

**Culture and Urban Policies:  
Dynamics and Effects of Third Cultural Sector Interventions in Barcelona**

Final Draft, *Revue Métropoles*, v. 11, 2012

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**Abstract**

This article addresses three interrelated questions, which we consider to be significant in current debates surrounding the future of cities. What constitutes an urban policy and what are the main variables that characterise it? To what extent have cultural policies adopted the core features of urban policies? And above all, what part does the third sector play in transforming the categories of social organisation that sustain urban and cultural policies? This article argues, via a Barcelona case study, that third sector organisations play a central role in the development of cultural policies as urban policies. This is essentially because these organisations have developed their own intervention logic, which is representative of a certain type of cultural and urban intervention. From this perspective, to what extent might the proximity factor regain value as a guide to cultural and urban policies?

Key words: culture, urban policy, cultural policy, third sector, proximity, Barcelona.

**Résumé**

Cet article aborde trois questions interdépendantes que nous considérons comme significatives dans le débat actuel sur le futur des villes. Qu'est-ce qu'une politique urbaine et quelles sont les variables principales qui la définissent? Dans quelle mesure les politiques culturelles ont-elles adopté les caractéristiques centrales des politiques urbaines? Et surtout, quel rôle joue le tiers

secteur dans le processus de transformation des catégories d'organisation sociale associées aux politiques urbaines et culturelles? À partir d'une étude de cas à Barcelone, cet article démontre que les organisations du tiers secteur occupent un rôle majeur dans le développement de politiques culturelles appréhendées en tant que politiques urbaines. Ce rôle s'explique essentiellement par le fait que ces organisations ont développé une logique propre, représentative d'un certain type d'action culturelle et urbaine. De ce point de vue, dans quelle mesure le facteur « proximité » peut-il être revalorisé comme axe des politiques culturelles et urbaines?

Mots clés: culture, politique urbaine, politique culturelle, tiers secteur, proximité, Barcelone.

## **1. Introduction**

This article seeks to improve our understanding of the peculiar dynamics and effects of the interventions conducted by third sector organisations in the field of urban cultural policy. It assesses these organisations' influence on the formulation and implementation of coordinated responses to the cultural needs of the new socio-economic context, as well as their specific contribution (and limitations) in the development of a model of public cultural management in the urban environment. We start out from one of the key questions currently being asked in the debate on new urban policies. How can we rethink problems and policy responses from a perspective that accounts for the significance of space and territory, while also maintaining an integrated approach (Cochrane. 2007; Iglesias et al., 2011) that allows for transversal, multidisciplinary and multilevel interventions which take advantage of the proximity factor (Subirats and Blanco, 2009)?

The article then deals with three interrelated questions. First, what is urban policy and what are the main variables that characterise it? Second, to what extent have cultural policies adopted the core features of urban policies? And finally, what part does the third sector play in transforming the categories of social organisation that sustain urban and cultural policies? Can the third sector be considered a locus of power, i.e. a space composed of organisations that are ready and able to take on public responsibilities in the city? How do the factors of proximity, innovation and quality combine in the cultural practices these organisations promote?

This article is based on the study of a set of organisations belonging to the third cultural sector of Barcelona. Following the elaboration of a database of 650 organisations that operate in the city, forty-five cases - considered significant because of their cultural activities and their impact on social interactions and on the structuring of specific urban spaces - were analysed in detail. The cases were selected after interviewing 32 key informants with considerable knowledge concerning the

object of study. This reputational information on the different organisations allowed us to make a case selection consistent with the objectives of the study<sup>1</sup>.

This empirical study has enabled us not only to generate specific knowledge on the model of cultural intervention prevailing in Barcelona's third sector organisations, but also to identify features that might be generalized to describe a wider phenomenon. Case studies are useful not only for conducting descriptive exploratory investigations or generating hypotheses; they also allow for the analysis of social objects and processes. Their conclusions are valuable because they produce knowledge about a portion of social reality, specific objects of study, and other objects that share similar characteristics with these (Flyvbjerg, 2004). Evidently, whether or not it is possible to make generalisations in the form of concrete, context-dependent knowledge depends on the selection and construction of the case study.

In many regards, Barcelona's cultural policy has proven to be an international reference - for instance in the way it has developed a policy model able to replace the classic paradigm of nation-state-based cultural policies - as well as a unique response in the context of the post-industrial economy and the crisis of the welfare state. The city's urban revitalisation strategies, which rely on large-scale architectural projects and events and on the development of services and new industries, have displayed an important cultural character. In this sense, Barcelona constitutes neither an exceptional nor a typical case of cultural urban regeneration, but rather an extreme one (Rodríguez Morató, 2008).

The structure of this article corresponds to the objectives of the study. In the first section, we establish the theoretical relevance of our object of study and research approach for the fields of urban policy analysis and cultural policies. We define the third cultural sector and explain why its investigation is important for the above fields. In the second section, we analyse the development of cultural policies in Barcelona's urban environment, paying close attention to the role played by civil society. We conclude that the incorporation of the proximity factor into cultural policies also highlights processes of defensive relegitimation and continuities with local planning policies. In the third section, we analyse the intervention model of the third cultural sector – in which a traditional perspective on the proximity factor coexists with approaches that attempt to redefine the latter in terms of urban policy. In the fourth section, we present a typology of third cultural sector

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<sup>1</sup> The selection criteria ensured (albeit incompletely) representativeness with respect to territory, cultural sub-sector, volume of activity, and legal personality. Once the organisations were selected, and with the aim of analysing them with due rigour, different sources were used – i.e. the organisations' internal documents, questionnaires and structured interviews with organisation members, documents reporting on their activities, etc. - all of which helped us triangulate and verify the collected information. The interviews were conducted during the first semester of 2010, and document analysis ended in June 2011.

organisations. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the relevance of the findings reported in this article.

