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Culture in Development Strategies of Small and Medium-sized European Cities: A Comparative Analysis

Abstract

In the past decades, many European cities have implemented culture development strategies as a way to respond to economic challenges, but also social, environmental and cultural requirements. Following a relational approach, we focus on the initiatives carry out in four small and medium-sized cities, located in intermediate and rural regions, in distinct European countries (Finland, Portugal, Czech Republic, France and England). Despite their special role and preponderance in European spatial territory, the increase mobility and connectivity of goods, services and people, these small urban these areas are often overlooked.

Chapter

In the last decades, a sequence of politico-economic events as well as technological innovations had marked extensively the development of European cities and regions. These events could be explained through an analysis of urbanisation processes which are conditioned by global dynamics and the changes that are occurring under capitalism (e.g. Scott, 2007, 2011; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; 2005).

The unprecedented level of urbanization that characterizes spatial development should be seen as a result of urban population growth and physical expansion of urban areas, but also in light of social and cultural changes that are occurring in everyday life of their citizens. More than 75%¹ of European population live in an assortment of settlements, from small and medium-sized towns to global cities, with different features, interdependencies and development paths. Besides physical alterations in terms of land use and the built-up areas, urbanisation also includes transformations in terms of functions and lifestyles (Madsen *et al.*, 2010). Socio-cultural practices associated with certain urbanity are appropriated and modified beyond the geopolitical boundaries of the cities. Furthermore, networks and flows, and the associated greater mobility and connectivity, have reformulated the restrict understanding of spaces and places, and consequently development policies, by integrating them in the wider global-local, urban-rural relationship.

Some authors stress the link between urbanization processes and the development of capitalism (e.g. Harvey, 1989a, 2012; Scott, 2007, 2011). The decline of classical manufacturing based industries in the mid-1970 and the consequent crisis of Fordism production system and welfare state regime in many Western countries, in addition to

¹ Data from EEA (European Environment Agency) (2006) *Urban sprawl in Europe The ignored challenge*. Report No 10. OPOCE (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities)

technological advances have given rise to a new economy characterised by new divisions of labour and modes of production and consumption (Amin, 1994; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 1989; Scott and Storper, 1992).

Looking for reconverting their urban economies and address the numerous social and environmental problems, many governments approved regulatory arrangements oriented to market rules and commodification in pursuit a neoliberal agenda, although with diverse intensities and expressions² (Brenner and Theodore, 2002, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Peck *et al* 2009; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez, 2002). Guided by imperatives of economic growth and increased competitiveness, local politicians have assumed a 'proactive role' or 'entrepreneurial approach' (Harvey, 1989b; Hall and Hubbard, 1998) and sought to develop new development strategies and forms of coordination with the participation of private, public and non-profit actors.

In the specific case of European Union, the rescaling of urban governance processes (Brenner, 2004) brought the enlargement of local governments' responsibilities and the decrease of financial resources with great impact on policy-making (Nibbering and Swart, 2008, Kuhmann, 2006). Moreover, urban policy agendas are regularly influenced by processes of mobility, assemblage and mutation (McCann 2008, 2011; McCann and Ward 2012; Temenos and McCann, 2013) through which knowledge, models and practices are transferred mobilized and adapted from place to place.

It is also important to notice that within European Union, there are significance differences among member states. The successive phases of EU enlargement from the outset reflect distinct conditions and asynchronous institutional changes. However, running the risk of generalizing, we also observe a certain degree of convergence towards an increasing relevance of the urban, market oriented economies, rescaling state processes and the emergence of new actors in development policies.

The ongoing changes mentioned above, had influence the evolution of European cultural policies, introducing new orientations and concerns in their formulation. One of the recurring subject, while domain of public intervention, it is the moving from a subsidiary vision, focused on the support to arts and heritage, to a more managerial attitude and the extension of the policy scope to include themes such as urban regeneration or creative industries. Another issue is the centrality of culture in development policies of territories, in pursuing economic and social gains, as well as sustainability goals. Further, the awareness of the economic relevance of the symbolic and aesthetic value of goods and services as well as the spaces where they are created, produced and consumed (Lash and Urry, 1994; Scott, 1997, 2000) and the increment of individual income and leisure time in western countries drew the attention of policymakers to the relevance of culture in local economies revitalisation, the so-called 'cultural economy' (Scott A. J., 1997; 2000; Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Gibson and Kong, 2005; etc.).

