CHALLENGES OF CULTURE-LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN PORTUGAL: RENEWING PERSPECTIVES, IMPROVING STRATEGIES

DESAFIOS DAS POLÍTICAS CULTURAIS LOCAIS EM PORTUGAL: RENOVAR PERSPETIVAS, MELHORAR ESTRATÉGIAS
DESAFÍOS DE LAS POLÍTICAS LOCALES DE LA CULTURA EN PORTUGAL: RENOVANDO PERSPECTIVAS, MEJORANDO ESTRATEGIAS

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ABSTRACT

Culture has become increasingly central to the rhetoric of territorial development, but it has not always been translated into the renewal of intervention strategies and practices. In this article, it is argued that in Portugal local cultural policies should have a strong territorial or endogenous configuration, aiming at the valorization of local assets and qualification of communities. Given some of the most relevant challenges in the portuguese context of local development, some guiding principles to which a cultural policy needs to respond effectively, as well as the main dimensions that should give them form and content, will be analyzed.

keywords: culture, cultural policy, local development, territorial development, Portugal.

RESUMO

A cultura tem vindo a assumir crescente centralidade na retórica do desenvolvimento territorial, nem sempre se traduzindo, todavia, na renovação de estratégias e práticas de intervenção. Neste artigo, sugere-se que as políticas culturais de âmbito local devem revestir um claro figurino territorialista, ou endógeno, porque só assim poderão assumir-se como genuínos instrumentos de valorização dos ativos locais e de qualificação das comunidades. Face a alguns dos mais importantes desafios existentes no contexto português de desenvolvimento local, serão discutidos alguns princípios orientadores a que uma política cultural necessita de responder eficazmente, bem como as principais características que lhes devem transmitir forma e conteúdo.

Palavras Chave: cultura, política cultural, desenvolvimento local, desenvolvimento territorial, Portugal.

RESUMEN

La cultura se ha vuelto cada vez más central en la retórica del desarrollo territorial, pero no siempre se ha traducido en la renovación de estrategias y prácticas de intervención. En este artículo, se argumenta que en Portugal las políticas culturales locales deben tener una configuración territorial o endógena fuerte, con el objetivo de valorizar los activos locales y la calificación de las comunidades. Ante algunos de los retos más relevantes en el contexto portugués del desarrollo local, se analizarán algunos principios rectores a los que una política cultural debe responder eficazmente, así como las dimensiones principales que deberían darles forma y contenido.

Palabras clave: cultura, política cultural, desarrollo local, desarrollo territorial, Portugal.

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INTRODUCTION

In Portugal, the intervention in the cultural sphere is still an emerging activity, with a significant pedagogical and experimentalist dimension, which is often associated with a deficit of theoretical and analytical rather than methodological and instrumental reflection. In this sector, however, it is installed a vision that gives priority to action rather than conceptualisation, which is translated, in practice, into a deficit of diagnostic analysis and strategic formulation – the immediate aim is to act, even if it lacks working with rigorous criteria of effectiveness and of efficiency. Not surprisingly, under these circumstances, some authors, such as López de Aguileta (2000), speak of the so-called agraphy of the cultural sector, which means the absence of a substantive and sufficiently expressive written production on the field of local cultural policies. This article will reflect the umbilical link that, we argue, exists between the different conceptions of local and regional development, and the intervention in the field of socio-cultural development, deepening, in particular, the relations between the territorialist development model and the model of citizen cultural intervention. In this sense, endogenous processes of development can acquire special meaning and coherence, allowing local and regional economies to assert and qualify on the basis of their potential for cultural intervention and development.

This article will highlight the main challenges that intervention projects in the area of culture should try to address, in order to promote more qualifying and sustainable development processes and dynamics, based on a broad and integrated reading of their endogenous resources, particularly of a cultural scope.

1. CULTURE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The theoretical debate around policies and intervention strategies in the cultural sector is basically structured in three models (Teixeira Lopes, 2009; Santos, 2012b). One, which we call industrial, with a strong neoclassical dimension, which argues that it is the free acting of markets that allows a better resource allocation and, thus, the dynamic balance of the market should be given the proeminente role of promoting cultural development. State action should, in this context, be restricted to the removal of structural barriers that block the smooth functioning of balanced market mechanisms.