## 2. Urban Policies, Cultural Policies and the Third Sector

This section begins by establishing the theoretical relevance of our case study for the investigation of urban policies, cultural policies and the third sector. It formulates in turn the hypothesis that runs through the rest of this article.

### 2.1 Local Policies and Urban Policies

What is an urban policy and what are its main characteristics? There is no broad consensus on the definition of urban policy, but it is generally accepted that the meaning of the concept has widened in scope. Starting with Allan Cochrane's definition (2007:13)<sup>2</sup>, we can see that the growing incorporation of different elements in the definition of urban policy bears a strong relation to recent urban transformations and to the broadening of the concept itself. The complexity of urban space also underpins one of Allen Scott's definitions (2008: 759)<sup>3</sup>. Our current understanding of urban policies, therefore, is that these differ from and improve upon policies intended strictly for local planning. Like any abstraction, this definition rests on ideal differences between various types of public interventions that have proven useful for our investigation, yet have historically offered limited potential for generalisation (Ragin, 1987). Table 1 provides in-depth definitions of these two types of policies, based on their symbolic/substantive dimension.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1: Local planning policies and urban policies: the symbolic/substantive dimension

| SYMBOLIC/SUBSTANTIVE DIMENSION |  | <b><i>Local planning policies</i></b>                                    | <b><i>Urban policies</i></b>                               |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
|                                | <b>Object of reference</b>                   | City (external/constructed)  | Urban habitat (found/reconstructed)                        |
|                                | <b>Conception of territory</b>               | Physical space   | Significant personal and collective sphere                 |
|                                | <b>Type of agenda</b>                        | Socio-economic services  | Extended (sustainability, culture, knowledge)              |
|                                | <b>Approach to welfare problems</b>          | Universal social rights  | Personal and community demands (specificity)               |
|                                | <b>Role of policies</b>                      | Administrative: regulating use, establishing functions, designing spaces | Political/strategic: synthesising wide-ranging initiatives |
|                                | <b>Justification for public intervention</b> | Creation of public spaces; attention paid                                | Promotion of common spaces: mobility, difference, autonomy |

<sup>2</sup> "Urban policy is both an expression of contemporary understandings of the urban, of what makes cities what they are, and itself helps to shape those understandings (as well as the cities themselves)"

<sup>3</sup> "...urban public policy is simply policy directed to the urban as defined."

<sup>4</sup> From conceptual elements to policy content (Gomà and Subirats, 1998).

|  |  |                            |  |
|--|--|----------------------------|--|
|  |  | to underprivileged classes |  |
|--|--|----------------------------|--|

*Source: prepared by the authors*

Thus, while local planning policies are construed as external to their object of intervention (the city in its territorial, physical dimension) and presuppose structured social relations, urban policies find and reconstruct their object of intervention in the very sites where they are implemented - i.e. in the urban habitat. Here the importance of territory - which is key to the distribution of opportunities for making a living and consuming - is taken into consideration (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1982). These features also underpin changes in the policy agenda, which has foregone its urban-economic character (including its offer of a range of basic social services) in favour of meeting new problems and demands. If welfare is construed in local planning policies as a universal dimension transcending territorial peculiarities, urban policies apprehend it as a personal and community demand rooted in proximity spaces (Subirats and Blanco, 2009).

Finally, local planning policies focus on channelling people's movements, regulating land use and establishing functions. Public interventions at the local level rely on a “spatialist” logic (Mongin, 2006) by which community life hinges on the design of public spaces. By contrast, with urban policies, governments take on a political role (and not merely an administrative one) as they seek to identify the needs of local communities and offer solutions (Blanco, 2009). The rationale for this is the attempt to build common spaces that facilitate mobility, the exercise of autonomy, and the promotion of difference.

Yet these symbolic and substantive elements are also associated with an intermediate, processual/operative dimension that includes features of the different forms of government. Table 2 helps define urban policies on the basis of these other elements.

*Table 2: Local planning policies and urban policies: the processual/operative dimension*

|   |                                  | <b><i>Local planning policies</i></b> | <b><i>Urban policies</i></b>                             |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>PROCESSUAL/OPERATIVE<br/>DIMENSION</b> | <b>Intervention logic</b>        | Sectorial specialisation              | Integrated, multidisciplinary deployment                 |
|   | <b>Agency capacity</b>           | Institutional government              | Extended: participation (citizen-based, formal, private) |
|   | <b>Sphere of government</b>      | Municipal (overlap)                   | Multilevel (simultaneity)                                |
|   | <b>Type of public leadership</b> | Management and vertical control       | Promotion of networks                                    |

*Source: prepared by the authors*

If local planning policies retain their territorialized, sectorial character (Cochrane, 2007) and centre on the management of cities' underprivileged classes (based on a logic of segmentation and specialisation), urban policies seek rather to integrate responses by articulating policies implemented throughout the territory. Similarly, if the former have developed thanks to a strictly institutional agency capacity (limiting participation to the traditional channels of representative democracy), the latter follow the logic of strategic consensus as they recognise the role of other actors (social or economic) present on the territory. It is highly difficult for central and municipal governments to come up with effective (local planning) solutions in isolation. Urban policies, by contrast, rely on the proximity factor and involve initiatives generated at different levels of government (supra-state, state, regional and local). The crisis of local government - in which leadership is exercised top-down, but also through horizontal departmentalisation and a dense network of behavioural controls – has paved the way for urban governance. Thanks to urban policies, governments can lead or support actor networks that recognise their interdependence, and are therefore willing to collaborate with each other when tackling common problems (Jessop, 2003; Blanco, 2009).

