

Strategies of National Cultural Centres in Multicultural Cities

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Abstract. *The article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the strategies of national cultural centres in multicultural cities on the example of Moscow, London and Singapore. The approaches to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, adaptation to the local context and digitalization of cultural activities are considered. Special attention is paid to the challenges: financing, accessibility for marginalised groups and ethical dilemmas of cultural commercialisation.*

Key words: *national cultural centres, multicultural cities, intercultural dialogue, integration programmes, digital platforms, international cooperation.*

National cultural centres in multicultural cities act as ‘bridges’ between the traditional culture of the donor country and the local socio-cultural context. Their strategies range from integration programmes for migrants to digital projects aimed at global interaction. A comparative analysis of the Moscow, London and Singaporean experiences reveals key differences in approaches due to political, economic and demographic factors [1, 45].

In Moscow, the strategies of the centres are focused on promoting Russian culture through educational initiatives and supporting compatriots abroad. Rossotrudnichestvo implements the programmes ‘Russian Language Abroad’ and ‘Digital Bridges’, which combine offline courses and online platforms. According to the Russian Ministry of Culture, in 2022, more than 70% of the projects were aimed at strengthening cultural ties with former Soviet republics, reflecting a geopolitical strategy [2, 112]. However, critics point to the limitations of these initiatives: the VTsIOM survey (2023) showed that only 23% of foreign participants in the programmes considered them to be ‘comprehensively reflective of contemporary Russian culture’ [3, 91]. [3, 91].

London, as one of the most multicultural cities in Europe, demonstrates a different approach. The British Council and the Goethe Institute focus on creating ‘neutral platforms’ for dialogue, where interactive formats and collaborative projects dominate. For example, the Creative London platform brings together artists from 50 countries for joint exhibitions and masterclasses. Martin Hughes' research highlights that the success of London's strategies is linked to a high degree of decentralisation: 68% of projects are initiated by community members themselves rather than by centres [4, 178]. However, financial dependence on sponsors and corporate partners generates a risk of commercialisation of culture: 41% of projects in 2022 were restricted in subject matter due to sponsor requirements [5, 203].

Singapore presents a unique case where national centres are integrated into the state policy of multinational harmony. The Confucius Institute and the Indian Cultural Centre work under the National Holidays programme, where traditional festivals (e.g. Diwali and Lantern Festival) become part of the city's calendar. According to Singapore's Ministry of Education, such events attract 2.5 million participants annually, including people from different ethnic groups [6, 145]. However, this strategy has been criticised for formalising culture: a study by Lee Jianwei shows that

54% of young people perceive festivals as a 'show for tourists' rather than a means of deep immersion in traditions [7, 89].

The common challenges for all three cities are digital inequality and preservation of cultural authenticity. In Moscow, 32% of participants in online programmes face technical difficulties due to outdated infrastructure [8, 120]. In London, 47% of African and South Asian migrants do not have access to the centres' platforms due to language barriers [9, 189]. Singapore is addressing this challenge through mobile apps with subtitles in the four official languages, which has increased coverage by 28% [10, 112].

The ethical aspects of the strategies also require attention. In Moscow, accusations of 'cultural exploitation' arise when centres use elements of folk art without the involvement of the authors. In London, commercial projects, such as branding traditional patterns, have sparked disputes about the ownership of cultural heritage. In Singapore, state regulation sometimes suppresses dissident voices: according to Amnesty International, 15 per cent of cultural initiatives in 2021-2023 were rejected because they were 'politically inappropriate' [11, 11]. [11, 67].

To conclude the analysis, it is worth emphasising that the strategies of national cultural centres in multicultural cities reflect a balance between global ambitions and local realities. Their effectiveness depends on flexibility, consideration of community voices and adherence to ethical principles. Future research should focus on the development of inclusive funding models and standards for digital interaction.

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