The cultural strategies formulated and implemented at local level reflect the rationales associated to development but also to culture thinking as well as the actors' power relations involved in governance process.

² For a typology of neoliberalisation phases in urban policy see for example Peck and Tickell (2002) 'Neoliberalizing space', *Antipode* 34: 380–403.

Given the large scale, diversity and density of relations and resources, research literature and policy models in urban studies tend to focus mainly on large cities and metropolises. Most of them neglected the culture-based development initiatives experimented in small cities (e.g. Bell and Jayne, 2006; Lorentzen and van Heur, 2012) and their capability to change their development path. However, these urban centres, particularly those in intermediate and rural regions have an important role for a balanced European spatial system³ as mediators between the centre and the periphery, the urban and the rural, or the local and the global. More, the increased mobility and connectivity, the potential to promote economic growth in non-traditional sectors as well as the demand for healthier lifestyles emphasize the necessity to understand what is happening in these cities.

Recently, there is more interest about how some urban centres outside metropolitan areas have include culture as a key component of their development approaches, and how these cities position themselves and take advantage of the opportunities and challenges posed by the current socio-economic and political situation.

Comparing culture development strategies in small and medium-sized European cities

For this purpose, we developed a comparative analysis of the culture development strategies that are taking place in four small and medium-sized cities, outside predominantly urban regions (Eurostat, 2012). The case studies are located in distinct European countries: Finland, Portugal, Czech Republic, and England to which correspond different socio-economic models and related value systems.

The investigation followed a relational approach focused on the political processes, the main actors involved (or excluded) and the specificities of the local contexts where they occur. We studied the initiatives and instruments through the analysis of different documents and interviews with key informants, reviewing the multiple references (images and representations, material reality and urban experiences) intrinsic to actors' discourses to reveal the several meanings that culture takes in urban policies.

After the description of the selected case studies, we summarize the principal key findings trying to emphasize the similarities and differences observed to point out plausible causal relationships (Ragin, 1987).

Jyväskylä, Central Finland, Finland

In Finland, after 1950, most public services related to the welfare society have been assigned or transferred to municipalities, continuing, however, under the tutelage of the state. After 1989 this autonomy was consolidated being the municipalities responsible for the provision of social and healthcare services, education, cultural services and technical infrastructure. Regarding cultural policy, until the 1960s, it was essentially an instrument of nation-state formation and promotion of national identity. Later, it turned into a sector of the welfare state policy, through a wide network of cultural institutions (Pyykkönen, Simanainen, Sokka, & Simanainen, 2009). The economic recession in the

³ Only 9.9% of the EU territory is designated as predominantly urban region, representing 42.4% of the European population. This classification is made according the new urban-rural typology for NUTS 3 regions. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Urban-rural_typology_update.

1990s questioned this approach and brought out an increasingly neoliberal market trend in public policies. Moreover, at that time, it was carried out an administration reform and various Regional Councils were created and responsible for regional development and planning. Culture became, increasingly, a way to achieve economic goals besides their intrinsic values. Nationally the creative industries have gained importance in order to improve international trade, economic growth and employment opportunities.

After 2009, the municipality of Jyväskylä joint a vast area of 1,171 km² of lakes, forests and hills and small villages in central Finland region. The municipality has a population of 132,062 inhabitants but the inner city counts only 25,587 residents. The compact city centre is surrounded by an attractive natural environment with many facilities to enjoy nature, practise sports and experience the traditional Finnish sauna.

Today, the city is renowned for its world class education, particularly due to the reputation of the University of Jyväskylä and the Jyväskylä Polytechnic. It is also well-known for the iconic architecture of the famous Alvar Aalto architect and as an important venue for international and national conferences and exhibitions, due to the existence of diverse facilities such as the versatile Congress and Trade Fair Centre. There is also a lively cultural scene promoted by theatre companies, orchestras and other performing groups; diverse popular events in art, music or sports; and cultural institutions like the Jyväskylä Art Museum, the Craft Museum of Finland or the Alvar Aalto Museum. Moreover, the Jyväskylä Centre for Printmaking provides artists facilities and residences.

