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Potentialization of the Gualaceo Canton through its inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

Abstract

The objective of this research work is to analyze the feasibility of Gualaceo joining the UNESCO network of creative cities, in order to enhance its cultural resources. In the theoretical framework section, the main concepts on international cooperation, international organizations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the cultural industry, creative cities and the UNESCO network of creative cities have been identified and developed. The state of the art section contains a description of the Gualaceo canton with a focus on its main festivities and cultural events. In part of the results, a comparison was made between the requirements established by UNESCO for the incorporation of the city in the network of creative cities and the components that the Gualaceo canton has, resulting in Gualaceo complying with a 53,5% of the requirements. In the discussion and results section, culture is discussed as an essential factor to be considered in local development plans, the obstacles that Gualaceo has to be admitted as a member of the network, the strengths it has in the cultural field and the benefits that belonging to the network can bring to the canton.

Keywords

- **Gualaceo, Culture, Creative Cities, UNESCO, International Cooperation.**

Reviewed by

N. Lourdes Moscoso

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo de investigación es Analizar la factibilidad de ingreso de Gualaceo a la red de ciudades creativas de la UNESCO, con el fin de potencializar sus recursos culturales. En la sección de marco teórico se ha identificado y desarrollado los principales conceptos sobre cooperación internacional, organizaciones internacionales, Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, , industria cultural, Ciudades creativas y red de ciudades creativas de la UNESCO; la sección de estado del arte contiene una descripción del cantón Gualaceo con enfoque en sus principales festividades y eventos culturales; en la parte de los resultados se realizó una comparación entre los requisitos establecidos por la UNESCO para la incorporación de la ciudad en la red de ciudades creativas y los componentes con los que cuenta el cantón Gualaceo, dando como resultado que Gualaceo cumple con un 53,5% de los requisitos. En la sección de discusión y resultados, se habla de la cultura como factor esencial a ser considerado en los planes de desarrollo local, los obstáculos que posee Gualaceo para ser admitido como miembro de la red, las fortalezas que posee en el ámbito cultural y los beneficios que pertenecer a la red puede traer para el cantón.

Palabras clave

- **Gualaceo, Cultura, Ciudades Creativas, UNESCO, Cooperación Internacional.**

Introduction

International cooperation has played a fundamental role in maintaining peaceful relations between nations. Today, the different international organizations work with specific approaches, proposing strategies to guarantee full development in a political, economic, social, cultural environment, among others, in order to guarantee an atmosphere of peace at the international level. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization "UNESCO" focuses on promoting the development of these areas in the international context. With an exclusive focus on the cultural field, the organization, through the creation of the Creative Cities Network, supports and motivates the development of the cultural industry by providing a strategic opportunity for the maintenance, rescue and enhancement of existing customs and traditions of each territory.

The incursion of cities as members of the network generates a positioning and recognition of the cultural wealth that cities possess in the global context and that can be shared among the different nations of the world. Traditions that, in a globalized world, are essential to encourage their conservation for the maintenance of the globally diverse cultural identity that exists. Encouraging the scope of the Sustainable Development Goals, in its objective number 11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities whose initiative is projected to increase urbanization to the extent that it is sustainable, integrated and inclusive through the promotion of local and national urban policies that are sustainable (UNDP, s.f).

In order to be able to analyze the impact of international organizations for the development of cities, this research analyzes the possibility of joining the Gualaceo canton of the Republic of Ecuador to the network of creative cities of UNESCO, this in order to determine if it is possible to achieve a higher level of local development in the Canton with the enhancement of its cultural resources through its integration into the network of creative cities. Since the purpose of this network is to be able to create cities through their culture that are recognized internationally through the development, organization, reproduction and dissemination of the traditions and customs of each territory with the aim that more and more cities are participants in these international cooperation spaces in the cultural field, the case of Gualaceo is analyzed, which has a diverse cultural wealth with the Carnival, Cantonization Parade, Battle of Moors and Christians and the Christmas Parade which are traditions that have been maintained for years in the gualaceña community that can provide social, economic and cultural development for the territory by being known in the international context.

The objective of this research is, through a comparative analysis of the UNESCO requirements for the acceptance of cities in the network and the cultural capital that the Gualaceo Canton possesses, to determine if the city has what is required to belong to this group and how its entry into the network could achieve greater local development. The importance that these festivities represent for Gualaceo is evidenced in different ways, being on the one hand the generators of a sense of belonging and identity of the Gualaceños, in addition to the economic impact that they provide for its population. Guaranteeing the maintenance of these traditions through their conservation, reproduction and dissemination are key factors at the local level since they maintain the essence of the territory and, being popular, unique and typical of the place, create the opportunity to be promoted internationally due to their origin. and characteristic nature that each festivity has.

Objectives

The objectives of this research focus initially on studying the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, its function, documentation, guidelines and other requirements for membership. After collecting the necessary information for an application to the network, a feasibility analysis is carried out in order to know if the Gualaceo Canton has the necessary requirements to be part of the UNESCO Creative Cities. Finally, the research seeks to analyze the benefits that being part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network could bring to the Gualaceo canton.

