own creative development strategies.	Goal 14
Conducted a series of anthropological investigations in the bio-region of the Portoviejo River basin to create a plan to safeguard the local knowledge.	Collaboration with Traditional Owners on projects centred on healthy water, healthy Country and the restoration of damaged landscapes.	Goal 15
Cooperation with Brazil and Andean creative cities in gastronomy	1. Recognizes the importance of working collaboratively and strengthening global cooperation; 2. The Bendigo Writers Festival, Bendigo Art Gallery; 3. International programs cooperated with UCCN cities in New Zealand, China and Canada.	Goal 17

The Creative Cities Network considers creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable

development and aims to foster the building of resilient sustainable cities. So the idea of sustainability has been woven throughout. It is only through time and continuous exploration that the sustainability strategy roadmap has evolved from an abstract concept to a concrete goal guideline.

As early as 1987, the concept of sustainable development appeared for the first time in the report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, it has achieved final consensus with the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and *Agenda 21* on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Based on ecological sustainability, its core content requires humanity to develop economy in harmony with the protection of the ecological environment. In the two decades since, sustainable development has become a strategic goal of global development.

It was not until the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 that the 17 major goals were specified. It expresses a common vision for humanity to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions: social, economic and environmental, and at the same time serves as a covenant reached among nations. With the release of the agenda, the assessed declarations give more prominence to the consideration of sustainable development condition of the contestant cities and are evaluated in terms of compliance with the 17 goals, with a special emphasis on integration with important contemporary topics such as health and environmental protection.

*The New Urban Agenda*, adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador in 2016, furthered the process of sustainable urban development by clarifying the direction of urban development, including social inclusion and poverty eradication, inclusive urban prosperity and opportunity, environmental sustainability and resilience.

As it is shown in Table 2, the 2019 new members, Bendigo and Portoviejo have both clearly stated in their declarations that the process of creating a creative city in their city, from visions to actions, are fully corresponding to the 17 goals.

### 3. Analysis of Assessment Elements

There are no quantitative criteria to refer to in the application itself. Early cultural assets were gradually relaxed as UNESCO continued to emphasize inclusiveness. Hou Bing et al.(2021)[7] found that there is no direct correlation between the size of the city and the evaluation of Creative Cities. Small and medium-sized cities accounted for more than half of the cities that were successfully declared Creative Cities. According to the 2019 data, there are 18 cities with a population of less than 500,000, and even Alba in Italy, Mérida in Mexico, Afyonkarahisar in Turkey, and Östersund in Sweden have a population of less than 100,000 people. Creative cities are not strictly quantified, which makes the evaluation process more flexible, humane and fair. Even Portoviejo, which was devastated by the earthquake, has the opportunity to tell its story to the world through the Creative Cities Network.

According to the application guidelines[8] of the organization's requirements for the conditions of reporting cities, the analysis found that the Creative Cities Network has shifted from emphasizing tradition to focusing on creativity, and from focusing on localized characteristics to encouraging multicultural characteristics. The assessment has expanded the pattern and is more future-oriented. But what remains unchanged is that the ultimate purpose of the Creative Cities Network is to protect cultural diversity and pay attention to the sustainable development of human beings. Taking into account the experience of cities that have been declared successful in recent years, the assessment elements have been organized as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Elements of Assessment

Elements of assessment	No.	Assessment dimensions	Assessment entries corresponding to the Application Form	notes
Sustainable development	1	Creative fields can contribute to sustainable urban development, help to solve the difficulties faced in the development process and be a driving force in urban development and challenges	6, 8	Dimensions that should be reflected in the whole text
Consistency with the international development agenda	2	Consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063, in particular "Building Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Cities".	10.6, 10.7	Dimensions that should be reflected in the whole text
groups	3	How different audiences (especially vulnerable groups) can benefit from it	9, 10.3, 10.10, 10.11	
	4	How stakeholders in the filing area are integrated into the filing process	9, 10.12, 10.13	
cultural asset	5	The role and foundations of the creative field in the process of historical urban development	10.1	Note the incorporation of the eight criteria
	6	Cultural and Creative Industries	10.2, 10.15	
	7	Specialized domestic and international activities	10.4, 10.19	
	8	Events and activities	10.5	
	9	Teaching and learning	10.6, 10.7	
	10	Research and development organization	10.8	
	11	Specialized infrastructure for related products and services	10.9	
	12	Place of facilities for the public or a specific audience	10.10	
	13	Various related initiatives, policies are used to support the development and personnel in the declared areas.	10.14, 10.15	
	14	Synergies with other Creative Cities network areas	10.17, 10.19	
	15	International cooperation	10.16, 10.18	
contribution	16	The action plan can contribute to the realization of the objectives of the Creative Cities Network.	11.1, 11.2	Focusing on the future medium-term plan of action
finances (public)	17	Overall fiscal revenues over the past five years, investment in declared areas	10.2	
	18	Fiscal budgets need to be operational, coherent, feasible and sustainable.	11.3	
Regulatory framework	19	The management structure that the program implements can help achieve UCCN's goals.	11.4	
publicize	20	Communication outreach programs for the general public	11.5	
	21	Media outreach materials and Web sites	16	
others	22	Overview of the city (including gastronomic traditions, ingredients and techniques, overview of traditional markets and industries)	5	

#### 4. Conclusion

In order to build communities suitable for human habitation, the United Nations Creative Cities Network will constantly make adjustments and adaptations according to the development trend and

strategic routes of the international community.

Applicants need to follow the pace of the world, pay close attention to UNESCO's policy direction and changes in the application guidelines, and look at the evaluation criteria of the application with a changing perspective as the framework shown in Table 3.

For cities with strong local traditional culinary characteristics, applications should not be composed in a way that emphasizes past glories, but should look to the future and focus on the sustainable development of traditional culture.

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