

# Public cultural Planning

Félix Manito Lorite

Cultural strategic planning has emerged as an indispensable tool for meeting the challenges of globalisation, seeing as the global-local dialectic has a growing presence within the field of culture. Culture has been progressively gaining prominence within public policies and economic activity due to its contribution to economic and sustainable development in areas such as metropolises and networks of cities. Therefore, we now understand cultural planning as the design of strategies that affect much more than the traditional cultural sectors (libraries, heritage and the performing, plastic and audiovisual arts); it influences the development of the territory and its image in terms of the value of culture.

## 1. Five reasons to start a planning process

The specific reasons for beginning a strategic plan are usually highly varied but they can, however, be grouped into five general types.

### **Innovation**

One of the main reasons to implement a strategic planning process is “to develop a new breed of cultural poli-

cy,” as contended by the pioneering case of the Cultural Map of Sabadell, created in Spain between 1991 and 1995. This idea demonstrates not only the desire to produce a different cultural policy, but it also means that cultural policies must be of a higher standard. In other words, they must represent an improvement and modernisation on what is already being done and they must be more in-keeping with modern times. Many other cases suggest rearranging the elements of the existing cultural policy so as to give them sense and coherence. As articulated in the explanation of the Strategic Plan for Culture in Andalusia (2007): “In matters of cultural policies, we are doubtlessly facing a radical change in the autonomous administration, a reconsideration which is based on the experience of recent years and which, using that already carried out and implemented, seeks to modernise cultural management and policies and to incorporate values and objectives.”

### **Co-responsibility**

Involving other agents in cultural policy is another of the biggest reasons to start a strategic planning process. It entails defining the shared objectives of the cultural policy with the public and private cultural agents of the territory. In this respect, the Basque Plan of Culture (2004) defined itself as “the Basque Government plan that will guide its actions and

fix its commitments. But it is more than that. Firstly, it is also a philosophy, a generic framework for all the institutions and agents of the country.” One can take another step further towards co-responsibility by involving the various agents in the implementation as well. According to the Basque Plan of Culture: “It is also a commitment to the development of these big ideas, through a few shared institutions whose aims are to coordinate and arrange actions, to streamline resources and to generate synergies. Naturally, this is all without invading the competencies of the institutions or interfering in the decisions of social or private agents.”

### **Forward planning**

Another of the common motivations in starting strategic planning processes is found in the ability to define and address the challenges of the future. Although the capacity for forward planning is one of the main qualities of strategic planning, it has not been sufficiently incorporated into the field of culture. In fact, according to the analysed case studies, this reason is discussed more in territorial plans than in strictly cultural planning processes. The 2010 Vitoria-Gasteiz Strategic Plan explained that “Strategic planning allows one to participate in the construction of the future itself, avoiding being left at the mercy of the vicissitudes of one’s surroundings.”

### **Development**

In strategic planning processes, especially in cities or metropolises, another reason to implement a strategic planning process is to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the territory. Unfortunately, it is rarely believed that culture contributes to development beyond that of the field of culture. The most significant case study in this regard was the 1st Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona (2003), as its intention was “to make innovation, creativity and knowledge the basis of competitiveness and progress in this area.” In cultural plans, this urban development objective is possible when there is a real transversality that enables cultural policy to permeate the other policies of the territory, from the “hardest” ones (town planning, the economy, etc.) to the “softest” ones (education, youth projects, etc.).

### **Territorial Marketing**

In the case of city plans, another of the main objectives is to convert cities into cultural capital within the territory, turning them into very attractive locations to the outside world. In this respect, the aim of the 2010 Seville Strategic

Plan was to give the city “cultural and administrative capital in Andalusia and a good international image.”

## **2. The public administration, the main actor**

In the Spanish panorama, there are multiple actors involved in strategic planning. However, the leadership behind the implementation of a strategic planning process is usually the responsibility of the public administration.