Lastly, if we accept that urban policies extend beyond mere local planning policies, we must recognise in turn that this is an on-going process. There are significant continuities in each one of the above dimensions between the two types of policy under consideration. Moreover, public authorities confronted with multiple urban transformations (from globalisation to the post-industrial economy, and from the individualisation of society to the restructuring of the welfare state) can try to re-legitimate urban policies "defensively" (Iglesias et al, 2011). Urban policies are then based on their ability to mobilise resources that can attract capital (Cox, 1993). Competitiveness is considered to be a prime requisite for creating future wealth, while territory and proximity are viewed mainly as economic growth factors (Amin, 1999).

## *2.2 Cultural Policies as Urban Policies: the Proximity Factor Under Scrutiny*

Having laid out our initial vision, we argue that cultural policies have tended to adopt, both on the symbolic/substantive level and the processual/operative one, several of the characteristics of urban policies. At the same time, we contend that they also reflect both continuities and defensive dynamics of re-legitimation. Two processes in the evolution of cultural policies associated with third cultural sector interventions illustrate these aspects.

The first process saw the principle of democratisation of culture guide and legitimate most of the cultural policies developed in Europe since the 1960s. This paradigm (with its emphasis on redistribution) was built upon an Enlightenment conception of culture associated with notions of

civilisation and modernity, but also upon a contract between public and private cultural agents operating predominantly at the state or national level.

As part of this process, cultural infrastructures - from museums to libraries, and from theatres to monumentalised public spaces – were promoted in an attempt to popularise the arts. Thus was consolidated one of the key features of cultural policies, inherited from this type of public intervention in urban space. This occurred because, in the words of Benjamin (1968), the rise in the number of participants altered the nature of participation. If works of art require an apparent attitude of hushed respect, architectural ones impose a different logic, one by which the public surrounds and fuses with the work itself. In view of this, infrastructures can be appreciated either for their use or their contemplation, while also being instrumentalised by governments that have different concerns in mind.

The instrumentalisation process intensified from the 1980s onwards, as the notion of culture as a fundamental right to be guaranteed by the (central) government was increasingly called into question. With the generalisation of the urban phenomenon, cities began losing their autonomous character as well as their capacity to promise integration and liberation (Subirats and Blanco, 2009), just as culture lost its status as a means to achieve liberty, national identity and universality of citizenship.

In this context, the idea took hold that local governments were equally or better placed to take on the task of promoting culture. Cultural policy's traditional objectives and instruments gave way to new intervention logics that originate at the local level: adoption of a systemic approach to culture (beyond the sectorialism of the artistic field), expansion of the agenda of problems to be tackled, or efforts to set up a multilevel government and a cultural governance model (Cherbo and Wyszomirski, 2000; Rodríguez Morató, 2005; Bonet and Negrier, 2008). From the mid-1980s onwards, cultural policies acquired a central role in the transformation of urban space. They became important for global strategies of urban regeneration - a process with widely studied, positive and negative outcomes (see among others Bianchini, 1995; Landry, 2004). Ultimately, this overall process reflects the path cultural policies have taken over the years: from embracing local planning policies to adopting urban policies' key features.

Nevertheless, these dynamics of re-legitimation also entailed defensive responses. Under the pressure of growing competition between cities (based on economic development criteria), governments gave new significance to the territory and the proximity factor, though mostly as levers for economic growth. Culture and cultural policies were at the heart of this process. One of the most widely adopted viewpoints - but also one of the most controversial on policy agendas - was the theory of creative classes and cities (Florida, 2002; Knudsen et al., 2007). This is a widely contested model (Hall, 2004; Glaeser, 2005; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Pratt, 2008), which relies on the

gradual commodification of cultural resources and of the very notion of community life (in the form of urban branding) as a central axis in cities' strategies for global competitiveness (Jessop, 2003; Peck, 2005). Without losing sight of this approach, this article focuses on exploring urban dynamics (and policies) based on cooperation and the generation of social value. We look at a type of cultural action that grounds its interventions in criteria which go beyond those of economic development, the promotion of so-called cultural sectors, or the fostering of cultural consumption. We therefore pay attention to the role of different actors (and their demands) in the public management of culture. A second process in the evolution of cultural policies illustrates continuities and changes in this area.

Without relinquishing the principle of democratisation of culture, cultural policies developed as part of the second process have tended to promote spaces of socio-cultural expression and participation - a policy model described as cultural democracy (Urfalino, 1996). While local planning policies centred on managing the cities' underprivileged classes, cultural policies implemented as part of the first process paid special attention instead to the most disadvantaged groups, and especially to the capacities these needed to promote their own culture. And yet mass participation, as defined in the cultural democracy model, failed to occur (Wu, 2002). Governments thus insisted on filling the role of cultural producers, and the institutional sphere took on the role of the public sphere. In reaction to this, the key demand of certain third sector groups was for an extension of agency (i.e. the capacity for autonomous action and interventions) in the area of cultural policies - based on social principles. As can be observed in the development of urban policies, the formulation of cultural policies involves various agents, and hence tends to overcome reactive responses to the demands of sectorial groups.