Local development strategies promote ‘the human technology’ brand as a representation of the desire to build an innovative ecosystem centred on people. Socio-cultural development which includes environmental, health and wellbeing in citizens’ life along with creative entrepreneurship and economic growth is recurrent in the discourse of local policymakers but also of Regional Council of Central Finland. Likewise, citizen participation through local associations and networks is one of the main strengths to improve urban sustainable development. This is reflected in several initiatives, such as the Kangas and Lutakko areas renewal projects and the youth and cultural centre ‘Veturitallit’.

The economic crises that affected the region developed a resilient capacity in local community. New governance models were adopted to improve cooperation and interdisciplinary practices among private firms, policymakers, educational centres and citizens, the so-called ‘Quadruple Helix’. Two key development actors in the region are the Regional Development Company Jykes Ltd focused on boosting business opportunities linking companies and public sector in the region, and the Jyväskylä Innovation Ltd responsible by the development of the cluster strategy through Jyväskylä Region Centre of Expertise Programme.

The region has been benefiting from EU programs not only in terms of structural funds but also on knowledge exchange through diverse networks. These instruments had encouraged the relation between urban and regional development with social cohesion and cultural policies (Mitchell & Heiskanen, 2011) Cultural activities are mainly supported by public funds from the municipality and National and Regional Arts Councils but also by Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Nordic Fund.

As in other areas culture is seen in a transdisciplinary way, connecting domains such as the arts, welfare, and entrepreneurship and fostering collaboration between different partners.

Český Krumlov, South Bohemia, Czech Republic

Contemporary urban policy in Czech Republic reflects the profound transformations that had taken place in many post-socialist countries that joined EU. The transition from the high centralized control to a pluralist democracy and market-based economy gave more autonomy to local governments but also new responsibilities. In the late 1990s, local politicians became more aware of the importance of urban planning and the necessity to deal with sustainability issues. Since 2009 the economic crisis and the state budget deficit have had serious effects on the support of cultural projects, at national, regional and local level.

The city of Český Krumlov is situated in the administrative unit of South Bohemia Region, 25 km south of the regional capital České Budějovice, classified as a predominantly rural region (Eurostat, 2012). This medieval town grew up in an intersection of Vltava River, a privileged location on east-west communication route. Český Krumlov flourished as an important craft and trade centre as well as a cultural reference in Bohemia region, reflected in the remarkable Castle complex, declared national cultural property, and the Late Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque burgher houses. The well preserved medieval streets and the scenic river environment cause a strong impression and a sense of uniqueness. In addition, the attractive adjacent natural landscape of Šumava foothills provides various leisure activities, such as canoeing, cycling, hiking, etc.

The inclusion of the city centre, in 1992, on the UNESCO World Heritage List was an opportunity to pursue the protection and renewal of historic monuments and the economic revitalization of the town. New cultural facilities were opened, including the internationally renowned Egon Schiele Art Center. Over the past 20 years, the city has increased its national and international prestige and it became one of the most visited destinations in the Czech Republic. In general, the main actors of the community recognize the importance of heritage care but also of encouraging an authentic cultural atmosphere that had attracted in the past many artists all around the world, the *genius loci*.

Throughout the year, Český Krumlov offers many popular cultural events, such as the Five-Petalled Rose Celebrations and the Festival of Baroque Arts. The build heritage and events agenda improve people's memories and cultural identity expressed in numerous associations for residents. There are also non-profit organizations working in cultural field such as Foundation of the Baroque Theater in Český Krumlov, the Chamber Music Festival Foundation or the Český Krumlov Artists' Union.

The Český Krumlov administration established a company to manage and protect the properties in historic centre, Český Krumlov Development Fund, and a tourism department to implement all marketing activities and tourism strategy of the city. The touristic revenues and municipal buildings' rents are reinvested in the development of projects such as the FotoAtelier Seidel.

