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Sustainability and commodification? The role of cultural assets in the development of new paths for tourism in Catalonia

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Abstract

Recognising and even producing cultural assets has been one of the emerging strategies in the development of new potential paths for sustainable tourism. This type of processes has integrated in the same frame practices and concepts such as cultural rights and economic competitiveness, cultural diversity and the economy of identity or cultural heritage and the intangible economy. Even if significant research has been developed on these issues, some questions remain still unexplored. Can we see a kind of paradox in these strategies, i.e., an opportunity for transforming development processes (making them more sustainable) and at the same time for reproducing economic and cultural inequalities? An opportunity to ensure equity in public decision-making about cultural tourism initiatives and at the same time deepening social and political exclusion? This chapter will address these questions through the analysis of a historical view of cultural policies in Catalonia and, specifically, a study case on the relation between the promotion of heritage and the development of tourism in the Catalan Pyrenees. Both the theoretical framework and methodology of this contribution is based on an interdisciplinary approach, including knowledge from the fields of political science, social anthropology, and cultural studies.

Keywords cultural policy · heritage · tourism · commodification · sustainability

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1. Introduction

Recognising and even producing cultural assets has been one of the emerging strategies in the development of new potential paths for cultural tourism (Urry 1995; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Stylianou-Lambert et al. 2014; De Frantz 2018). Cultural planning on this subject, such as the creation of new public and private institutions or the promotion of cultural, natural and intangible heritage (Labadi 2011; Winter 2011), are some of the initiatives coming from the cultural tourism sector. This type of processes has integrated in the same frame practices and concepts such as cultural rights and economic competitiveness (Baltà and Dragičević 2017), cultural diversity and the economy of identity (Barbieri 2015) or cultural heritage and the intangible economy (Del Mármol and Santamarina 2019).

Even if significant research has been developed on these issues (Throsby 2001; Pratt 2008; Anheier and Yudhishtir 2008; Bendix et al. 2012; Scott 2014), some questions remain still unexplored. Can we see a kind of paradox in these strategies, i.e., an opportunity for transforming development processes (making them more sustainable) and at the same time for reproducing economic and cultural inequalities? An opportunity to ensure equity in public decision-making about cultural tourism initiatives and at the same time deepening social and political exclusion? In the specific field of cultural heritage, for example, several studies have shown how the heritagization of cultural phenomena have resulted both in processes of commodification and normativization, while at the same time opening breaches towards contra-hegemonic dynamics that can or cannot end up into new developmental paths (Herzfeld 1991; Hafstein 2014; Cortés-Vázquez et al. 2017)

This chapter addresses these questions through a case study that includes an analysis of a historical view of cultural policies in Catalonia and, specifically, the relation between the promotion of heritage and the development of tourism in the Catalan Pyrenees. The research combined, on the one hand, the methodology of frame analysis (Goffman 1974; Verloo 2005) of debates in the Parliament of Catalonia with content analysis of historical documents (cultural policy plans, laws, governmental budgets, etc.) and semi-structured interviews with 18 informants (including policy makers from the Catalan and local governments, third sector organisations, private companies and cultural experts). We focused on these interviews profiles because our research wanted to analyse policy making and formulation processes. And these informants directly participated in those processes or have expert knowledge about them. On the other hand, this chapter includes knowledge from a long-term ethnographic approach based on participant observation during 14 months between 2006 and 2012 together with qualitative methodologies of analysis. Both the theoretical framework and methodology of this contribution is based on an interdisciplinary approach, including knowledge from the fields of political science, social anthropology, and cultural studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework brings together two fields of study: the analysis of cultural policy and heritage studies. In particular, it will define and interrogate the relationship between cultural policy, heritage, and regional and economic development strategies where tourism plays an important role.