### **Areas of culture of municipals and autonomous communities**

The bodies that drive strategic cultural planning processes are usually the cultural departments of the public administrations, especially city councils and autonomous communities, although the mayoral and presidency departments of both administrations are also involved. An exceptional case is the Basque Plan of Culture which was driven, from its very beginning, by the Council of Basque Culture, with support from the Autonomous Government.

### **Provincial authorities**

In the case of intermediate administrations, there are some provincial authorities which provide support in strategic planning processes, within the framework of their responsibilities as intermediate public bodies that cooperate with lower level, local administrations. Two examples of this are the Provincial Councils of Barcelona and Biscay. These two territories have proven how the existence of stable programmes has allowed strategic projects to proliferate in the field of culture.

### **Collaboration between administrations within the same territory**

Strategic plans with a broader territorial scope have been started in some areas of neighbouring municipals, or else in separate municipals that have important relationships of dependency and/or complementarity. In fact, the close relationships between some municipals has allowed us to see the importance of streamlining efforts via territorial strategic planning that is not limited to municipal borders. An example of this is the CONCERCOST Project for strategic planning in the Central Regions of Valencia (2001).

### **Private associations and foundations**

In Spain, the driving force is not often a private agent such as an association or foundation. European Union sub-

sities made it possible for the Aragonese Association for Cultural, Multilateral Cooperation, alongside certain entities from Toulouse, to carry out the strategic process linked to the *Infoculture Space* Project (2002-2005). However, some cultural institutions channel their efforts into the realisation of strategic plans that guide their development, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (2001-2004).

### **Management of planning projects**

At this point, we believe that we need to mention the agents which develop the strategic planning processes. The driving forces behind strategic plans usually recur to external businesses and, to a lesser extent, to their own organisations. An exceptional case is the Historic Heritage Intervention Plan of Castile and Leon, which was launched by the Planning and Studies Service of the Castile and Leon Council between 2004 and 2012.

### **3. Methodology, a complex universe**

There is no single methodology for strategic planning: there are numerous theories and methods to carry out a strategic planning process. However, some generalisations can be made about the organisation, phases and fundamental principles.

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### **Organisation**

Strategic planning processes usually have various organisations that make it possible for the drivers to run the operations and monitoring throughout the entire process. On the one hand, a body is created to bring together those responsible for policies and the specialists at key moments of the process, in order to establish the political direction. On the other hand, the operative coordination is delegated to an organisation that brings together specialists and consultants periodically throughout the process. In some cases there is also a monitoring body that includes specialists, politicians and private cultural agents. These bodies form the stable organisational structure of the plan, whilst the variable structures are participation mechanisms that are established based on the needs of each process.

### **Phases**

The methodology usually follows the same schema in all cases, with the exception of those cases that cover planning in a broader sense, i.e. as a work strategy that does not involve a determined process or seek to obtain a document as a material result. Therefore, in general, and aside from the multiple phases of certain cases, the planning processes are composed of two main phases that are essential to any plan. On one side is the analysis of the current situation of the culture, generally called the Diagnosis, and on the other are the future strategies and actions, frequently called the Action Plan. These two phases generally take place once the strategic planning process has finished and they appear in a single document, divided into the two aforementioned sections at the least. It should be noted that these two phases may overlap. It is also worth indicating that the initial phase, prior to the start of a strategic planning process, is basic although generally not born in mind. In fact, a good preliminary definition of the project, the intended aims and the acceptance of commitments can be the determining factor in whether the project runs smoothly.

### **Describing the context: the diagnosis**

The diagnosis consists of an analysis of the current cultural situation of the territory in question. This analysis is usually supported by the existing bibliography, the available or purpose-made quantitative data on the culture and territory, and the qualitative information extracted from interviews and participative sessions (round tables, workshops, seminars, etc.). Diagnoses can be structured as a single document or as sectoral and/or transversal studies carried out

by specialists. In general, they tend to describe a general framework of the territory and a specifically cultural framework, with both of them bearing in mind the idea of development. In some cases, these described contexts are contrasted with descriptions of similar or desired situations. Furthermore, in some cases, diagnoses also have a conceptual framework which covers the principles and values that guide the plan.