One of the biggest problems is the significant decrease of the number of permanent residents in the historic centre over the past 20 years and the reconversion of the residential function into tourist services. Among local actors is frequent the discussion about the benefits of tourist income and jobs creation in this sector and the objective of maintaining the authenticity and preservation. It also emphasized the desire of keeping the town spiritually alive for and with the participation of local community.

Most of cultural projects, even from private initiative, are developed with the financial support of the city of Český Krumlov, the central state, as well as the South Bohemian Region. UNESCO Heritage Programme, European programmes and the EEA and Norwegian Grants are also others sources of funding. There are very active collaborative ties with the so-called Visegrád countries (Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland) and Austria and Germany.

The zoning plan, a planning tool for land use, serves as the basis for local development. However, as a requirement of UNESCO process, a management plan for the historic centre of Český Krumlov was developed, which states the significance of the historical heritage for city development.

Óbidos, Central Region, Portugal

In Portugal, the National Spatial Development Policy Programme (2007-2025) sets the framework for development priorities at national and local level and also for the two autonomous regions. In last years, we witness, as in other countries, a decentralisation policy along with the decrease of state budget transfers and reduction of local taxes revenues. So, the rise of local governments' competences led to the adoption of different organizational settings like public companies, inter-municipal companies, outsourcing, etc. for the provision of public services. Also, cultural policies are increasingly a responsibility of local authorities. After de dictatorship, when culture was a way to exalt national identity and symbols, cultural national policy was largely the creation and recovery of infrastructures, organised in networks of libraries and archives; theatres and cine-theatres; and museums through partnerships between central and local governments (Silva, 2004). At local level, in addition to the creation and management of cultural facilities, public cultural policies encompass access to culture and artist education to a broad support of practices linked to the regional and local identity. Another important aspect was the growing internationalization through participation in production and consumption networks (Silva, 2007).

The small municipality of Óbidos, with only 11,772 inhabitants is located in the Central Region of Portugal, Western sub-region, a short distance from the capital. It covers an area of 142 km², inserted in a predominantly rural region (Eurostat, 2012). Óbidos is primarily distinguished by its iconic image: the medieval walled villa and its narrow streets with white traditional houses. It is also characterized by the surrounding countryside and the unique natural landscape of a lagoon and a coastal line. Local identity is shaped by its historical and noble past alongside rural traditions and lifestyles which is reflected in local heritage. For the conservation of the historic buildings contributed the classification of the Castle as National Monument in 1911 and its extension to the entire walled centre in 1951.

In 2001, seeking to reverse the process of social and economic decline, the elected Mayor, initiated a development strategy to reconvert the rural-based economy to one centred on culture and creativity, supported by a strong marketing strategy: ‘Creative Óbidos’. For the management of local initiatives it was adopted an agency model through the creation of municipal companies. Diverse public and private partnerships were also promoted, such as OBITEC (administrator of the Technologic Park), as well as higher education institutions, training companies and business associations.

At first, the local strategy was supported by a lively agenda of thematic events such as ‘International Piano Week’ or the popular ‘International Chocolate Festival’ which contributed to improve city image and consolidate the tourism strategy. This was underpinned by a set of cultural facilities (e.g. Network of Museums and Galleries), new school system and environmental sustainability programmes. It is also one of the local priorities to attract creative and qualified individuals through the promotion of a favourable environment to live and work. Therefore, it was made a range of investments to support creative business, such as spaces for incubation and co-lab, in conjunction with financial advantages (tax incentives, microcredit, etc.). It was also launched an urban regeneration programme that will provide studios, co-working spaces, and live-work houses for national and international artists, designers, researchers, etc. Community development is also reinforced by sociocultural projects like Odesign that joints young designers and seniors, combining design and creativity with traditional techniques and skills.

The internationalisation, through participation in exchange networks, commonly through European programmes, was always an opportunity to enhance city’s visibility and recognition and to achieve more scale and critical mass. On the other hand, inter-municipal cooperation is limited due to the lack of a common regional strategy and to the rivalry between municipalities.