Another approach, which we have termed institutionalist, on the contrary, makes betting on the state's interventionist hand the real spring of the dynamics of sociocultural change, namely through the provision of infrastructure and equipment, within what we may call cultural democratization (Taylor, 2013; Harding, 2017). It is assumed that, thus, adequate thresholds of positive externalities are guaranteed, a condition that would allow sociocultural actors a more favorable framework of action and a guarantee of diffusion of cultural goods and services with the objective of creating publics to enjoy the supply of cultural services and goods.

The third model is that of the citizenship approach which, assuming that state intervention is necessary to provide the territories (at least the most debilitated) with these externalities for their development, maintains, however, that, in parallel, they must be provided with mechanisms that make possible to enhance the use of the different portfolio of their own resources - whether material, human or institutional, they are crucial in order to affirm a creative aesthetic that allows its identity affirmation within the so-called cultural democracy

framework (Benhamou, 2019). It theoretically makes it possible to better reconcile cohesion objectives with competitiveness objectives, to more easily articulate private initiative with action in the public sphere, to more effectively fertilize sectoral logics with territorial-based interventions, to give greater focus to potentialities and opportunities than to problems and difficulties.

It is no longer so much a matter of deciding the allocation of scarce resources, but rather of (re)creating resources through new configurations that are adjusted to the rationalities, interests and challenges of local actors (Vázquez Barquero, 2007; Calligaro, 2017; Balfour et al., 2018). A strategic axis of intervention nowadays assumes that cultural policy instruments should go beyond a focus on access to cultural works to include and integrate access to the means of cultural production and distribution (Hadley et al., 2018). Additionally, it allows, and this is the fundamental objective of the dynamics of local development, to elect the promotion of citizenship as a strategic target, making the territories protagonists of their own futur path. In essence, it is about stimulating the use of culture as a local and regional identity element, as well as a territorial differentiation competitive factor, in a logic of participation, co-responsibility cooperation in networks of public and private entities (Santos, 2003; Picart, 2004; Portugal and Marques, 2007; Telmo Gomes and Lourenço, 2009). The great strategic objective of action is to be embodied in attenuating the distances between creation and reception, while making communities more self-centered in their values and beliefs but, simultaneously, open to the world and the changing dynamics of contemporary times.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF PATRIMONIALIZATION

In a globalized world, by its heritage, a territory, a community, they are affirmed by their uniqueness and differentiation. Once a concern for a political and intellectual elite that defined what should be conserved and kept, heritage has entered the broad agenda of the public domain, democratizing itself.

In this phase of heritage boom, we cling to the notion of cultural heritage to ensure interrelational connection, calling memory and placing it at the service of building a collective identity. Material and immaterial heritage has unquestionably become one of the key elements of identity affirmation (Hsiao et al., 2016; Martos Núñez et al., 2015; Cruickshank, 2018).

Patrimonialization is also, in this sense and precisely for this reason, a feature of looking at the future, our common future. This poses a major challenge, which is to know and interpret our legacy as an identity construction engine. As Plato recalled, "the beauty of Athens is not in what you see, but in what you understand after you have seen it." To a large extent, this is the equation that needs to be properly formulated and solved.

Traditions and culture, in the broad sense, to become a catalyst for local development, need to be understood as a process and not as an almost isolated, closed, sacralized event (Azevedo, 2004; Littoz-Monnet, 2015). They have to be form, but also content and design put at the service of the identity reinforcement of the local communities, without, however, closing their door to the continuous flow of cultural renewal. The challenge, which is not easy to equate and solve, is therefore to preserve the memory but, simultaneously, to prevent and avoid museographic excesses that may lead to the emergence of past logic of petrification and cultural crystallization.

In the context of an increasingly globalized society and economy, each territory must be able to find its place in the world. In this search for its identity, heritage necessarily plays a major role and must be able to contribute to finding new positioning formulas, internally and

externally (López de Aguileta, 2000; Picart, 2004; Lapostolle, 2007). How to determine which aspect(s) of local cultures that will need special attention? How to turn these specific aspects into development factors? How to analyze and predict changes in identities and cultures? How to project these challenges in the field of cultural development at local level? Where international or global views put more emphasis on the technological dimension of culture, the local and regional perspectives remind us that culture matters first as social capital. It reflects an identity that allows the originality and differentiation of a specific territory (OECD, 2018; Gilmor et al., 2019).