In this context, the proximity factor has become a key argument for justifying public interventions in the cultural arena. Proximity policies are largely meant to facilitate access to culture, reinforce people's capacity for self-expression, and foster a sense of group belonging.<sup>5</sup> Yet this type of cultural policy also reveals that not all proximity policies are urban policies. Beyond policies' capacity to offer solutions that are simultaneously diversified, integrated, democratic and efficient, the proximity factor can be deployed in "repair" policies, in line with local planning characteristics. Rather than constituting an integrated and territorial approach, proximity policies can prove a conservative response to the interrogation of political representation in general, and to the lack of legitimacy of cultural policies in particular<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Communitarian cultural policies in the Netherlands (Etzioni, 1997 and 2004), as well as the impact of art on social cohesion in the United Kingdom and Canada (Barraket, 2005), illustrate some aspects of this trend.

<sup>6</sup> The New Labour's policy discourse on culture in the UK has stressed cultural policies' (alleged) potential for achieving goals present in other public policies (and their agendas): education, health, the environment, security and urban planning (Belfiore, 2006).



Thus, the analysis of third cultural sector organisations and of the way they apprehend and incorporate the proximity factor enables us to generate knowledge that is relevant for the broader field. Yet how do we define the third cultural sector and why must we study it?

### *2.3 Third Cultural Sector: a Model of Intervention in Urban Space*

Among the factors examined to explain transformations in urban policies, reforms conducted by central governments and local government initiatives are worth stressing (Blanco, 2009). In particular, the scholarly literature has paid significant attention to cultural strategies of urban regeneration, and this is especially true for the case of Barcelona (Rodríguez Morató, 2005; Rius, 2006; Delgado, 2007; Nofre, 2010, among others). Researchers have proven much less interested, however, in the particular dynamics and effects of third cultural sector interventions in urban space.

The definition of the third sector adopted in major international empirical studies<sup>7</sup> is that of a group of organisations that have a legal personality, are non-profit and privately owned, and benefit from considerable volunteer involvement. In other words, the third sector is defined negatively: it is associated with that which lies outside the public or state domain, is neither lucrative nor directly regulated by the market, and addresses needs that neither the state nor market dynamics can fully satisfy.

For our part, we construe the third cultural sector as a set of non-profit, private organisations (with or without legal personality) whose statutes and activities reflect their social purpose. Their activities also help develop a system of production of goods and services that channel expressive needs and aesthetic sensibilities. Included in this definition are foundations, associations, platforms, exchange networks, cooperatives and even other types of organisations run along commercial lines. Yet in order to establish the analytical and empirical relevance of our case study, we also centre on the practices we believe constitute the third cultural sector's central axis. These are organisations that stand out for their ability to overcome a dichotomy observed in the cultural policies implemented in urban space, i.e. open management as opposed to the search for quality in cultural production, as well as the promotion of participation and social regeneration as incompatible with artistic excellence.

Thus, our hypothesis is that third cultural sector organisations have become key actors in the development of cultural policies as urban policies. The reason for this is that the third cultural sector has developed its own logic of intervention in the fields of culture and urban space. On the one hand, the sector's organisations have retrieved the essential and traditional core of what is meant by

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<sup>7</sup>Among these, of particular note are the studies of Salamon and Sokolowski (2004) or Anheier and Kendall (2001). For the Spanish case, see García Delgado et al. (2004), Montagut (2005), Ruiz Olabuénaga (2000, 2006), Castiñeira and Vidal (2003), *Observatori del tercer sector* (2009) or Subirats (1999). In the area of culture in Spain, Bonet and Negrier (2010) include non-profit organisations among the elements that condition policy formulation and implementation.

“proximity factor”, preserving the logic of repair that underpins local planning policies (in line with local government interventions). At the same time, however, this type of organisation has helped transform the proximity factor, developing what we might term “practices of new proximities”. In this sense, such organisations share with urban (cultural) policies the same symbolic/substantive and processual/operative features.

Analysing this singular intervention model, we argue, enables us to highlight advances, contradictions and resistances in the shift from local planning (cultural) policies to urban ones. Thus we begin by analysing the evolution of cultural policies in Barcelona’s urban environment, paying particular attention to the overall role played by civil society in urban processes.

### **3. Cultural (and Urban?) Policies: The cases of Catalonia and Barcelona**

In the case of Spain, and in particular Catalonia and Barcelona, the return of democracy was accompanied by a certain vacuum effect. It also prompted an identity crisis within a large section of civil society, which had played an active role in producing and disseminating culture as part of the struggle against the Franco regime (Fina, 1999: 155). This vacuum was filled with the consolidation of cultural policies (especially those pursued by local governments) as well as that of private agents organised in cultural sub-sectors (theatre, cinema, music, etc.). This historical process, which initiated a move towards European standards, can be divided into three phases. The first phase, from approximately 1978 to 1992, was marked by the predominance of cultural policies rooted in a local planning logic. The second phase spanned the rest of the 1990s, and witnessed no major innovation in the relationship between public and private agents. During the third phase, which lasted from the early 2000s to the present day, urban policy dynamics have been explored with varying degrees of success.

The most significant development in the first phase was the recovery of public spaces. When city councils were taken over by anti-Franco civil society, an important phenomenon occurred: streets were reclaimed and participation became key. Traditions were recovered and reinvented, and there was a shift towards the democratisation of culture through the construction of facilities for disseminating art and culture. During the 1980s, in short, the cultural sector was normalised. In Barcelona, this process was accompanied by disagreement between authorities concerning the implementation of metropolitan-scale interventions. The City Council's cultural policy at the time focused on the area lying within the municipality’s boundaries, and especially the city's historical

centre. It also sought to solve urban problems by prioritising building and design over clarification of uses, and the architectural/formal dimension over functional and social ones (Subiros, 1994)<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, cultural policies displayed a significant local planning character, especially in relation to civil society. The end of this phase and the beginning of the next were heralded by three large-scale events that took place in 1992 in Spain: Madrid as European Capital of Culture, Universal Exposition of Seville, and the Cultural Olympiads of Barcelona. These functioned mainly as large festive events. From a cultural perspective, they hardly left any traces.