2.1. Cultural policies: legitimacy, instrumentalisation and opportunities for sustainable development

Cultural policy refers to the institutional support structures that direct both aesthetic creativity and our collective lifestyles: it is (or means to be) a bridge between aesthetic and anthropological registers (Miller and Yúdice 2004). Occupying this liminal space has posed important challenges for cultural policies in regard to their public legitimacy, in essence, the legitimacy of public institutions intervening in the field of culture. The process of institutionalisation for European cultural policies is thus carried out with a significant deficit in perceived legitimacy, implying a consequent limitation of recognition and resources, especially if we compare this situation with that of the Welfare State's central public policies.

During the second half of the 20th century, cultural policies built their legitimacy by overlapping different developmental models. Firstly, came that of the democratisation of culture, specifically the promotion of access to those things which are considered the key references of Western culture (Mulcahy 2006). Hence the England Arts Council's first slogan: *Great art and culture for everyone*. Secondly, in the face of criticisms levied against this conceptualisation of culture, cultural policies sought to rebuild their legitimacy using a model labelled *cultural democracy*: the government's responsibility is to provide equal opportunities for citizens to be culturally active on their own terms (Urfalino 1996). However, these strategies require mediation, and this role is often realised by the so-called *cultural sector*, a deliberately imprecise concept that includes (but also excludes) certain public and private actors.

Support for this sector, and ultimately for all cultural (and therefore creative) industries tends to become not only a facilitating tool, but an objective. This sectorial logic is then compounded with the logic that conceives of culture as a right, perceived as just as, if not more legitimatised. The tension between these two logical frameworks has shaped the history of cultural policy (Barbieri and Fina 2020). As an underlying issue then, inseparable from the tension previously described, cultural policies have a legitimacy problem; a constant need to find solid elements that explain their importance and direction. For this reason, on this path towards institutionalisation, we see attempts to make compatible very diverse objectives such as the construction of national identity, the promotion of artistic excellence, the impulse towards economic development, the safeguarding of heritage and access to culture.

One of the logical frameworks for the justification or legitimisation for the most established cultural policies advocates a State as the principal sponsor of cultural and creative industries (Wu 2003). The underlying idea is that powerful industries will simultaneously ensure a competitive national economy, artistic quality, and cultural diversity (in a globalised context). During this process, conceptual frames of reference are adopted such as the economy of identity or economy of experience. What kind of result has this type of policy had? In many cases, it has been the creation of cultural industries that are not only unequal from country to country (or with transnational agents that monopolise the production of content), but also internally unequal (inequality of class, origin, etc.) (O'Brien 2019).

In the particular case of regional and local development, cultural policies have attempted to integrate complex and contentious concepts and practices such as the economy of knowledge and urban regeneration with social cohesion, governance and sustainability. Frequently, the balance of these objectives has tended to focus on the economic impact of culture, implementing cultural policies and the idea of territory or *cultural proximity* (Rius and Klein 2020). This proximity, which ought to have served to incorporate the unique and heterogenous character of the territory into cultural policy, instead became above all a lever for economic growth, wherein an ensemble of private-sector actors controlled the policy-making process. This was the case, amongst others, with the cultural policies of New Labour in the United Kingdom which were very interested in the instrumental capacity of arts and culture. With these processes in mind, it was crucial for culture professionals to have an increasing level of visibility in the political arena and above all, that this visibility was accompanied by a growing capacity for the sector to exploit and take advantage of economic resources associated with the budgets of other political sectors such as tourism or urban development (Belfiore 2012).

However, it is necessary to emphasise that cultural policies of this kind have also created opportunities for wider democratic participation in their elaboration. Various agents (not only culture professionals and governmental bodies) have been able to influence the cultural policy agenda, introducing new issues like cultural sustainability. Culture is considered the fourth pillar (together with economic, social and environmental factors) of the process of sustainable development (Hawkes 2001; Pascual 2018). The discourse surrounding cultural rights and community-based culture also fits into this process (Baltà and Dragičević 2017).