The cult of heritage appears, in this sense, in the context of an endogenous development approach and within the ambit of citizenship cultural model, as a counter-power, aiming to counterbalance the ethical and economic dysfunctions that increasingly question the values of authenticity and even local legitimation (Teixeira Lopes, 2009). In seems, by this linkage to heritage, one can respond to the challenge that Jane Wagner, an American writer and filmmaker, put with some sense of humor: "All my life I wanted to be someone. Now I see that I should have been more specific". That is precisely the point. Heritage as a connecting and rooting vehicle. Affective link to the territory and strengthening of social cohesion, which better supports the work of identity construction, allowing a firmer and safer transition between the present and the future.

It is not so much, however, about selling cultural heritage but as valuing endogenous resources (Babo, 2010; Hribar et al., 2015; Calligaro, 2017). Self-esteem, a condition that is often forgotten, of individual and community development, is essential. Anemia and apathy are often the result of a loss of confidence in their legacy and values, so one must reverse this vicious cycle, making communities more proud, capable, assertive and willing to act. It is a whole field of intervention opportunities for cultural policy which opens up, guaranteeing a reasonable equilibrium between the bet on the diverse forms of material and imaterial heritage and contemporary creation.

3. THE INSCRIPTION OF CULTURE IN A LOGIC OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Local and regional development, distinct from the functionalist view that assimilated it to the concept of economic growth, must be integrated and sustainable, centered on the territory and its community. Similarly, a cultural intervention project should use this intersectoral and more participative approach to create links of complementarity and synergy that can serve the purposes of sustainable development (Nared et al. 2020).

Intervention plans in the cultural sector must be instruments for local development. The worst that can happen in the formulation of cultural projects, as well as projects oriented to other activities, is their self-closure around the sector's own logics - a vertical project rather than a territorially structured one. It is desirable that the project take on a cross-cutting nature that potentiates and irrigates other sectors of activity, which might open the door for intersectoral fertilization, moving towards creative and innovative initiatives with an increasingly integrated and integrative character (Santos Silva, 2003; Florida, 2004; Costa, 2008; Della Lucia et al., 2017).

Cultural projects must thus participate in the structuring of the territory they serve, establishing bridges with other spheres of action, such as education, sport, tourism, health, employment, among others. Their conceptual and methodological projection must move away from the strict

narrowness of more traditional and vertical interventions focused exclusively on the cultural sector, but instead take on a more transversal scope, focusing on the demands and opportunities of that community and that concrete geographical space (OECD, 2018).

It will therefore be advantageous to start from a broad conception of cultural activities, including all forms related to what is traditionally associated with art and popular culture, trying to avoid dichotomous and simplifying distinctions such as those which traditionally distinguish between high culture and culture of masses, between art and industry, between public provision or the market (Paiva et al., 2018). This broadening of the notion of culture is absolutely vital in the strategic planning process, allowing for a wider, richer and more diverse work base that is essential to open up new avenues of local and regional development (Santos Silva, 2007; Santos, 2009).

Particularly relevant is not only the desecration of culture, with the development and symbolic legitimation of the most diverse forms of popular culture, but also the growing diversity of subcultures, associated with the plurality and segmentation of identities and the de-hierarchization of receptive cultural praxis. It is important to link with the past, different formats of culture and material and immaterial heritage, the historical-cultural legacy, but just as importantly to the emerging ranks of the so-called creative industries - it is this particularly fertile and diverse constellation of cultural activities (Costa 1998), connecting past, present and future, which seems a clear added value from the point of view of local development strategic planning.

Raising artificial borders and manichean walls that hinder an integrative view of the whole ensemble that runs through this creation-diffusion-consumption arc seems particularly reductive and limiting the local action in this area. All this portfolio, if well understood and integrated, embodies a unique asset of major relevance in a logic of promoting endogenous or territorialist local development. This involves analyzing new organizational configurations associated with the identification and preservation of cultural territorial resources, fostering original projects, with an innovative and even an experimental dimension (Sacco et al. 2013; Schlesinger, 2017; Boujdad Mkadem et al., 2018).

The project aims to reinforce the existing cultural offer within this territory? Does the project aim to emerge or deepen territorial identity? Does the project intend to mobilize local cultural actors to create a development dynamic centered on a federating theme? The project is intended as a vehicle for territorial marketing and reinforcement of tourist attractiveness? Whatever the core objective of the project, it is essential that it does not fail to comply with a logic of service and enrichment of the local community. It is essential to realize that cultural (and natural) assets must advantageously be integrated into the planning of socio-economic and territorial development, and become a vehicle for creating wealth and jobs (Lapostolle, 2007; Boisier and Canzanelli, 2008; Santos Silva et al., 2015; Hsiao et al., 2016). A development in which territory is perceived as a space for socialization and identification that transcends history, geography or landscape, and where local communities are the cardinal point of reference for self-organization and social participation.