Theoretical Framework

International Cooperation is a term that arises in the year 1945, a time after the wars where, as a result of the consequences that this generated in the global context, the idea of finding ways to establish joint work between nations originated. The stated objective was to create conditions of stability and well-being necessary for peaceful and friendly relations between nations (UN, 1945). International organizations were born as structures that contribute to the implementation of peaceful relations between states. The formation of international organizations occurred through an evolutionary process whereby the states' own will,

grouping together and interacting together to work through an organized structure of interstate scope (Díaz Galán, 2018). Depending on the specific scope of action that a certain organization seeks to focus on, it employs characteristic objectives according to its needs and requirements, which generate the existence of a broad and diverse field of action for these structures at a global level.

International Organizations are born with specific objectives to provide solutions, thus generating the cooperation of governments in political, economic, social, cultural fields when these are not enough to provide lasting and real support for peoples. In order to promote interstate relations in a peaceful manner in education, science and culture, what we know today as the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture by UNESCO originates. This focuses on guaranteeing access to education for all, strengthening links between nations by promoting cultural heritage and equality of the various existing cultures, and supporting policies and scientific programs that are created as platforms for development and joint work (UNESCO, s.f.). The actions of this organization seek to contribute as a laboratory of ideas where initiatives are coordinated to promote the exchange of knowledge through the free circulation of ideas. Attacks on cultural diversity, forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific facts and threats to free expression are factors that do not guarantee the establishment of interstate peace.

Currently, the role of the cultural industry has positioned itself in an influential way worldwide, encouraging its growth and strengthening. Cultural industry is a term that began to be used in 1948 referring to industrial reproduction techniques in the creation and mass dissemination of cultural works (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1988). Thus, in order to position creativity and cultural industries at the center of the countries' national development plan to promote active cooperation in the international atmosphere, in 2004, the UNESCO network of creative cities was created. This idea seeks to encourage cooperation between and towards cities by increasing local development, a complex process in collective construction at a specific local level, which aims to activate the local resources of the territory with a common purpose where all the actors are taken into account in the established community (Casalis, 2015). Local development is a process of its own that has its origin in the community itself, it is not an external process but on the contrary it articulates local, provincial and national, interjurisdictional factors that promote it, thus giving rise to planning taking into account guidelines of a hierarchy of the indoes that are conjugated. The essential focus of local development is to be able to transform reality by incorporating the community as a whole into an inclusive and cooperative project for all. Since when cooperating, ideas flow freely, they can be perfected more and executed more quickly when there is an interaction between generators of creativity that are in constant contact (Jorge Gómez, 2009).

The idea of "creative city" originates from the concept of creative economy. The core of this economy is made up of the sectors whose activity is focused on producing, promoting, disseminating and marketing both goods, services and activities of cultural, artistic or heritage content (Sánchez-Naudin & Vivas-Elias, 2018). Currently, a total of 246 cities from 80 countries are members of the network, which has established 7 areas: crafts and popular arts, digital arts, cinema, design, gastronomy, literature and music (UNESCO, 2021). This diversity of fields of action provides a broad platform of opportunities to enhance the cultural riches that each city in the world possesses, since today it has been possible to appreciate that cities play an important role as spaces of cultural influence, social inclusion and catalysts of economic development (Olmedo-Barchello et al., 2020).

The network aims to achieve the enabling and transforming power of culture and creativity in building cities that are resilient, sustainable and prepared for the future, thus supporting the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017). One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that it seeks to achieve is to increase, in a coordinated manner, the well-being and improvement of the standard of living of the millions of people who inhabit the planet through a joint effort of humanity. According to Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, the SDGs are the most universal, comprehensive and ambitious agenda that has been created in history, encompassing everyone without exception and constituting a paradigm shift that requires us all to work in an innovative way (UNESCO, 2017).

Literature Review

The Gualaceo canton of the Republic of Ecuador is located in a privileged territory of the Andes. It has a spring atmosphere that, thanks to these climatic conditions, has been recognized as Jardín el Azuay (Garden of Azuay), being one of the most productive valleys in the province since its strategic location makes it possible to grow flowers, fruits, trees, and plants.

In this order and thanks to the riches of Gualaceo, cultural resources are framed that have been maintained for years in the place, such as the Carnival festival, a renowned festivity of the place and with the historical context of its origin, since thanks to its warm climates and beautiful shores is a nationally recognized holiday. Carnival is a multicolored celebration that brings together local, national and international people. The celebration begins with the traditional folk parade that takes place in the center of the canton. Where groups of people participate with native dances, town bands, modern dances and allegorical cars representing the joy of carnival. On these dates, the participants in this celebration prepare themselves with flour, water and foam to catch the carnival game. The natural riches of the canton, such as the banks of the Santa Bárbara and San Francisco Rivers, become favorable places for these activities, which also accompany this celebration with astronomic recipes such as sweet figs, beans, coconut, milk for accompany the traditional gualaceño carnival bread.

The Cantonization Festivities that take place on June 25, is a civic celebration that includes religious, cultural, sports and artistic activities prepared annually. In addition, craft and gastronomic fairs are held to offer what Gualaceo has to its own and visitors. In the cantonization, the election of the cholita and queen of Gualaceo is held, which is a tradition of several consecutive years. Among its traditions is the Night of Fantasy, which takes place on the banks of the Santa Bárbara River in a tour on a barge adorned with lights for the queen-elect, full of fireworks. The civic-military parade is continuously held, where they participate with native and modern dances, allegorical cars, peace bands, etc. After the parade, the solemn session takes place where recognitions are designated to illustrious people of the canton and an annual report of work in the territory. This festival culminates with the burning of castles, fireworks and a great popular dance for the people of Gualaceo and its visitors.