The main criticism to local strategy resulted from the numerous visitors that disturb residents’ everyday life, the omnipresence of services oriented to tourism, the commodification of local values and practices and the conversion of the village and its inhabitants in a ‘scenario’. However, it is also important to mention the easy interaction and collaboration with local authorities to make the improbable happen. A good example is the Óbidos Literary Town a project started with the installation of a bookshop in the ancient church of São Tiago with open participation of public and private entrepreneurs.

York, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom

In the last 30 years, in the UK, were undertaken institutional reforms that had special impact on spatial development and in formulation of cultural policies. Local government reorganisation resulted in the transference or share of public services responsibilities to private sector actors and non-profit organisations via new policy instruments such as contracting out, public-private partnerships, etc. The current Government (nominated on 2010’s elections) begun to abolish the set of regional institutions. In their place, there were formed Local Enterprise Partnerships described as “joint local authority-business bodies” (HMG, 2010) to promote local economic development and whose impact is still unknown.

In cultural field, the British government drew a landmark policy approach marked by the shift from state to market-oriented policies and from patronage to managerial viewpoint in arts and media policy (see for example Garnham, 2005). The instrumental use of culture for economic purpose is largely connected with UK creative industries policy and had influenced political agendas worldwide. Local authorities had always an essential role in supporting arts and crafts and in the preservation of local heritage and traditions not only via culture budget, but also indirectly through regeneration agencies and other statutory and strategic agencies. Other funding sources are, for example, the DCMS grants, the Arts Council England and National Lottery programmes, private sponsors as well as the EU programmes.

The City of York is a unitary authority area of 198,000 inhabitants, a non-metropolitan district in less than two hours from London. It is located in the county of North Yorkshire which is classified as an intermediate region (Eurostat, 2012). Within its administrative area of about 272 km² there are distinct localities, suburbs and villages in a large rural landscape. In recent decades, York has moved from a prosper economy based on chocolate manufacturing and the railway-related industries to one dependent on tertiary sector mainly education, health and tourism and also public services.

The city has a unique atmosphere characterized by 2,000 years of urban settlement, embodied in well-preserved archaeological sites, ancient monuments and notable extensive archives that reflect the history and culture of England and Europe. Furthermore, it contains valuable museums, interpretation centres and academic research that not only provide educational resources, but also cultural experiences for a wide variety of audiences. Examples of these are the Jorvik Viking Centre, the York Castle Museum, the National Railway Museum or the University of York and York Archaeological Trust.

Despite culture has always been unavoidable in York urban policy, only recently it was integrated in development policies as a key driver for economic growth, jobs creation and social cohesion. In 2004, the Local Strategic Partnership 'Without Walls', composed of representatives of the public, business and voluntary sector, developed the first cultural strategy, following an extensive public consultation. Subsequently, it was formed a cultural partnership York@Large with the City Council to pursue one of the main dimensions of the York City Vision and Community Strategy 2004-2024 named 'York, a city of culture' which aims to distinguish the city nationally and internationally for its inclusive, lively and active profile. For such was created an extensive agenda of festivals supported by local organisations, many of them recreating an imaginary based on local identity and history but also approaching contemporaneity. The visitor economy was assumed as central in local development strategy and confirmed by the seven million annual visitors that support 20,200 jobs and created a thriving industry of £606 million¹.

In 2011, given the broad consensus on culture and consciousness of the importance of place-marketing, the City of York Council and a group of stakeholders submitted a bid to integrate the list of UNESCO World Heritage Site. After the first attempt failed, York launched a second bid to become a UNESCO City of Media Arts, in an effort to transform creative industries in one of the drivers of urban development, linking culture, innovation and technology.

The compactness of the main urban area is a key feature of the city but also a challenge between preservation and economic growth concerns. Land-use regulation imposes some restrictions in order to maintain the desired balance. But, the high cost of housing and business spaces as well as the proximity to large labour markets are considered to be major difficulties to increase the attractiveness of the city. The strategic vision adopted in the Local Development Framework (2012-2031) focuses on boosting economic growth based on existing small business community, built on the distinctive cultural, social and physical assets.