In the second phase, which began with the hangover of 1992, the different agents aimed for normality rather than standardisation. The role of public administrations and of the various cultural sub-sectors, however, was not clearly defined. Institutions were viewed as protagonists simply for being present - not because they set the rules of the game, brokered agreements or made general strategic plans. Private agents lacked sufficient capacity for action, and the territory showed a high degree of heterogeneity and inequality. Thus, the publishing industry - which is the most important cultural industry in Spain - was practically restricted to Barcelona and Madrid. In addition, the weight of civil society varied from one territory to the next. Two factors influenced this differentiation: the degree of urban and industrial development, and the presence of a specific language and culture (as was the case in Catalonia) (Fina, 1999: 156-157). In Barcelona, the incipient strategies of urban-oriented cultural policies were still conditioned upon the reordering of space. Policies to promote associations and culture – which include both administrative decentralisation and the fostering of local neighbourhood identities – remained rooted in the logic of local planning policies.

The third of these phases has been marked by efforts to develop a strategy for the urban governance of culture. Among the authors who have investigated this period in Barcelona, Rius (2006) analyses two key institutions for cultural policy - the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art and the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre - as examples of the move from a project based on cultural and urban regeneration to what he refers to as “cultural governance”. From a different perspective, Nofre (2010) concludes that the cultural interventions conducted by Barcelona’s City Council to renew the city’s historic centre and suburbs constitute strategies of social homogenisation and hygienization.

In effect, the elaboration of the first Cultural Sector Strategic Plan (*Ayuntamiento de Barcelona*, 1999) - which applied the same urban planning methodology as that developed for the elaboration of the Municipal Action Plan – reflected prevailing efforts to transcend the logic of local

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<sup>8</sup>Oriol Bohigas, former urban planning officer and now councillor for culture in Barcelona’s City Council, wrote in 1988: “I have complained many times that our cultural policies are directed towards spectacular one-off endeavours without ever tackling the deficiencies in our basic cultural structures” (Bohigas, 1992: 15).

planning policies. Yet it also revealed the limitations of such efforts. The plan defended the strategic importance of culture and cultural policies for urban competitiveness in the face of a supposedly irreversible configuration of Barcelona as an international centre of knowledge and services. It insisted that all spheres of government (European, state, regional) should see the city as the most significant space for cultural creation. The logic of government intervention was redefined as a catalyst for the cultural sector and its agents (especially professional ones), to the extent that the policy process came fully under their control. Though this remained mostly in the background, the plan also presented culture as an element of social cohesion, and as a tool for promoting equal opportunities in access to knowledge, respect for diversity, and spaces of sociability.

The development of the Universal Forum of Cultures Barcelona 2004 revealed some of the main shortcomings of this logic of public intervention (which partly retained its local planning character), marking a turning point in the city's cultural policy. Two years later, Barcelona's Strategic Plan for Culture (*Ayuntamiento de Barcelona*, 2006) diagnosed a need to redefine the instruments of proximity policies. The link between culture, education and the proximity factor was recognized, giving rise to a plan for the development of art schools, and to a redefinition of the role of civic centres in public spaces. Finally, explicit consideration was given to the lack of integration between public interventions geared towards promoting cultural excellence and those that incorporated the proximity factor.

Thus, although it is beyond the scope of this article to take this analysis further, the cultural policy that was consolidated in Catalonia and Barcelona has remained tied to general trends in public policies' treatment of the urban dimension. In other words, the promotion of the proximity factor (as well as its associated ideas and values) in the cultural policy domain opens the door to changes but also reflecting continuities with local planning policies. We can now go on to analyse how this tension has manifested itself in the interventions of third sector organisations.

#### **4. Third Cultural Sector and Practices of Proximity: Between the Logic of Repair and New Urban Proximities**

In this context, how do third sector organisations operating in the field of culture incorporate the proximity factor? In the third cultural sector's intervention model, the logic of repair that underpins local planning policies co-exists with the promotion of a type of urban intervention that is redefining the proximity factor.

On the one hand, organisations have integrated in their practices the traditional understanding of the proximity factor. Their interventions centre on the following:

- Promoting access to culture.
- Reinforcing individuals' powers of self-expression.
- Fostering a sense of community belonging as well as group identities.

These three categories are not mutually exclusive, since organisations adopt a variety of overlapping approaches when implementing practices of proximity. In fact, we are dealing with a conception of proximity that was previously consolidated in local public policies of repair.

As regards the promotion of access to culture, several organisations have sought to foster the autonomous development of individuals in order to increase their ability to interpret and understand their surroundings, but also to develop their own cultural capital and resources. In some cases, bringing the proximity factor into play has led to an increase in the number of cultural activities, thanks to public programming criteria that favoured the production of a sustained cultural offer over the staging of large events. One of the key objectives of these organisations is to incorporate into the audience people who do not usually have access to sustained cultural programming – i.e. people who have the lowest possibility of access: those at risk of social exclusion, with limited financial resources, etc. Some organisations even try to establish a link between democratised access to culture and artistic creation construed as an inclusive and participatory field. Examples of significant initiatives in this area are cultural grant programmes, but also concerts organised in hospitals and in centres for supervised drug consumption and drug abuse prevention.