The only generalised method of use, surely due to its simplicity and usefulness, is the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) matrix. This matrix brings together the internal and external factors which condition the application of strategies, acting as a summary for the situation under study. It is therefore used in numerous cases at the end of the Diagnosis. The image of the territory shown in the SWOT is used to facilitate the work for designing the proposals.

### **Designing the strategy: the action plan**

The action plan is usually structured around a few objectives that are developed in general terms, often called the strategic principles, and around specific actions. It is worth bearing in mind how the Strategic Plan of the Barcelona Auditorium Consortium (2006-2010) explained how “The strategic dimension of a plan is defined, to a large extent, by the ability to imagine an auspicious future for the institution.” The specific actions can be prioritised in time (short, medium or long term) and quantified. In contrast, some plans establish high impact structuring projects within each strategic principle, the implementation of which is a priority.

### **Communication and participation: two basic concepts**

Participation has garnered special importance within the methodology of strategic planning. In fact, in the majority of cases, panels for work, validation and participation are organised so that the cultural agents and citizens can debate the diagnosis and proposals. In terms of the diagnosis, it is worth mentioning that the opinion of those who participate in the panels is usually sought beforehand via a framework document on an analysis of the situation. Also, participation channels are put to work through the internet. The panels may be restricted if participation from certain persons (generally agents from the sector) is sought or open if citizens can participate as well. The themes can be general, sectoral or transversal.

Communication is another of the main elements in a strategic planning process and this is closely linked to

participation. In order for the participation to achieve the desired results, it is necessary to prepare a communications plan that contributes to the transparency of the entire process and therefore to its credibility in the eyes of the citizens. Consequently, every strategic planning process must have a specific communications plan which informs all citizens that the process is starting and which encourages participation from potentially interested citizens. However, the majority of processes do not develop this aspect very far.

### **Implementation, monitoring and evaluation**

The implementation and monitoring of strategic plans is a basic phase of the process but it is not usually given its due importance. Generally speaking, strategic planning processes do not have detailed systems for monitoring the implementation. Very often, the monitoring is comprised of an annual report which doesn't necessarily evaluate the achievement of the objectives and specific actions. Only in the Cultural Plan of the Basque Country does the plan itself include a complete evaluation and monitoring system. The body responsible for the monitoring of said plan is the Basque Observatory of Culture, but a virtual forum was also created along with sectoral work groups. Using these, the cultural agents could participate in open days on the monitoring of the plan.

## **4. Obstacles to strategic planning**

In this section we give a few examples of failure in cultural strategic planning processes, throwing into relief the difficulties faced by these projects.

### **A lack of co-responsibility**

The first and main reason why certain strategic plans were not brought to fruition is found in political changes. In fact, the Communities of Valencia and Madrid started cultural strategic planning processes which could have been pioneering were it not for political changes which caused both projects to be abandoned. However, it is worth indicating that a change in the political colours of the government that is behind a planning process does not necessarily signify the failure thereof. If the project is a shared project and not just of a single government (i.e. if it has benefitted from the participation of all political groups and cultural agents), then all involved will want that project to be successful and will not give up on the project even if there is a political change.





### **A lack of leadership**

The second reason why action plans are not implemented stems from the lack of leadership. One-off alliances that were created in order to carry out a specific process, without conviction or clear leadership, were the reason for the failure to realise the CONCERCOST Project. This strategic planning process, financed in part by the European Union, was promoted by the Consortium of Central Regions of Valencia, a body that was specially created to carry out said process. Exercising leadership means that the team behind the plan has a strategic vision, that it believes in the planning process and that it is capable of uniting other departments, political forces and agents. It also brings coherence to the whole.