On July 25 of each year, the festival takes place in honor of the apostle Santiago, patron saint of the Gualaceo canton. The Battle of Moors and Christians, an event recognized for the scenic representation linked to the fights of the ancient Christians with the Arabs, in the Iberian Peninsula. The traditional dance of the contradanza, dances in a coming and going of jumps and turns spinning the umbrellas, which finally ends with an interlacing of ribbons by the dancers forming beautiful figures around the stick that holds the colorful ribbons. The procession has the presence of the traditional pendoreros, those people who carry a banner, which is a kind of religious emblem that is used in the procession. It consists of a stick approximately one meter long, on its upper part a cross, from the lower part comes a white cloth that is strangled two or three times, creating some spheres that have internal material to maintain their figure and their sides. ribbons on both sides for the companions making this festivity one of the most popular religious celebrations in the canton.

The festival of the Christmas Parade, is the most important cultural expression in the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, thus being one of the most influential in the Gualaceo Canton. In the canton, this celebration links the familiar with the religious where adults, youth and children dressed in costumes representing biblical characters form an immense troupe mostly by means of allegorical cars. This celebration is accompanied by a unique gastronomic drink of the canton, the Rosero, a typical drink of the Christmas season that is made from fruits that grow in the place. Christmas Parade runs through the entire historic center of the city, where the image of the Christmas Parade carried by the comadre who is the one who presides over the procession and is designated annually. The organization of this parade is also accompanied by dances and bands from the town that sing Christmas carols honoring the Christmas season, thus being this particular, authentic and original event of the intangible cultural heritage of Gualaceo.

Methods

For the development of this research, a GQM (Goal, Question and Metrics) methodology was used, consisting of objectives, questions and metrics in a hierarchical structure proposed by Heiko Koziolok (2008). To meet the general objective of determining the potential of the Gualaceo Canton through its inclusion in the UNESCO network of creative cities, an initial part of bibliographic review was carried out on the parameters and regulations established by UNESCO for applications to the network of creative cities. Once the information was acquired through the bibliographic review, a description of the UNESCO requirements for the application and acceptance of candidates in the network of creative cities was made, later a historical recount of the events / festivities of Carnival, Cantonization, Moors and Christians that are festivities typical of the place and that have their role as cultural elements of great relevance in the cultural industry of the Canton. Next, a comparative analysis was carried out between the UNESCO requirements and the resources that Gualaceo possesses, the study of some national and foreign

cities that are currently part of the network was also used to determine if the Gualaceo Canton has what is required by the net.

According to Koziolok, interviewing relevant people and verifying the descriptions of available processes or products help to define the objectives (Koziolok, 2008). Thus, with the objective of knowing in depth the knowledge and cultural traditions that the Gualaceo Canton has, interviews were developed based on a non-probabilistic sampling technique for convenience, which makes it possible to select accessible cases that allow them to be included for convenience. accessibility and proximity of the subjects to the researcher (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). In the interviews, a series of semi-structured questions was used for members of the community, public sector servants and small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the Canton. With the information obtained from the interviews, a detailed description of the cultural industry that the Gualaceo canton possesses was made in order to be able to analyze what it possesses and the needs that it has to face in order to make its potentialization possible by entering the network of creative cities.

The first interviewees, members of the community, provided information of a historical nature about the tradition of each festivity, its preparations, needs and changes that have been generated in its development. From the second group of interviewees, servants of the public sector, it was possible to learn about the municipal planning of the events analyzed and the economic impact that is generated thanks to these festivities for the city. From the third phase of interviews with small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the city, information was collected on the level of sales during the events under analysis. To provide an answer to the goal of the research, the plan was used from the bottom up to interpret the results, thus allowing to measure the feasibility of Gualaceo entering the network of creative cities in the field of crafts and popular arts using a comparative analysis with two specific cases, Duran, Ecuador and Chiapas, Mexico, members of the network of creative cities in the field of handicrafts and popular arts from 2015 to the present.

Results

Table 1. Fulfillment of Requirements Network of Creative Cities – Gualaceo

Application requirements for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network	Requirements for the Gualaceo Canton
Participatory Process	80%
Approach with a vision of the future	100%
Inclusive Sustainable Development	75%
Long-term commitment	0%
Sustainable Action Plan, Capacities and Resources	66%
Exchanges and Cooperation	0%
Total Percentage Achieved by Gualaceo Canton	53,5%

Participatory Process: It is made up of five guidelines, of which the Gualaceo canton complies with four of these, representing 80%. First requirement, the call for candidatures is possible for cities from all

UNESCO Member and Associate States. In the case of the Republic of Ecuador, this is a member country of the United Nations Organization for Culture, Science and Education since 1947 (“UNESCO,” 2021).

Second, the organization has the ability to restrict the call for applications. As of 2021 it has been established that applications from only two cities in the same country will be accepted from the same member state, provided that each one is applying to different creative fields.

Third, a city that has applied to the network consecutively and failed to become a member is forced to wait 4 years to submit a new application. The Loja canton of the Republic of Ecuador is a city that began a project with the intention of being part of the UNESCO creative cities network in the creative field of music in 2017. Loja sent its application in 2019 without being accepted in the network and in 2021 they tried again with a second application (Diaz, 2021). The result of this application is not known until now, since the new cities that become members of the network before their designation are kept waiting for a whole selection process carried out by the network. In the case of Loja and in accordance with the requirements of the network, if the city does not obtain designation after its second application, it must wait a four-year moratorium period. This case is taken into account because, due to the non-acceptance of Loja in the network, it opens the possibility for Gualaceo to participate in the next call for the network of creative cities, since the canton could be one of the two cities of the Republic of Ecuador that submits an application thus complying with the guidelines stipulated by the network.