A large part of the tensions, contradictions and even paradoxes present in this methodology for cultural policy are captured in the field of heritage politics and its relation with the cultural tourism sector. The origin of heritage policies must be sought in the philosophies of conservation indebted to nineteenth century thought with its first legal definition appearing in the French national legislation of the 19th century (Poulot 2006). This marked the beginning of a series of theoretical and managerial transformations, which would lead us through various changes of direction to the contemporary configuration of heritage (see Santamarina 2013). The following section of this article will be dedicated to succinctly exploring these debates.

2.1. Heritage, cultural policies and tourism

Heritage politics has developed as a crucial dimension of cultural politics during past decades, prompted by its growing presence in the international scene due mainly to the Unesco implantation of a complex corpus of conventions and regulations (Smith 2006; Di Giovine 2009). The deployment of this refined heritage regime (Bendix et al. 2012) instituted not only a governmental sphere but also a powerful system of thought including elaborated dichotomies of legitimacy in relation to the conservation of the past (Lowenthal 1998; Herzfeld 2010; Meskell and Brumann 2015). Built as a legitimate representation of the past, cultural heritage constitutes a powerful field of political action. Heritage thus became a doctrine, a mandatory field imposing specific Western ideas of conservation, restoration, monumentalization and beauty (Lowenthal 1998; Smith 2006). But the latest twist in heritage regimes has been the adoption of a new conceptualization: *Intangible Heritage*, coined within UNESCO discussions to enlarge the restrictive frame of the 1972 World Heritage Convention (Hottin 2011). The concept became known worldwide in a vertiginous and successful process starting with the approval of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO) in 2003 (Aikawa_Faure 2009). As observed before, the adoption of the Convention prompted a cascade effect on national legislation worldwide, proliferating the local protection, identification and safeguarding of what became known through UNESCO definitions as intangible heritage. To grasp the complexity of the new concept, we need more than the official definition given by UNESCO:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003, Art. 2).

A refurbishment of former disputed and criticized fields of knowledge such as folklore (Bortolotto 2011), intangible heritage represented as well a deep effort to prompt more inclusive notions of heritage in tune with ideas of social inclusion and participation (Sánchez-Carretero et al, 2019). The extent to which these efforts are successful is still being strongly discussed (Smith and Akagawa 2009; Hafstein 2009, 2014; Santamarina 2013, amongst many others).

Beyond the well-intended attempts of consolidating alternative definitions of heritage, the rise of intangible heritage came about together with the rise of intangible assets in the economic domain (see Del Mármol and Santamarina 2019). The emergence of the intangible economy has been widely celebrated since the early 2000s, in reference to different phenomena such as knowledge, social relations, ideas, brands, R+D, product design or human capital and its role in the economic system

(Bloomberg 2013²; Haskel and Westlake 2017). In tune with the expansion of definitions of new economic regimes in relation to the encroaching of the cultural domain, such as new *cultural economy* or *cognitive economy* (Throsby 2001; Anheier and Yudhishtir 2008; Scott 2008), the rise of intangible assets is being widely celebrated. The tricky relationship between heritage and economic dynamics has long been a controversial topic of debate (see Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2006; Bendix et al. 2012), pointing to the risky potential of turning heritage into a cultural and economic asset. Nonetheless, tourism development has largely seized cultural, intangible, and natural heritage in its thirst for shaping attractive destinations (MacCannell 1976; Korstanje 2012, 2019; Fyall and Rakic 2006; Timothy 2018). This aligns with recent statements of the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) praising cultural tourism as a key market niche in the next years (UNWTO 2018; see Cousin 2008). Many are the authors that have lately identified UNESCO with a brand (Meskell 2015; Grätzer et al. 2015; Lai and Cang-Seng 2015), posing that the mandate to protect heritage through the inscription of elements into Unesco Lists has been replaced by the mobilisation of the brand in the hope to achieve development, in many cases conflated with tourism.