### **Conditions prior to success**

The problems of co-responsibility and leadership experienced by the Community of Madrid, the Community of Valencia and the Central Regions of Valencia can be avoided if certain conditions are brought about before starting the planning process. In fact, a political leader who initiates a strategic planning process must ask: “Do I have the willpower to bring it about, knowing all that it entails?” and “Do I have the support of my government team and the support of the opposition?” A strategic planning process is drawn up with short, medium and long term objectives and it should not therefore be at the mercy of any political changes which may occur.

## **5. Strategic planning and culture**

Strategic planning has had a big influence on cultural policies, producing new issues and new forms of management, as well as contributing to its centrality. But culture has also contributed to strategic planning with the principles of Agenda 21 for culture.

### **New issues**

Cultural policies have generally centred on traditional sectoral fields: the plastic arts, performing arts, reading, heritage, *fiestas* (traditional celebrations) and popular culture. However, they have also addressed transversal fields such as: amenities, creation, training and broadcasting. With the normalisation of strategic planning, the focus on traditional issues has been modified and cultural policy has started to cover a wider spectrum of cultural issues, making new fields

more widespread. We will highlight three issues which we believe are the most relevant and which have been incorporated into cultural policy.

### **Cultural tourism**

Tourism became an issue covered by cultural policy a long time ago, given that the search for quality tourism clearly needs a good range of culture on offer. Cultural capital is an element that attracts tourism and with this in mind, one understands part of the drive of the city marketing aspect within the strategic plans of Seville and Barcelona. Cultural policies are increasingly seeking cultural projects with an international scope, policies that allow their territory to be put on the global map so as to generate more than just a flow of visitors.

### **Cultural industries**

Another of the central themes of current cultural policies is that of cultural industries which have a growth potential that exceeds to a large extent that of traditional economic sectors. One thusly can understand the choice of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona to highlight this sector as one of its development strategies. Vitoria-Gasteiz, in its own city plan, also chose to strengthen the culture of knowledge through emerging cultural sectors characterised by activities with high added value.

### **Culture of proximity**

An issue which has seen many ups and downs but which is returning to the realm of cultural policy with renewed vigour is the culture of proximity, heir to the revived socio-culture. Growing diversity and the persistence of unequal access to culture has enabled the rebirth of this issue as a tool of social cohesion, with new points of view. Thusly, the 2006 Cultural Plan of Barcelona aimed to strengthen the active participation of its citizens in the area of culture, using a point of view that was much more focused on the strengthening of one’s own expressivity and the cultural practices of the citizens themselves.

### **Changes in management**

Strategic planning has not only inserted certain issues into the cultural political agenda, it has also brought about changes in the management of culture and its impact. Indeed, strategic planning has supposed changes in the way that culture is managed, bringing order to the actions which are carried out and setting goals, leading to more efficient

and effective management. In the decision-making processes of cultural policies, the impact has been significant given that the views of the agents involved and the citizens are born in mind. Strategic planning has also brought its forward planning capabilities into play in cultural policy, enabling it to anticipate predictable situations and to design desirable and possible futures.

### **Agenda 21 for culture**

Agenda 21 for culture represents a great contribution to strategic planning processes. It develops the concept of holistic planning, thus creating culture-based principles and recommendations that can be used by local governments and other bodies as guides for territorial strategic planning processes. In fact, Agenda 21 for culture is centred on the concepts of democracy and cultural democratisation, but also on governance, sustainability and the economy, given that culture contributes to the development of those concepts.

### **6. By way of a conclusion**

The contributions in the field of management are common to both strategic planning processes and other

fields, but the large impact that strategic planning has had specifically in the field of culture is the contribution of placing culture at the centre of public policy. One cannot say that the centrality of cultural policy is a generalised phenomenon; it actually requires transversality to make this possible and it is not usually given this. Strategic planning has allowed culture to multiply its impact on territories and for this reason it is increasingly born in mind in territorial development plans. In fact, it has progressed from having zero presence in said processes to taking on a fundamental role in certain territorial strategic plans.

### **Bibliography**

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