Fourth, the organization and structuring of the application must be prepared by the municipality, since the documents required for the application are an official letter signed by the city authority and a letter of support from the National Commission for UNESCO of the essential resources. The participatory action of the municipality for an application in the network represents a challenge in Gualaceo, in the canton there is a lack of political will to develop an application to the network, which represents a highly complex barrier, since this guideline is one of the resources that is required to be part of the network of creative cities of UNESCO. On the other hand, regarding the requirement regarding support and action by the National Commission for UNESCO in Ecuador, it is known that it has provided the necessary support in applications made by other cities in the country, as is the case of Chordeleg and Duran, cities of the Republic of Ecuador that are currently part of the network, so Gualaceo will be able to meet this requirement.

Fifth, in the application it is necessary to demonstrate that, through a participatory process, all the actors of the city are linked, both public and private, and civil society. In the case of Gualaceo, it meets this requirement, since according to the surveys and interviews carried out with both the public, private and civil society, the cultural events that Gualaceo carries out create a synergy between all these actors, since for their development it requires different resources that come from all these and have an impact of a social, economic and cultural nature. This synergy and collaboration occur because the development of all the cultural activities of the canton are carried out with the participation of the canton's own inhabitants, with relatively little involvement of external actors.

Approach with a vision of the future: The guideline of approach with a vision of the future is made up of a single requirement which requires the linkage of all the cultural industry that the city owns that involves its cultural heritage and other creative assets, which through the structuring of a coherent and gradual action plan that contributes to the fulfillment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. What is expected is that every project that is carried out, in this case from culture and art, contributes to achieving sustainable development. In the case of the Gualaceo Canton, this requirement is met in its entirety, since the Territorial Development Plan, the Annual Planning Plan, as well as all the cultural events of the canton are developed with the Sustainable Development Goals as a guide.

Inclusive Sustainable Development: Among the requirements that must be met in terms of the guideline regarding sustainable and inclusive development, four have been established, of which the canton meets three, thus representing 75% compliance. As a first request, it is necessary that the city has plans that encourage sustainable urban development having culture and creativity as the main pillar to achieve development objectives through the organization of programs that in the action plan demonstrate the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of the United Nations at the city level, producing an integrating impact that encompasses economic, social and environmental aspects. The Gualaceo canton guarantees the focus on the Sustainable Development Goals in the planning and structuring of its cultural events that are regulated in the Territorial Development and Planning Plans and the Annual Planning Plan.

Second, the cities must express their motivation for the application, the main challenges and opportunities that will arise, their global development goal, policies and planning on the desired impact after a possible annexation to the network. For Gualaceo, the lack of political will in the canton represents an obstacle in complying with this requirement, since the canton, not having the support of the public entity in charge, faces difficulties when carrying out planning and analysis of all the challenges and weaknesses of the canton, which in turn generates a lack of knowledge of the opportunities that a designation can offer the canton.

Third, the city is required to have quality and innovative policies and measures, focused on encouraging the creation and increase of local cultural and creative industries within the creative field to which it intends to apply. Within the application form, you must indicate directly to which of the seven creative fields, crafts and popular arts, digital arts, cinema, design, gastronomy, literature and music, you are applying. However, despite the fact that it is necessary to indicate a single creative field, applicant cities are encouraged to seek to also promote areas belonging to other creative fields and create a synergy between them. The Gualaceo canton would focus on making an application in the creative field of handicrafts and popular arts in order to potentiate its traditional events of Carnival, Cantonization Parties, Moors and Christians and the Christmas Parade. In these festivities, colorful parades take place through which the art made by artisan hands from Gualaceo is witnessed, as well as many other representations of the culture such as clothing, allegorical cars, decorations, accessories, gastronomy and music that reflect the creativity existing in the canton. The cultural events that take place in Gualaceo are held annually and on historically established dates, and it is on these dates that the development of a diverse creative industry takes place, since in each of these the elaboration total of the artisanal resources necessary for the development of these traditions. It is important to mention that these events, despite being unique and different each year in terms of creative expression, always seek to keep the essence of the traditions they represent intact.

The fourth guideline requires that the applicant city possess the necessary skills to create synergies between the specific creative field of application and the other creative fields of the network. Gualaceo, complies with this guideline since in all the festivities a synergy is created with the other creative fields of the network, in a very significant way with those of gastronomy, music and design, essential factors in the development of each one of the traditions of Gualaceo.

Long-term commitment: The guideline regarding long-term commitment is made up of a single requirement, which establishes that cities whose application is accepted commit to presenting a four-year follow-up report to guarantee their commitment to strengthening the exchange of good practices between cities and their active participation in the annual conferences of the network of creative cities. In the case of Gualaceo, this requirement is not met, for this reason it presents a percentage of 0%. The lack of technical resources with knowledge about international relations in the municipality hinders the structuring of an application in the network, international cooperation plans with other creative cities and active participation in international conferences. It is for this reason that it is necessary for the canton to have both economic, human and technical resources destined to the management of international relations, this in order to be able to strengthen its resources and capacities through projects that involve international actors as is the case from UNESCO. It is also important that these international projects are developed with a long-term approach, since in the case, for example, of the UNESCO network application, a long period of time is required to comply with the steps of the application, and if the city is accepted, with the projects that ensure compliance with the objectives of the network and that manage to generate the expected benefits in the city.