In this vein, cultural and intangible heritage has been deployed as a strategy to reshape local and regional markets in consonance with global directives emanating from developmental agencies or supranational bodies such as the Unesco or the UE, for the cases that we are dealing with in this text. If the intangible investment is being identified as a well-known source of economic development from an economic perspective (Haskel and Westlake 2017) it is crucial to identify the role of heritage politics (whether cultural, natural or intangible) in the shaping of specific regions as tourist's destinations. The fact is that states and local governments, as well as NGOs, and international agencies are increasingly promoting development based on the exploitation of intangible heritage (Labadi 2011; Winter 2011; Collins 2018). Already in 2009 Bendix have argued that the economic potential of heritage has grown to be the primary incitement in the development of heritage projects. But the risk of this situation is also denounced by UNESCO itself, that has intensified his warnings against the *freezing* or *folklorisation* of heritage, opposing *market value* to *cultural value*. But this translation of cultural value into market value is not a contradiction as such, and many authors have identified it as a usual strategy of current neoliberal economies (Miller 2008; Franquesa 2013). As Tsing (2015) has recently and eloquently shown us, the connection of different regimes of value is a key neoliberal strategy for reaching the slippery promise of local development. It is important, though, to identify how cultural, natural, and intangible heritage are being incentivized and deployed, and how they are translated into economic assets. A critical analysis must strive to identified which sectors and social classes are able to display, develop and benefit from the new resources growing under the shade of

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-07-18/the-rise-of-the-intangible-economy-u-dot-s-dot-gdp-counts-r-and-d-artistic-creation>

heritage politics (see Brumann and Berliner 2016; Alonso 2014). Since the promises of development wrapping heritage politics are deeply intertwined with tourist economies, the risks of unequal development are frequently found in the form of transnational actors and capital seizing the benefits (Brumann and Berliner 2016). Furthermore, the evidence shows an increase of restrictions in the rights of access and use of what is declared as heritage in different local contexts (see Breglia 2006; Del Mármol 2012; Copertino 2014).

Nonetheless, we must not ignore that the expansion of notions of heritage referred above has also set up notions of common inheritances that can in some cases brought about paths of resistance and political struggles for new democratic claims. As Coombe and Weiss reminded us, important shifts from liberal state-based regimes of protection of patrimony to multiscalar and multisectoral assemblages of governmental regulation are taking place (2016: 43). Within this, cultural heritage is promoted as a resource, enshrined mainly as an economic asset in marketized relationships by governmental and developmental agencies, but seized as well as token of empowerment and legitimacy by some subaltern groups. As many authors have shown, the increasing of regulatory regimes such as environmental or cultural and intangible protection schemes cannot be solely understood in its dominative capacity but must also be analysed as a contradictory process providing both opportunities and constrains (eg Herzfeld 1991; Leblon 2013; Coombe and Weiss 2016; Kiddey 2017). The extent to which each of these options is deployed in a particular setting requires a rooted and multiscalar approach in order to apprehend the specific configuration of local power enabling the final outcome. The institutional and legitimized language of cultural and intangible heritage can become not just a hegemonic idiom of oppression (Herzfeld 2010), but also a vocabulary for reclaiming alternatives rights, unique property rights and raise up the voice for nonconventional futures. We are witnessing thus new fields of confrontation and legitimation bringing about the possibility of paradoxical configurations.

3. Case study: from the historical development of cultural policies in Catalonia to the heritage promotion in the Pyrenees

3.1. Cultural policies in Catalonia: from normalization to instrumentalisation

The case study of cultural policy in Catalunya illustrates a good many of the theoretical debates that have been previously presented here. We have referred to the structural weakness of cultural policies and the necessity of continuing to find discourses and practices that reinforce their legitimacy for intervention in the field of culture. Next, we will focus on understanding the historical evolution of these policies since their implementation at the beginning of the 1980s, up to the present day.

