

Summary multi-annual strategic plan for culture in Morocco – period 2018-2020

International Cultural Policy: The Netherlands and Morocco

The Netherlands enjoys important historical, cultural and economic ties with Morocco and strives towards an international policy that fosters cultural cooperation, mutual understanding and dialogue. Overall, the government's main objective is to create 'more room for the arts to contribute to a safe, just, and future-proof world'.

The Role of Art and Culture in Morocco

Morocco is a melting pot of diverse cultural influences which have left their mark on what originally was Amazigh (Berber) culture. Thus, diversity and tolerance run deep in Morocco's narrative and counter the uncertainty about the political unity of the country. Cultural products are a mix of young and old, of both innovative artistic expressions as local handicrafts, you find them in the urban hotspots and the rural areas of the country. What is more, thanks to the Moroccan diaspora in the Netherlands there are many associations between the two countries.

Stakeholders

There are three main stakeholders in the cultural field of Morocco: the Royal house, the elected government (currently the Islamist Party of Justice), and the independent creative and cultural scene including foreign cultural institutes and charitable foundations. The Royal house, which includes the king and his inner circle, is focused on the organization of large festivals and cultural happenings in partnership with private investors and is primarily concerned with a national cultural narrative. The government is mainly an important stakeholder with regards to the regulation of cultural productions and oversee that they do not violate the values of their interpretation of Islam. In addition, even though there is a steady increase in independent cultural productions in Morocco, there is little cooperation between cultural actors and national organizations which creates a divide between the different stakeholders and their missions. Most of the independent cultural sector relies on private and foreign funding as state funding is limited.

Challenges

There are several challenges that the cultural plan takes into account which are specific to Morocco as a country. The main challenges are the youth unemployment rate (30%) and the high illiteracy rate (33%). These are correlated to a systematic lack of transparency within the public sphere and extensive issues within the Moroccan educational system. Moreover, strong social divisions result in limited accessibility to culture amongst lower social classes, which are also defined by geographic divisions. In short, it is the combination of these challenges and the lack of structural funding within the independent cultural sector that fails to widely engage the Moroccan public with culture. In addition, finding a common language amongst international players poses another challenge since French and Arabic are more common in use in Morocco.

Results & Plan for 2018- 2020

Through a pilot year in 2017, the embassy was able to define target groups, stakeholders, and key disciplines. It became evident that a general lack of perspective in life makes youth inactive and thus should become a focal point of the cultural policy, working towards cultural-literacy and self-expression. Secondly, it is crucial to motivate Moroccan audiences across different social classes, and to encourage structural financing, organizational and promotional skills. Thus, the cultural program will focus on the making of sustainable cultural networks rather than the provision of individual funds. The embassy wants to do so through knowledge building and forming coalitions between bigger players with starting artists.

The embassy also sees possibility in encouraging the use and re-use of Moroccan cultural heritage, namely artisan activities, in engaging locally embedded projects and enlarging its social reach. This can also be achieved by supporting more expressions of art in public spaces and social media.

Finally, taken that the Dutch-Moroccan diaspora is the 2nd largest from a non-western country, it is considered a potentially strategic asset in diplomatic relations and the fulfillment of the plans main objectives. Exchanges with Dutch partners could increase innovative thinking and support partnership development towards knowledge building and intercultural exchanges. As the diaspora has its origins in the northern regions of Morocco, the embassy has chosen to focus its cultural programme primarily (but not exclusively) on this region. Within this framework the embassy will carry out more fieldwork with support of advisory bodies such as Dutch Culture, Dutch-Moroccan partners and local mapping systems.

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