Sustainable Action Plan, Capabilities and Resources: In this guideline a total of six requirements have been established to be met, the canton of Gualaceo meets four, representing a percentage of 66%. The first requirement asks the city to attach a four-year action plan that presents specific projects and programs with impacts both locally and internationally that must be developed once the city is accepted as a member of the network. These plans must detail the impacts and expected results, priorities, capabilities and both human and financial resources that will be involved, and they will also be evaluated through reports presented by the city periodically. The public part of the Gualaceo canton in its policies establishes as one of its objectives the maintenance of the existing traditions in the city, which are regulated in the Territorial Development Plan and in the Annual Planning Plan; this guarantees, under the law, the preservation of culture. Additionally, these policies and regulations establish the allocation of economic, human and technical resources for the development and maintenance of the canton's own traditions. This is very important since it is essential to ensure the viability and sustainability of the festivities through financial planning that guarantees a budget for their development.

As a second requirement, it is established that the applicant city must ensure the intervention and participation of the local creative part (cultural organizations, artisans, artists, creators, etc.) in the planning and development of the application. In the Gualaceo canton there is no center or organization in charge exclusively of cultural activities, this may be due to the fact that the festivities and cultural events take place annually, so it has not been seen as necessary to have an organization that works all year round. In these types of events. On the other hand, for the application, the participation of all the actors that constitute the local creative area is required. Regarding this, to meet this requirement, in Gualaceo there is a need to carry out a socialization about the intention of making an application to the UNESCO network of creative cities, this in order to attract the interest and support of society. , and that in this way it is also possible to encourage the public sector to get involved in this process in order to set in motion actions that can contribute to the development of the canton.

Third, the applicant city must have a specific infrastructure for the management and execution of the action plan proposed in the application. For the canton, the creation of a specific infrastructure for the execution of these festivities is a complex issue, since the Gualaceños traditions are developed annually, so the necessary infrastructure is temporary. The traditions of Gualaceo are developed in existing spaces and infrastructures, such as the church of the canton, acoustic shell, stadium, shores, historic center of the city, among others that are adapted in a particular way on the dates in which they have placed the festivities. This factor allows the adaptation of the existing infrastructures of the canton to be different year after year, which shows the existence of an innovative creativity that in turn maintains the conservation of the essence of the traditional ones as a pillar. Despite the fact that no exclusive infrastructure has been built for the festivities, it must be taken into account that these existing infrastructures need economic resources for their maintenance and adaptation, which represent expenses that the canton has to face in order to guarantee the development of its activities. cultural events.

As a fourth requirement, it is established that the historical context and the creative field of crafts and popular arts must be fundamental pillars in the development of the cultural activities of the applicant city. In the interviews conducted with the public, private and civil society, the sense of belonging that the population has with the festivities that Gualaceo carries out year after year was discussed. Given this, all the interviewees agreed that the canton has a population that identifies widely with the customs of Carnival, Cantonization Festivities, Moors and Christians and the Christmas Parade this sense of belonging is the result of the historical knowledge and meaning behind these festivities as well as the pride of developing them using their own creativity that is embodied in all the details, objects, and products that make it possible to maintain its essence.

The fifth requirement establishes that it must be ensured that the sense of belonging, impact and quality of the projects proposed by the city encourage and guarantee greater participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups in society in cultural events. The festivities that take place in the Gualaceo canton have been maintained by the strong sense of belonging that its population has with each of these traditions. However, according to the interviews carried out with the different actors that participate in the organization and development of these cultural events, it is known that in the development of these activities there is no specific plan of action for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, for people with special disabilities who use wheelchairs for their mobilization, mention that adaptations have been made to provide facilities, such as the placement of ramps, or adequate infrastructure to facilitate their mobilization, but they are minimal and little elaborated adaptations. However, it was mentioned that in recent years efforts have been made to provide greater attention to the most vulnerable sectors. Another example of inclusion that has been implemented in Gualaceo has been to send invitations to vulnerable groups in which they are made a special call to be part of these traditions. However, it was mentioned that there has not always been a positive response, making this an insignificant and inefficient strategy. It was commented that it seeks to implement a specific space within the development of these cultural events where vulnerable people are really involved, this is expected to be achieved by establishing specific roles or tasks that these people will be able to perform in the cultural events of the canton.

Sixth requirement, it is established that the applicant city must clearly and strategically structure the analysis, feasibility and consistency of the proposed action plan, focusing on its contribution to the network's objectives at both a local and international level. The action plan proposed in the application is consistent with the legal statutes of the municipality where the conservation of the traditions of the canton is sought. With regard to viability, there are long-term plans, such as the Christmas Parade, which represents one of the most important traditions in the canton and which, due to its characteristics and religious ties, is

an event that is guaranteed to develop and produce during the next 15 years, this became known as a result of the interview with the parish priest of the canton where it was revealed about the existence of a group of people who have voluntarily enlisted as priests to carry out this festivity in the next 15 years. This demonstrates once again the sense of belonging of the population towards these festivities and their dedication and effort to preserve them.