With the return of democracy in Spain, the government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya) and local governments (led by the Barcelona City Council and the Barcelona Provincial Council) developed cultural policies practically on a parallel timeframe with more conflicts than points of convergence. The Generalitat based its culture-policy discourse on the idea of cultural “normalisation” or standardisation. As the Catalan Minister of Culture Joan Guitart (1990) pointed out, to standardise Catalan culture was to define it as a market (where goods are produced) and at the same time as an expression of national identity. Catalan culture had to be as *normal* as any other national culture. However, this framework only takes shape in the (re)construction of the great national cultural facilities (museums, theatres, auditoriums etc.).

Consequently, heritage policies (museums, heritage and archives) maintained a significant role during the 1990s, even exceeding remaining more important than those areas which we would call direct cultural promotion: performing arts and other sectors (visual arts, cinema, music and literature). However, these policies refer to the most part to the development of laws for the preservation of traditional cultural heritage. Ultimately, heritage was not recognised as a resource for regional development until well into the course of the 1990s.

For their part, local governments placed emphasis on policies that enabled access to culture, the recuperation and (re)invention of traditions and the construction of facilities used for cultural dissemination. The city councils took over from anti-Franco civil society and thus brought to light a significant phenomenon: that participation was constituted as a basic component of society. This shifted towards a process of cultural democratisation by means of the construction of facilities for cultural and artistic dissemination. However, the turning point for this stage of the process was the great cultural events staged during 1992 in Spain: the designation of Madrid as European Capital of Culture, the Seville Expo’92 and the Barcelona Cultural Olympiad³. These events functioned as significant festive occasions but from the point of view of cultural policies, did not leave much behind.

Towards the end of the 1990s, a combination of factors led to the consolidation of the cultural industries paradigm: the failure of democratisation policies, very little development on policies for cultural democracy, and important conflicts with the professional culture sector (more organised each time). It became necessary to re-legitimise culture policies. The underlying idea is that public policy should act as the catalyst for the culture sector and its professional agents. At the level of the Generalitat, the Catalan Institute of Cultural Industries was created and, at the city level in Barcelona, the strategic plan for the culture sector (1999) defended the “strategic character of culture and cultural policies for urban economic competitiveness and the configuration of Barcelona as a centre for knowledge and services of an international nature” (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1999). Furthermore,

³ The Cultural Olympiad was a cultural programme of the Organising Committee for the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games which offered cultural activities during the four previous years of the games. See Moragas (2008) for more details.

facing the centrality of this new model, heritage policies and institutions (museums, heritage and archives) lost relative influence during the decade of the 2000s.

From this point onwards, the budget and the organisational structures dedicated to the cultural industries grew significantly. Boosting the cultural industry and its competitiveness, it was argued, allowed the achievement of quality cultural production, access to culture for the population and the protection and reproduction of cultural identity in the long run. In the words of a Catalan Minister of Culture (Jordi Vilajoana), Catalan culture should take part in the initiatives that constitute contemporary culture from a worldwide perspective (Parlament de Catalunya 2000). The accounts that support the cultural policies of the Generalitat in this period define culture as a productive process and attempts were made to construct the legitimacy of cultural policies based on concepts such as the economy of experience (Mascarell⁴ 2005) and the economy of identity (Tresserras⁵ 2008). This would imply a shift from a society based on industrialisation to one where services, leisure and free time are fundamental to the economy. This change was combined with a representation of Catalunya as an excellent, entrepreneurial, and innovative society capable of global competition. The issue of Catalan identity was put at stake less during political negotiations with the central state and more so in economic relations within and outside those limits. Identity is considered both a condition of existence and a tool of competence. Therefore, the conceptual framework of cultural policies, which had until now linked culture and identity, expanded to incorporate notions such as competitiveness or economic attraction with differences depending on the body in question.