Additionally, a number of organisations focus on developing people's capacity for self-expression by making use of spaces that can help diffuse their needs, opinions and knowledge. Many such entities define themselves as agents of socio-cultural revitalisation, or simply as organisations that promote volunteer activities and participatory cultural action as tools for individual and collective development. Again, projects of this type focus on specific groups that are in closest contact with the organisations: youth, the elderly, or immigrant groups. Another case worth mentioning is that of organisations that are more directly linked to the world of professional artistic creation, and that include among their strategic objectives the diffusion of cultural activities as well as the building of connections between artists and their audience. For example, dance and theatre are promoted with the explicit aim of attracting future audiences or training specialists and professionals who will eventually favour the sector's interests.

Finally, proximity is conceived as a tool for creating and empowering group identities as well as fostering a sense of community belonging. Most third cultural sector organisations generate among people a high degree of implication and regular participation in their activities. Thus they reflect interests and concerns that are significant for the various communities (e.g. artistic sectors or

ethnic groups), or for their closest environments and territories (e.g. district, neighbourhood, or public space in general).

Through these three types of intervention, third sector organisations strengthen the traditional approach to the proximity factor already present in local cultural policies. Yet they also reinforce some of the limitations of these policies: a physical-spatial conception of the territory, sectorialisation and specialisation, the institutionalisation of agency, the individualisation of leadership, etc. Moreover, this approach limits organisations' capacity to establish relations of cooperation with governments. Subsidies (both from the Barcelona City Council and from the *Generalitat de Catalunya*) have become public policy's most substantial instrument for dealing with the third sector, and some of the characteristics of this instrument (limited duration, criteria of economic viability and quantitative impact) subject these organisations to relationships of economic dependence.

As we have already indicated, however, the proximity factor approach co-exists with the promotion of a type of intervention that transcends the dichotomy established between proximity and high-quality cultural production. Three lines of action have become catalysts for interventions of this type, revealing transformations and continuities in urban cultural action.

#### *4.1 Collective Processes of Knowledge Generation and Technology Use*

The organisations that have been able to promote cultural interventions recognised both for their quality and for their capacity to generate spaces of re-socialisation have shown the potential to further social cohesion, creativity, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Certain third cultural sector organisations have pushed for a type of virtual proximity that is closely tied to ICTs. This has entailed a move away from the traditional notion of proximity, yet one predicated on added value rather than a radical break. Practices of re-socialisation have been redefined. Knowledge transfer and exchange have made use of the potential of interconnectivity and the Internet.

One of the tools most commonly used by these organisations to generate and exchange knowledge is open source software – an instrument whose objectives rely on a traversal outlook. The so-called model of free and shared culture (mostly tied to the Internet and its respective sub-networks) generates common spaces in which interventions are debated and organised. Looked at from this angle, these interventions create a sense of belonging to the community.

It may prove useful to look briefly here at the case of *Telenoika*, a cultural association functioning as a platform for artistic, social and cultural events that foster experimentation and creation with audio-visual technologies. Located in the Raval neighbourhood, this organisation was created in February 2000 in response to the lack of interventions and spaces dedicated to the

emergence of live video art<sup>9</sup>. Telenoika operates by using potential connections between physical meeting spaces (live performances with audience, documentary film screenings, or face-to-face workshops) and online ones (webs, blogs, or online stage-design workshops). Through a combination of physical presence and absence, the association has been able to generate cultural processes and contents with user groups at the centre of the creation process. Online space is used as a communication tool that redefines space-time barriers, allows users to share information, and improves teachers' training skills.

Another useful case study for understanding the effects of third cultural sector organisations is the association Platoniq. This is a cultural organisation whose mission is to expand and promote the appreciation, diffusion, production, and study of cultural activities associated with new technologies. It investigates the potential social uses of technology and the internet, with the aims of improving communication strategies and developing self-learning and citizen organisations. Among its most outstanding projects are *Burn Station*, *The Common Knowledge Bank* and *Goteo*. The latter is a platform for collective funding and distributed collaboration based on the principles of crowd-funding.

The types of organisations that have promoted spaces of knowledge transmission and exchange respond to a particular reading of urban dynamics in the modern city. By this, we mean cities in which knowledge networks, creativity and innovation are not exclusively tied to traditional sectors such as public institutions or private industry, but are promoted through collective organisations and interventions. Efforts are made to overcome potential tensions between the individual and the group by creating networks of autonomous individuals who can contribute to the construction of new models of community intervention.

Obviously, as with any entity working with new technologies, third cultural sector organisations encounter structural characteristics of present-day societies that condition their objectives. In a society that has maintained low levels of connectivity and technology use, and in which certain technologies are restricted to a professional or specialised milieu, the impact of new, virtual forms of proximity is necessarily limited. For the elderly, for example, these new tools remain well out of reach. One of the current challenges is to make new forms of proximity more and more diverse and socially inclusive, but also to help immediate physical surroundings (neighbourhoods and districts) recognise their potential and identify with them.

#### *4.2 Public Needs, Public Interest and Social Conflict*

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<sup>9</sup> Formerly known as the Chinese quarter, the Raval is a neighbourhood situated in Barcelona's old town that has undergone several urban regeneration programs since the 1980s.