Exchanges and Cooperation: In the guideline of exchanges and cooperation, a single requirement has been established, the Gualaceo canton does not comply with it, so its compliance percentage is 0%. The requirement establishes that the applicant cities must demonstrate their commitment, sufficiency and capacity to develop cooperation programs and initiatives at the national, regional and international levels with UNESCO and with the other members of the network. The canton has generated transversal projects in the development of these festivities with other creative fields such as gastronomy, design and music, this locally and nationally, but not internationally, which is seen as one of the greatest shortcomings of the city, this is due to the lack of human resources with the necessary knowledge to create international links. Ignorance in international cooperation is a relevant factor that Gualaceo must take into account, since the lack of involvement that the canton has with the existing resources abroad prevents the city from potentiating its cultural industry. An openness towards the outside in order to seek opportunities and benefits is what Gualaceo must implement in order to guarantee better production, development and dissemination of its traditions. In the case of Gualaceo, local fairs are held in each of the festivities in order to boost the local economy of its artisans and other producers who participate in them. However, as mentioned above, the city does not have the technical or operational capacity to produce international fairs.

The Gualaceo canton reached a percentage of compliance with the requirements of the UNESCO creative cities network of 53.5%. Among the main requirements that the canton fails to meet is the political will necessary for the application and subsequent fulfillment of the network's objectives. This factor plays a relevant role that significantly affects various requirements of the network, since the lack of political will strongly hinders a possible application, this is because the municipality must be the entity that leads the process of developing a proposal for a candidacy for the net. In addition, the lack of human and technical capital with knowledge in international relations in the municipality is another shortcoming and an essential issue to consider and integrate if one really seeks to potentiate the resources that the canton has at the international level. On the other hand, in a more positive aspect, Gualaceo, thanks to the wonderful cultural resources it possesses, which it has been able to maintain over the years, has the potential to be part of it and take advantage of the benefits it offers its members. Requirements such as the existence of cultural resources, local creative industry, sense of belonging and identity of its inhabitants with the festivities are requirements that the canton already has, which motivate to propose an application and enable the scope of a designation for Gualaceo as a creative city of the UNESCO. However, there are also several factors to consider within the development of these cultural events, which need attention, modification, action and strengthening so that Gualaceo can carry out a comprehensive candidacy towards the network, in which compliance with all the guidelines is guaranteed. that the network establishes and the incorporation of the canton in the network is achieved.

Discussion y Conclusion

The Gualaceo Canton of the Republic of Ecuador, is a territory that enjoys great cultural riches that provide vast opportunities for empowerment. The UNESCO creative cities network seeks to encourage all cities in the world to enhance their culture and creativity as an alternative for sustainable development. The network seeks to support the Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 by fulfilling the 17 established objectives. These goals seek to generate a universal call for action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the quality of life for all human beings around the world (Johnston, 2016). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations were established taking into account factors that encourage the achievement of a better quality of life that guarantees social, economic and political inclusion, labor rights, gender equality, decent jobs, and environmental care among others factors that are considered essential to achieve full development of the human being.

UNESCO is an organization that celebrates and considers culture as one of the main pillars of every society, it is also an organization that believes in the Sustainable Development Goals and that with its plans and projects seeks to contribute to their fulfillment. It is for this reason that the fact that culture, its promotion and conservation are not part of these objectives that claim to seek the sustainable development of peoples is striking. Culture consists of common patterns of behavior that are learned from the members of a certain society, which governs a characteristic lifestyle of a certain group of people (Acuña Barrantes & Nonell

Torres, 2015). Culture is an essential part of every individual, it comes from a unique context and history, it generates behavior patterns, it allows creating common goals, sharing and celebrating traditions. It is something so unique and characteristic of each community and Each individual that it has been what has individual and has been what has prevented globalization from turning the world into a single village where our own distinctive tastes, preferences, traditions, customs and behaviors are eliminated and discarded to give step to a place where history, experiences and experiences have no relevance and where being unique and proud of what is different is seen as insignificant.

With this research work it has been possible to know the importance and power that culture has in each society. It is something that makes us different and therefore striking in the eyes of the world, it is something that, if respected, conserved and enhanced, can contribute as much or more than the other objectives to achieving sustainable development for a community, city, country or region. If we talk about sustainability, how can we put aside our essence, if that is what makes us unique and different and it is that diversity that makes the world such an extraordinary place. By grouping the SDGs into three different areas, economic, social and environmental, it can be seen that culture and creativity play a transversal role that creates a synergy between all of them (Hosagrahar, 2017). From an economic aspect, culture has a very important weight since it is directly involved in the creation and potentialization of industries as well as the economic revitalization of cities. Through different types of cultural expressions, such as the commercialization of cultural products such as handicrafts, art, music, cultural services such as festivities, parades, dances, the development of resources required for the production, dissemination and creation of cultural representations, among others stimulate the local economy. From a social aspect, culture is a factor that gives identity and belonging to societies. The socially exploited culture can play an important role in establishing norms of behavior that guarantee an integral society that focuses on working towards sustainable development. On the other hand, from an environmental perspective, culture, having the power to implement behaviors in society, has the ability to make human beings aware of the importance of caring for and respecting the environment, thus guaranteeing a better standard of living for all living beings.