Key findings

As in many other European cities, culture became more embedded in urban policies and in strategic development of the small and medium sized cities presented in this study. Local authorities beyond the support of art and cultural institutions had look to culture as a way to face urban problems, such as the decline of traditional economic activities, the growing interurban competitiveness, the decrease of public funding and private investment, and ongoing social changes. These cities are trying to carry out new development paths or diversified local economies based on local specificities and resources available.

Cities like Jyväskylä and York have strong development trajectories based on their industrial past, but the decline of traditional industries have brought unemployment problems. One of their main bets was the specialization in education combined with innovation, which follows Finland and UK national strategies. While the location of Český Krumlov and Óbidos, has always been decisive to determine their development choices. Without an industrial path, these cities have special difficulties in achieve economies of scale and access to larger markets because their size and lack of resources.

Local institutional capacity, specially the strong commitment and proactive role of local offices plus resilience capacity of non-governmental actors was decisive to test new solutions and to inspire new development approaches. Cities like Jyväskylä and York compete hardly for enhance their position within the national/international urban system and the preponderance of capital cities and large metropolitans, notwithstanding their key role at regional level. In turn, smaller cities like Óbidos and Český Krumlov have greater dependence of neighbour larger towns especially in jobs and educational opportunities; however, overcome these insufficiencies through a more specialized offer and links to external markets.

Urban elites in the selected cases are strongly involved in different transnational networks and being knowledgeable of the ideas and models publicised in these circuits. The internationalisation and the promotion of local identity and place qualities are crucial components of their strategies. The city imaginaries, lived and experienced, were appropriated to define local development agendas aiming to promote a positive image to attract visitors, residents and investors. So, cities like York, Óbidos and Český Krumlov have a strong focus on historic legacy and cultural identity which framed local strategy, while Jyväskylä focuses on human capital. Consequently, local authorities had also invested in a dynamic cultural agenda and a range of cultural and leisure facilities to increase the city's attractiveness. Besides, natural environment is part of the distinctive

features promoted by these cities, especially in Jyväskylä and Óbidos where is essential a strategic factor in the promotion of a place quality of life and well-being.

Furthermore, the growth of tourism and related activities is one of the major topics of cultural policies in York and Český Krumlov given the number of visitants and revenues derived from this sector. In Óbidos, the tourism strategy is linked to the support of creative economy to diversify local economy and attract human capital. Jyväskylä and York also compete in attracting businesses and international students built on the recognition achieved in the field of innovation and educational skills.

Policy discourses, despite the rhetoric and the type of interventions, advocated an economic rationale in culture development strategies beyond social concerns. However, a more community development focus depends largely of the national framework and actors' power relations (see Table 9.1). For example, in Jyväskylä, as in others Nordic cities, there is a long requirement in ensure cultural participation as a way to promote health and psychological well-being. In York, community development is as a powerful instrument for renewal projects and partnerships. In small communities like Český Krumlov and Óbidos, local associations and education institutions are crucial actors for community engagement in development strategies. The integrations of both approaches can determine the sustainability and the consensus around local strategies.

Development agenda and Culture				
Approach	Rationales	Objectives	Key interventions	Leading actors
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To create wealth and jobs - To increase resilience and competitiveness - To diversify local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support entrepreneurship and cultural production - Improve visitor economy - Stimulate inward investment - Promote cultural consumption - Enhance a positive place image - Retention of graduates and skill workers - Promote spill-over effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructures for cultural/creative business Fiscal Incentives and start-ups support Place branding and tourism services Cultural/creative clusters Events and festivals Arts venues Heritage sites Fairs and congresses Renewal projects Grants for research projects Public services privatisation Retail and leisure areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public authorities Development agencies Business Political experts
Community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To create more equitable, healthy and diverse communities - To promote high quality of life and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to culture and art education - Enrich civic participation and community engagement - Reduce social risks - Improve social cohesion - Stimulate collective identity - Promote cultural diversity and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural institutions funding Artists grants Education and art programs support Cultural/social centers Low-rent cultural facilities Multicultural and community events Forums and public consultation Voluntary programmes Neighbourhood renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural institutions Civic associations Artists Education institutions

Public authorities have introduced new governance models, creating agencies and departments to manage cultural urban policies and to establish public-private partnerships and inter-sectoral collaborations. These new modes of governance are still embryonic in Český Krumlov, as in Czech Republic, and in Óbidos has to be a strong participation of public actors. A singular situation is the role of York Trusts in city's cultural and urban planning (e.g. York Civic Trust about conservation regulation) which

are non-profit successful models in cultural fields. Educational actors are privileged mediators between political offices and community in towns like Óbidos and Český Krumlov where civic participation and voluntary sector is smaller than in the others two cases.