The second key dynamics of the third sector is its role in the evolution of public space. In certain cases, third sector organisations play a direct role through the use of streets, squares or other similar spaces. In others, they do so through the development of cultural spaces that respond to the needs of cultural sector agents and those of the general population. In view of this, we can determine the ways in which third cultural sector organisations have generated solutions that take into consideration the impact of high-quality cultural interventions on communities and territories. In various ways, we can identify organisations that have origins in social movements, traditional popular cultures, festive events, etc., but also organisations set up to remedy what they see as a lack of attention paid to certain artistic genres or cultural spaces.

It may prove useful here to examine the case of the *Federació d'Entitats del Clot-Camp de l'Arpa*. This organisation, located in the Clot-Camp de l'Arpa district<sup>10</sup> of Barcelona, was set up at the end of the 1970s with the aim of rehabilitating traditional popular festivals, campaigning for improvements in the neighbourhood, and acting as an interlocutor vis-à-vis local authorities. At the present time, the Federation seeks to reinforce the socio-cultural structure of the neighbourhood and to build upon the dynamism of its associations. Among its various projects, it is currently running the *La Farinera* cultural centre in El Clot, with the support of the Barcelona City Council. This centre was originally built in 1892 as a grain warehouse, and was recently reclaimed as an active cultural centre by people of the neighbourhood. In addition to programming regular cultural activities, second-level organisations like *Federació d'Entitats del Clot-Camp de l'Arpa* work to produce plans and programmes of action. Their mode of operation contributes - at the micro-level of programming - to a rise in the number of cultural activities. Yet it also significantly influences cultural planning in the organisations' close environment, as well as in the rest of the city.

This model of intervention results from the tension between the participation of citizens organised via different agents (which is the main demand of neighbourhood associations) and the stance adopted by the public administration. Although only a small number of organisations participate directly in policy formulation and implementation, in some cases collaborations are established beyond the recognised channels of traditional representative democracy. Joint projects with the city's public libraries, residences in organisations based in cultural centres, and activities in secondary schools are significant examples of this. Thanks to these, reactive responses to the demands of sectorial groups – which are typical of local planning cultural policies – can be overcome.

However, these types of organisation – which develop cultural interventions in proximity situations, while also using rigorous methodologies that aim for quality and impact - find it very

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<sup>10</sup> El Clot is a neighbourhood of medieval origin that retained its rural character until it was industrialised in the nineteenth century. It now belongs to the Sant Martí district of Barcelona.



difficult to achieve continuity in longer-term and wider-scale projects. Their impact at the community level is limited to the training of specific individuals in leadership skills. By contrast, in smaller territories, the impact on the community is greater, and there are more opportunities for collaboration between administrations, organisations and users.

#### *4.3 The Tension Between Tradition and Modernity*

A large number of third cultural sector organisations are now seeking to widen their tools for cultural creation and to incorporate multidisciplinary creation dynamics and languages in their projects, yet without losing sight of the objective of democratising access to culture. These organisations do not explicitly identify with the traditional classification of cultural sub-sectors on which local planning (cultural) policies rely (music, performing arts, film and audio-visual production, etc.). The logic behind their interventions is based not on competences, but on identified problems. They aim to construct new typologies (less sectorial and more transversal) rooted in categories that are associated with urban cultural policies, and that ultimately structure their programmes.

These types of interventions have prompted significant changes in traditional fields such as literature, as well as in more contemporary ones like audio-visual production (especially in the way certain genres have been added to usual repertoires). In addition, these organisations have formally adopted sustained programming that has enabled them to attract and retain new audiences.

The organisation *Projectes poètics sense títol* (Untitled Poetic Projects, *propost.org*) was set up in 1994 as a platform for disseminating contemporary poetry. Its work with different poetry formats and media, and its attempts at bringing artists and their audience into direct contact, spring from a diagnosis of the city's cultural situation. This organisation usually operates at two levels of activity: a wide-scale programme (e.g. European artists' residence projects), and sustained poetry dissemination. This approach has had such an impact that both publishers and public institutions have adopted the promotion of poetry as a space of direct contact. While the relationship between this type of organisations and industrial firms has not been conflict-free, the third cultural sector has defined itself as a complementary model. Third sector organisations have been interested in changes in the way culture is produced and distributed, and have regarded these transformations as opportunities for innovating and developing new marketing strategies.

In addition, within the scope of tradition-modernity relations, several third sector organisations have rehabilitated and promoted traditional forms of artistic expression they believe are neglected nowadays, namely those most closely tied to Catalan popular culture. The socio-cultural and sports association *Lluïsos de Gràcia* (founded in 1855 in the Barcelona neighbourhood of Vila

de Gràcia)<sup>11</sup> developed its own model for action, which shares similar characteristics with older third sector organisations and with the Catalan associative movement. The defence of traditional Catalan culture, and the origins of the associative model in catholic civic-cultural movements, are among its statutes' priorities. Yet at the same time, the organisation fosters community life and intercultural dialogue via its cultural interventions, re-appropriating and redefining its own collective vision and values.

Nevertheless, although such entities seek to confront the most flagrant inequalities and work for the inclusion of diverse social groups, several of them feel that their interventions produce only limited results. In sum, although there is an obvious attempt at redefining the diagnosis and intervention model beyond the logic of local planning, the proximity factor is still addressed on certain occasions from the perspective of repair.

## **5. Categorisation of Urban Cultural Interventions Conducted by Third Sector Organisations**

Modern society is witnessing the rise of new forms of authority and hierarchy. Third cultural sector organisations now play a role in the market alongside governments and traditional cultural firms. As such, the third cultural sector enjoys a strategic position that enables it to transform prevailing categories of social organisation. In Table 3, we summarise the contributions made by each type of third sector cultural organisation in Barcelona. Aiming for greater clarity, this table seeks to classify third cultural sector organisations based on their most significant practices in urban space.