The Gualaceo canton has great cultural resources that have a significant impact on the social, economic and environmental spheres. This link with all other spheres of society highlights the importance of culture as a means to achieve sustainable development that provides benefits and opportunities for all. From a social aspect, Gualaceños have a great sense of identity and belonging to their culture, a factor that is important and essential to take into account in order to consider culture as a basis for local development because without a sense of identity, the development of events and other cultural representations would not be possible. The impact of cultural events in the economic field is demonstrated by verifying that on the dates in which the Gualaceo festivities take place, various economic sectors of the city such as gastronomy, hotels, clothing, production of massive events, and others register a significant increase in their income, the income of these sectors is approximately double compared to the rest of the year when there is no cultural event. Something very important that should be known is that among these businesses that are involved and benefited from cultural events, there is a large percentage of women's work. Women in the cultural field of Gualaceo have an important role in the development of festivities. Since they are mostly female people who work in the elaboration of costumes, clothing and gastronomy area. This specific case of women's work encourages an application in the network since it meets Sustainable Development Goal 5, which contributes to gender equality (United Nations Organization, 2016). These increases in the economic income of Gualaceo become a motivational factor to potentiate even more and with a broader focus as it is at an international level all the resources that the city has. Well, all the cultural resources that the canton possesses can be used to contribute to the development of the local economy, thus contributing to the third Sustainable Development Goal regarding local production and, in turn, supporting the generation of employment in the canton through the creation of jobs which is the goal of sustainable development goal 8 that focuses on decent work and economic growth (United Nations Organization, 2017).

With the aim of potentiating cultural resources, not only national but also international spaces are sought that allow culture and its components to be celebrated. The UNESCO creative cities network is a platform that seeks the recognition of culture as an essential factor in the development of peoples, but above all in the recognition and celebration of the differences between peoples. In this research work, the possibility that the Gualaceo canton can be part of this network is analyzed and it was determined that among the greatest challenges that the Gualaceo canton is faced to achieve its incorporation into the network of creative cities, two of high impact, the first focused on the lack of political will existing in the territory, and on the other hand the lack of human resources in the public sector with knowledge and domain in the field of international relations.

In the present investigation, the results obtained, both positive and negative, show that Gualaceo has challenges and opportunities when considering an application to the UNESCO network of creative cities. According to interviews with members of the public sector, the duration of the term in office of mayors is a factor that hinders an application in the network of creative cities, since to make an application in the network the process is demanding. The extensive and the short duration of the terms of the mayors generates a demotivation and lack of political will towards these projects, this is because the results of the management will most likely not be seen during their terms as mayors. On the other hand, there is a lack of resources that have knowledge and expertise in the field of international cooperation, which is an even more important factor, although it is true that in order to apply for an online candidacy, a letter addressed from the highest authority of the canton, but we must take into account that said authority is not going to develop everything individually and authoritatively, it will always need advice on international issues.

On the other hand, the requirements established to make an application to the network are demanding and require a link between all the actors of society, both from the public and private sectors and civil society. In the case of Gualaceo, the lack of resources creates a very influential obstacle in the attempt to potentiate the cultural resources that the territory possesses, the lack of knowledge of opportunities that international organizations could offer to the canton means that its potential is not exploited and appreciated in an appropriate way that provides greater cultural, economic, social, environmental development.

Another essential factor to take into account is the involvement of people in vulnerable conditions. In the case of Gualaceo, there is currently no action plan that facilitates the participation of vulnerable groups in cultural events in the canton. At present, attempts have been made to link and take this part of society into account, by sending invitations to these vulnerable groups, but it has not received a favorable reception. The canton must employ an action strategy that involves the most vulnerable, thus guaranteeing compliance with objective number 10 of sustainable development, which seeks to reduce inequality within and between countries, in this specific case locally in the reduction of inequality towards vulnerable people in the canton.

Although the canton of Gualaceo has many challenges to face for an online application from the perspective of political will and existing resources for planning its candidacy as a member of the network, on the other hand, if analyzed from the perspective of cultural resources required for an application, the canton has ample opportunities. The preservation of the traditions of the festivities of Carnival, Cantonization, Moors and Christians and the Christmas Parade are cultural resources that put the canton in the capacity to belong to the network with the aim of potentiating its resources at an international level. The events that currently take place in Gualaceo become novel events for Gualaceo's people and foreigners due to their high content of identity, culture and creativity.

There have been many traditions that have been maintained, however there are others that have disappeared over time. In the past, an event called "El Festival del Durazno" took place, this was a festivity that occurred in honor of the great peach productions that existed in Gualaceo, this festivity unfortunately disappeared approximately 35 years ago. This is an example of the importance of preserving traditions. The peach festival calls our attention to the magnitude that culture has in the development of cities, since with the disappearance of this festival there were economic impacts on society, since this date was a time of both economic and social revitalization. The disappearance of this festival is linked to an environmental factor which was the lack of peach production in the territory. The lack of environmental care caused the disappearance of one of the strongest productions in the canton and, as a consequence, a cultural expression from Gualaceo also disappeared. Therefore, the important link that exists between environmental care as a basis for the conservation of cultural events is highlighted.

There are many actors who are involved in the development of cultural events, the public, private and civil society. It was sought to know a historical context of the festivities used for a possible application in the network, and it was known that the festivities of the canton have been maintained for decades and that currently they have had to face several changes and adaptations. Although the festivities try to maintain their essence, they do not remain identical to how they were in the beginning, but have had to adapt to the generational changes that have occurred over the years. For example, the development of the events that take place in Gualaceo was formerly done in a public but quite limited way where the majority of the families of the city met, but over the years it became an event of abundance of great scope leading to the creation of massive events for both local and national and international.