4. REDESIGNING LOCAL CULTURAL POLICIES

Cultural heritage, understood as a strategic resource, can, and should, be a fundamental pillar in shaping future paths, as this dimension is absolutely critical in development processes if we really want it to be meaningful to communities. Unfortunately, even in the field of local development, the cultural dimension is often, if not ignored, at least undervalued by more

technical and sectoral interventions. It often predominates, as has already mentioned, a model based on the diffusion of cultural models and patterns from the centers to the peripheries within the framework of what can broadly be termed cultural institutionalist model. Territories, at local and regional scales, assume themselves as mere recipients and consumers of cultural goods and services, within a context of political-institutional verticalization (top-down policy). In this case, one cannot talk so much about cultural empowerment, this is not what this model requires, but rather interventions aimed at cultural programming and management (Greffe, 2002; Duxbury et al., 2015). This picture clearly embodies the quintessential field of the so-called aesthetic of reception. In fact, the qualified policy intervention will come very simplistic and poor, around the triangle "increasing the number of audiences, creating new audiences and building public loyalty" (Azevedo, 2004; Santos Silva, 2007; Telmo Gomes and Lourenço, 2009).

Currently, a mixed logic seems to prevail on the portuguese context of local development, being at the same time institutionalist and industrialist. This is not surprising, as it basically corresponds to the extension to the cultural sector of the functionalist approach to development. The aim here is not to preserve and promote identity values and local and regional cultural diversity, but rather to disseminate and absorb the cultural and heritage values and symbols disseminated within a center-periphery relationship, where the center corresponds to the voice of command and regulation and the peripheries assume a subordinate role of following the policies defined at the top and emanating from them (Santos, 2012b). These approaches end up creating the need for territories, for reasons of identity preservation and defense of their cultural values, to respond to the challenge: how to promote an increasingly cultural intervention based on the promotion of citizenship, valuing local cultural and heritage assets? It is to this question that the model of citizenship culture attempts to answer.

Based on a territorialist logic of development, this model refuses territories, local communities and citizens to, in practice, remain hostage to policies and cultural stimuli conveyed to them by institutional and / or industrial strategies. The great challenge is to value local cultural assets, no matter how auspicious they may seem, working within a framework of active participation and deep mobilization and involvement of local communities – "sparking a creative fire", in the words of Balfour et al. (2018). In this model, one also tends to understand culture in a more global and integrated way, including, in particular, vernacular and popular forms of culture, popular and religious traditions, traditional knowledge and know-how, etc. (Picart, 2004; Cerezuela, 2007; Martos Núñez et al., 2015). In this context, while the openness to the world is not in any way reneged, the great challenge, however, lays in the context of a genuine logic of a (socio)cultural empowerment, in order to prioritize strategies and initiatives based on the promotion of an aesthetics production framework.

The process encompasses raising communities from the level of mere recipients to the level of protagonists who create exclusive and particular cultural goods and services. All this with its own specific territorial logic, seeking a path of affirmation of local identity values and creation of self-esteem by reference to their past and, naturally, also to their future projects (Pinto and Portugal, 2001; Greffier, 2013; Hsiao et al., 2016). Local and regional communities, this way, go from development spectators to true protagonists of their future, their future paths, their diversity and their development. This is clearly the domain of cultural democracy (Teixeira Lopes, 2009; Santos Silva et al., 2018; Hadley et al., 2018). It thus implies, on the portuguese context, avoiding the acritical emulation of events that propagate rapidly as mechanical and quick answers from municipalities, like the replication of medieval fairs as turnkey projects, pop or rock festivals, often heavily sponsored by the ICT and the beer industry, with no remaining positive impacts for the socioeconomic life of the local communities, etc.

One of the issues that arises in the local cultural environment is stray populism, often extremely partisan. As Tavares dos Santos (2007) affirms, these ideas of politicizing culture are often and vehemently criticized in Portugal by both the 'ruling classes' and some 'cultural audiences', whose actions have always been characterized by attempts to impose a 'kind of culture'. Regardless of their form, extremes in the cultural vision have produced stray, inconsequential and perfectly obsolete cultural policies.

This capability approach, as Sacco et al. (2013) argue, favors a bottom-up, non-market-oriented view of local cultural development, where the level, intensity and profile of social participation, the production of social capital and community cohesion, and the search of relevant, welfare-improving life perspectives get more importance than the economic impact. In this context, the role of an active, from below, local cultural policy comes clarified and reinforced.