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<sup>11</sup> The district of Gràcia comprises the old territory of Vila de Gràcia, which originated in the 18th century and was absorbed into the municipality of Barcelona at the end of the 19th century. It is the second most densely populated district of the city.

Table 3: Categorisation of third cultural sector organisations

|                  |   | CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS : TYPE OF VISION                |   |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| MANAGEMENT MODEL | Flexible and circumstantial: activities | Strengthening the cultural sector and the organisation | Transforming cultural interventions (conflict and innovation) |
|                  | Stable and planned: programmes          | PROXIMITY 1<br>Diversity                               | PROXIMITY 3<br>Movement                                       |
|                  |   | PROXIMITY 2<br>Consolidation                           | PROXIMITY 4<br>Redefinition                                   |

Source: prepared by the authors

While the vertical axis (management model) describes organisations according to implementation parameters, the horizontal axis (type of vision) refers to organisations' approach to the development of culture (practices and agents involved) in urban space. We can thus describe four types of organisations, depending on the way these conceptualize and implement the proximity factor.

Type #1 organisations ensure the density and diversity of the city's cultural offer, addressing all groups no matter how different or small. Those we classify as type #2 facilitate coordination between (public and private) agents, and generally reinforce the cultural supply within a specific sub-sector and/or territory. Type #3 organisations act as a point of disruption in the dynamics and rules established within specific cultural spheres. Finally, type #4 organisations redefine the structural parameters of action and cultural intervention valorisation. They aim for change in a context that is not specifically territorial.

Thus, types #1 and #2 represent a largely traditional approach to the proximity factor. Some of these organisations prioritise the sectorial reinforcement of cultural interventions, paying particular attention to the degree of institutionalisation and to the physical territory in which they are located. This does not mean that they reproduce the logic of local planning policies, but it does mean that they share with them the above parameters. Types #3 and #4 come closer to what we have defined as new proximities. These organisations are aware of the innovative dynamics generated by tensions and conflicts in the cultural sector - several of which derive from global, socio-economic

transformations. If their interventions are implemented (with varying degrees of institutionalisation) in specific territories, they are nonetheless planned and developed beyond the latter's limits. In brief, rather than proposing a normative categorisation that would consider one type of organisation to be more valuable than the other, we seek to highlight the diverse and complementary models for action that prevail in the third cultural sector. This mode of categorisation may prove useful for establishing strategies of action, but also for facilitating interactions among the various agents involved in the public and urban management of culture.

## **6. Final Considerations**

Two questions can help identify the contributions of this article. First, what can we learn about the evolution of urban policies through an analysis of cultural policies? Urban policies not only differ from local planning policies, but they also improve upon these (without necessarily being opposed to them). This on-going process is giving rise to hybrid policies, for which the field of cultural policies is highly significant. In effect, as the city becomes an international centre of services and knowledge, policies no longer consider culture to be a promise of freedom or a means to achieve national identity and citizenship. At the same time, the agenda of problems to be tackled is expanding, and the search for a multilevel government that can act as a catalyst for interventions by various agents of the cultural sector (as opposed to merely reacting to these) is underway. Yet the incorporation of the proximity factor into cultural policies simultaneously highlights processes of defensive re-legitimation and continuities with local planning policies. It does so on the one hand by re-interpreting proximity as a lever for economic growth (in which a group of private actors can centralise the policy process), and on the other hand by deploying the proximity factor as a type of repair policy, i.e. as a counterweight to public interventions that promote cultural excellence. In short, though cultural and proximity policies increasingly take on the form of urban policies, a distinction still needs to be made between the two. This leads to our second question.

What does the analysis of the third sector teach us about the evolution of cultural policies as urban policies? First, the high degree of complexity and flexibility in systems of political organisation has enabled third sector organisations to play a leading role in the production of networks that help formulate cultural policies as urban policies. Second, the effects of this intervention are considerable since third sector organisations have been developing their own model of cultural and urban action. This model, moreover, is a hybrid one. It adopts the traditional perspective on the proximity factor, and hence helps preserve the local-planning character of cultural policies (including some of their limitations). Yet the impact of this model can also be observed in the construction of new practices of proximity that assign priority to "cultural problems" over sector-competency frameworks as grounds for action, incorporate the territory's heterogeneous character in

the search for high-quality cultural interventions, use technology as a starting point for creative and innovative processes, and explore mechanisms of collaboration with public authorities so as to take policies beyond the logic of reaction. As such, this process illustrates the difficulties of the third sector in acting as a locus of power, as well as its capacity to redefine the proximity factor and further the development of urban cultural policies.

Finally, this article presents a typology of third sector organisations that highlights the diversity of their dynamics and impact on the proximity factor. An important, future line of research would entail mapping and analysing the effects of each type of organisation. In sum, we consider that our perspective on cultural policies and the third sector contributes to current academic and political debate on the future of cities and the changing concept of urban policy. We are optimistic that research into these dynamics will produce valuable knowledge, as well as inform the implementation of management practices that take such knowledge into account.

## Acknowledgements

This paper is based on the findings of the research project “Proximity, Culture and Third Sector in Barcelona”, which was coordinated by Joan Subirats and Xavier Fina. The research team also included Nicolás Barbieri, Adriana Partal, Eva Merino, Xavier Fina and Joan Subirats. The research project was funded by the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona (ICUB). We would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. Any errors or omissions in this essay remain our responsibility alone.

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