Being part of the UNESCO creative cities network presents benefits, opportunities, challenges and obligations. The benefits that the network offers its members go beyond the international positioning that

the network has, since it contributes to the member cities being recognized throughout the planet and through this, their cultural resources are potentialized in pursuit of reaching further local development. Another benefit of the network is that it promotes the conservation of the traditions of the canton, allowing the strengthening of the identity. This benefit, in addition to providing a conservation of traditions, also promotes its dissemination, production and potentialization.

There are many benefits that the cities that are already part of the network have received, Durán of the Republic of Ecuador, was the first city in the country and Latin America to be recognized as a member of the network within the creative field of handicrafts and popular arts. Among the benefits that Durán has managed to achieve has been to be able to strengthen the pride and sense of belonging of its inhabitants, thus generating support for the conservation and maintenance of the culture of the territory (Durán Ciudad Creativa, s.f). In addition, it has managed to generate meeting spaces that benefit the community where you can see a staging of the creativity that exists in the place, which through the acculturation events that are carried out, has a positive impact on the economy of the city.

San Cristóbal de las Casas in Mexico is also a creative city in the same creative field of crafts and popular arts and was the first city in Mexico to consider the creative economy as an alternative for its development, seeking a paradigm shift to generate scenarios that guarantee the prosperity of the city and the communities of one of the poorest regions of the country (Solozano, 2017). According to Solozano (2017), who used an analysis of the case of San Cristóbal de las Casas in order to analyze the results that being part of the network has generated in the city. It is found as one of them the promotion of the local economy through the creation of an important market for its artisan products and services, which has in turn achieved that its products combine innovation, design and tradition and that they are marketed locally, regionally, internationally generating income for the artisan families of the territory.

Finally, the designation of a city as a "Creative City of UNESCO" should not be seen only as a recognition for the city, but as a commitment on the part of the city itself to develop plans that allow taking advantage of the benefits offered by the network and thus truly achieve the potential of its cultural resources in pursuit of achieving sustainable development. It is also a commitment of the members of the network to maintain a spirit of cooperation that allows generating ideas and projects that not only seek their own benefit but also that of the other cities belonging to the network.

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Annexes

Public Sector Municipality

- In the public area, do you work on what political strategies or plans exist to support the maintenance of the carnival festivities, cantonization, Moors and

Christians and the Christmas Parade? Is there an economic planning for the maintenance of these festivities, does the municipality designate an economic percentage within its annual plan for them?

- Have cultural facilities and infrastructures been created or maintained that are linked to the development of these festivities? Which?
- What are the actors involved in these festivities? Historically, analyzing, do you consider that these festivities generate an involvement of all actors in Gualaceo, both public, private and civil society? What is the role of the actors? ● Do you consider that the entire civil society of Gualaceo has a sense of belonging to these festivities and that, furthermore, in their celebration, people in a state of vulnerability in Gualaceo society are taken into account, (provide context of the vulnerable disabled, indigenous communities, women, elderly people and others...)?
- What is the economic and social impact that these festivities generate for the canton?
- How do you think it is possible to generate an innovation (with the objective of promoting tourism, environment, for the development of the festivities that exist in the canton? Preamble of UNESCO's international cooperation in the cultural and creative field
- Does Gualaceo with UNESCO or the Gualaceo canton have experience in linking with international organizations or actors that promote the creative field that it possesses?
- Has Gualaceo submitted an application to the creative cities network? Why?

YES/NO

- Do you consider that the municipality of Gualaceo has the technical capacity to handle international cooperation projects? Why?

Public Sector Priest

- Do you know from when the historical part of how the tradition of the Moors and Christians festivities and the Christmas Parade was born?

What is the role of the church in the organization of what strategies or plans exist to support the maintenance of Moorish and Christian festivities and the Christmas Parade?

- Every time the festivities arrive do you have to create things or maintain things for the development of the festivities?
- Have facilities and infrastructures, cultural objects that are linked to the development of these festivities been created or maintained?
- Do you consider that the entire civil society of Gualaceo has a sense of IDENTITY, belonging (SPECIFY pride, own) with these festivities and that, in addition, people in a state of vulnerability in Gualaceo society are taken into account in their celebration? From part of the church to include the vulnerable.

Interview Private Sector Clothing Rental – Lodging – Gastronomy – Artistic Show

and Scenographies ● Is your income impacted by the holidays?

YES / NO

Yes, an estimate of the increase with percentage

- Are most of your clients from Gualaceo or from outside the city or outside the country? (accommodation, gastronomy, rent) Scenography if infrastructure from other places and shows from other parts are involved.

Interview Civil Society Sector

Historical narrative

Do you know how many years these traditional festivities have been taking place in the canton? Could you narrate each one of them and the context that you know?

1. Carnival
 2. Cantonization
 3. Moors and Christians
 4. Christmas Parade
- How these traditions have evolved - what was before and what is now.
 - New generations maintain that they like to be involved (RECOMMENDATIONS) (Cultural facilities and infrastructures that are linked to the development of these festivities have been created or maintained)

- You are proud of these traditions you have counted out of these traditions.
- Do you consider that all of Gualaceo's civil society has a sense of belonging to these festivities and that, in addition, people in a state of vulnerability in Gualaceo society are taken into account when celebrating them?

MEANING OF THINGS

- In your opinion, what cultural factors are used in the festivities of the canton? Parades, Dances, Dances, Gastronomy, religious affiliation, local identity, tangible and intangible heritage, religiosity, customs and traditions, etc.