In essence, it is expected to play a role in activating the endogenous forces and potential towards cultural affirmation, to fulfill a function of mediation and the creation of stimuli that help to embody this conception of intervention, focused on empowerment and the creation of social capital (Putnam, 1995). It is not so much a matter of programming or managing, but rather of animating, a function which, by definition, should be assigned in a naturally joint and multidisciplinary work (Santos Silva, 2003; Throsby, 2010; Azevedo, 2014; Boujdad Mkadem et al., 2018).

It is a challenging task, requiring and demanding groundwork in order to generate, or ativate, associative microdynamics, and stimulate communities, individuals and businesses create projects based on the preservation, enhancement and dissemination of intrinsic cultural values (Gravari-Barbas, 2013; Ilmonen, 2015; Moyano Pesquera et al., 2017). This policy design does not deny the state or the market, but this is clearly not its focus - it is rather the citizen and the whole community. This model of citizenship culture understandably intends to give rise to a strong organizational capacity of communities and local public authorities. As it is based on the search and affirmation of endogenous values, it is obvious that it refers to the need for local authorities to assume a cultural action that values this activation of local capabilities (Neves, 2005; Schlesinger, 2017). Being realistic, it seems critical to understand the importance of interconnecting the work of democratizing culture and cultural democracy. It is the local communities that neatly define and decide their cultural priorities - what types of intervention do they intend to undertake? More focused on heritage preservation and enhancement? More encouraging for community creative and artistic activities? Promoters of studies and activities leading to the search of identity dimensions?

The risk in this regard is precisely that some municipalities, by strategic myopia, will misrepresent these desirable interventions, which cal, above all, for a pivotal and regulatory role of the local state, and create, instead, a framework which we may name of municipalization of the local cultural intervention, almost a monopoly, thereby drowning out the forces and energies that needed to be triggered (Batalha, 1997; Santos, 2012a; Cruickshank, 2018). If this happened, as somehow, due to ignorance and inability to strategic vision, has been occurring in some cases, a logic of state intervention, top-down, would be reproduced at this time at the local level. The role of cultural policy seems precisely to incite the citizen to realize their citizenship and actively participate in the dynamics of their territory (Picart, 2004; Lopes, 2007; Trindade et al., 2018). In this sense, to establish a more systematic and continuity work, it seems advantageous to define a municipal culture policy articulated with the strategic objectives of local development.

In this matter, at the level of local power, it is necessary to break with the old logics that tend to conceive of development from a step-by-step perspective: first, one has to address basic

infrastructure needs, then, education and health issues, which gas been impliying a continuous minorization and secondization of cultural policies at local level (Garcia et al., 2018). Besides, data provided by Pordata (2018), for Portugal, shows a rather low level of expenditure on culture and sport - as % of total expenditure, the average expense for portuguese municipalities is about 10%. Yet, given the fact that most of this amount is directed towards sport initiatives and promotions, the figures for cultural activities are, in fact, rather low. In Portugal, according to the Eurostat, the total general governement expenditures was, in 2018, 0.6% of the overall national budget, while at the EU-27 level this figure comes to 1%. This problematic is also connected to the the issue of the decentralization of cultural policies, with the need to give a greater weight to local authorities, and mainly, to the participation of any other kind of stakeholders in the most diverse kinds of partnership (Borges et al., 2012). One has to be aware that it is not an easy task to change this situation, since there are interest groups that take advantage of this crystallization around this non-development paradigm (Greffe, 2005; Babo, 2010; Matoso, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Local policies must make a growing and effective commitment to culture as a strategic vector for sustainable development. Culture, understood in the broad sense, must come to fulfill a central and strategic place in the local political agenda and serve as a vehicle for, while factor of differentiation and identity affirmation of local communities, to qualify local communities and territories.

This is a time that must compel to critically reread the theories, discuss the intervention models and redefine policies conducive to a more important and strategic role of culture on local development. Development refers to people, not objects or symbols. We have to be willing to admit that we don't have all the answers. On the ambit of the culture-territory dialectics, if we think otherwise, then we will probably never be able to reinvent new ways of the future.

Finally, additional empirical research will be needed that leads to a detailed knowledge of the role of the portuguese municipalities in the promotion, foment, dissemination and cultural creation. That will constitute a primordial element in order to interpret the cultural needs and aspirations of local communities, especially with the aim of formulating more adequate cultural policies to respond to these new challenging times.

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