All cities' plans integrate the renewal of urban spaces or quarters which include the transformation of derelict or unexploited buildings in new artistic and creative spaces in inner centres. The dimension and flexibility are characteristics for the sustainability of this kind of projects in small settlements as Óbidos. The preponderance of service sector in cities' centre is one common concern which implies specific measures to attract new residents to these areas.

Moreover, economic objectives of local strategies are often used to justify the public funding to cultural activities and institutions. On other hand, values associated to community development are often defended to legitimize political action and different actors' interests. For instance, some artists criticized the instrumentalisation of their activities for regeneration projects or tourist purposes however the dependence of public funds and providers change the game rules.

The urban municipalities selected have developed a diversity of cultural interventions which depends largely of the targets that they want to achieve. The proximity and the compactness are seen as an advantage to use their territories as policy laboratories and to improve changes.

The involvement of cultural and community actors is often a way to approve local strategies; however they have an important role in the implementation of local strategies. Their capacity in influence decision-making depends of the power relation with public authorities. In Český Krumlov, for example, the Castle administration has a significant role in local development strategy and cultural activities.

The “cultural turn” in municipal planning was made in accordance with the European and national policy agenda and influenced by the several networks in which cities and local actors are involved.

Final Remarks

The macro processes identified in the first part of this chapter are important to comprehend the local politics and how those dynamics influence or determine the political action in various contexts. In general cultural policy follows the overall development of wider social and economic trends and policies. Thus, it brings about the discussion about policies mobility, the definition of local development priorities through national and European policies and programmes, as well as the emphasis on proactive local leadership and the involvement of different stakeholders with regard to structural conditions.

The circulation of policy ideas and models across places or governmental levels have undoubtedly influenced the definition of local agenda and contribute to some homogenisation of the type of approaches. Taking in account the increasing responsibilities of municipalities, political officers assumed a proactive role rehearsing new solutions. According to McCann and Ward “Policies and the territories they govern

are not entirely local constructions but neither are they entirely extra-local impositions.” (McCann and Ward, 2012: 328).

The acknowledgement of culture significance in development strategies request a reflection about the rationales and power relations defined in political discourses and actions. Local strategies are based on the symbolic construction of a ‘community’ and the urban imaginary, materialized in the type of interventions supported and the regulations approved by urban elites (Stevenson, 2004; Healey, 2007) and exclude some powerless groups and undesirable themes image of the cities. However, in small communities due to the proximity, this process is constantly negotiated.

Despite the general predisposition to evaluate the success of cultural policy strategies in accord with city’s size and position in urban hierarchy, small and medium-sized towns advocate their potential, through local culture and identity, to developed particular development paths. They underlined large cities’ disadvantages such as traffic congestion, social exclusion, environmental problems, etc. in opposition to community proximity, a healthier quality of life, the capacity to make changes easier, among others. Also, the increase connectedness and mobility and the processes of internationalisation stimulate by city’s actors have enlarge these cities functions and possibilities, especial those in intermediate regions. The historical and preserve legacy and social capital also determine opportunities for a more sustainable development. Nevertheless, the nature of cultural projects needs to be assessed more rigorously in terms of the impacts they produce.

The post-2008 period signifies a challenge for small and medium-sized cities, but a balance relationship between community values and economic purposes could be a central axis for urban development and for cohesion and competitiveness European agenda.

Research about culture development policies and strategies in specific locations are useful to provide information about the variety of processes that reflect contemporary socioeconomic changes and provide guidelines for further research such as the in-depth analysis of top-down projects made in resistance to cultural development formulations of urban elites.

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ⁱ Source: <http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/YK/cms/pdf/07-research-Keyfacts2012.pdf>