However, this change in the orientation of cultural policies left room for the emergence of other strategic directions. On the one hand, important policies for cultural facilities were developed aimed at the local level. The discourse of cultural rights was also incorporated and not only secondarily. However, access policies were often limited to the construction of infrastructure, leaving by the wayside the implications (social, educational, political) that their use may have for citizens. On the other hand, the Generalitat developed a policy of support for creativity, aimed at individual creators and cultural entities, with less structure and resources than that which was developed for the cultural industries, but in partnership with organisations that acquired additional relevance. Finally, the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONCA) was created, with the initial objective of democratising the development of cultural policies by introducing the principle of *arm's length*⁶. However, this objective of improving governance did not come to fruition and CONCA has since reduced its advocacy capacity, again guided by a corporate logic.

The 2010s and the early 2020s were marked by multiple crises. Firstly, the economic crisis which brought important cuts to the cultural budgets of many

⁴ Ferran Mascarell was Catalan Minister of Culture (conseller de cultura), 2006 and 2010-2016.

⁵ Joan Manuel Tresserras was Catalan Minister of Culture (conseller de cultura), 2006-2010.

⁶ Even if this principle can be considered in different ways, following Per Mangset (2009), it is usually supposed to imply that a relatively independent and artistically competent *arts council* (or similar body) is established to take care of the allocation of public subsidies to the arts community.

governments, but especially of the Generalitat. However, cultural policies also faced a new political crisis: a crisis that questions the legitimacy of their intervention in the field of culture. As an example of this crisis, we can cite the Generalitat de Catalunya's *Strategic Plan for Culture 2011-2021*. The development of the plan was initiated but remains unfinished.

And so, throughout the entire decade of the 2010s, attempts were made to search for new economic resources: a tax on ADSL companies was promoted (which was later declared unconstitutional), and the Fundació Catalunya Cultura and the Catalan Agency for Cultural Heritage were created. In the latter case, the functions of this body go beyond the search for new financing, but nevertheless the economic concern is at the foundation of its creation. This process is better understood by noting that the cultural industries paradigm is gaining ground, also incorporating the concept of creative industries. In the search for renewed legitimacy, the remit of cultural policies is widening. The concept of *creative industries* is the conceptual umbrella for this expansion that allows the inclusion of fields such as design, video games, gastronomy, or the digital industries (Garnham 2005). Beyond this expansion of the definition, the logic for the "justification" of cultural policies becomes even more important, based on measuring their impact, both socially and especially economically.

Finally, in opposition to this dominant model, at the same time as the sphere of cultural policy expands, the door opens to new directions in this area or, indeed, to the recovery of previously displaced debates. In this way, policies are being developed, especially through the promotion of local governments, that connect culture and sustainability; the cultural system and the educational system; or the role of culture in community development policies. Many city councils in Catalonia adopt and develop the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture, a directive that promotes the interconnectedness of the relationship between citizenship, culture, and sustainable development. For example, the Barcelona City Council recognises the need to orient the city's tourist activity towards sustainable development, with a responsible tourism model based on regional balance and the pillars of Agenda 21 for culture (Comissió de Cultura de CGLU 2018; see UNWTO 2013).

In the next section, we will analyse in detail how these challenges for cultural policy development are reflected in a region of the Catalan Pyrenees.

3.2. Catalan Pyrenees

The case study presented here, focusing on the Catalan Pyrenees, will allow us to deepen into the process of tourism promotion and its relationship with the development of heritage politics. This area covers two tourist brands coined by the Catalan Agency of Tourism: *Pirineus* and *Val d'Aran*, that are nonetheless far away from the two main tourism destinations of the country: the coastal zone and the city of Barcelona. The Catalan Pyrenees cover a vast area of 9652 km² (38% of the Catalan population) concentrating just 214.547 inhabitants (the 2,8% of the Catalan population). This area went through a substantial change in the past decades, in terms

of economic orientation and the productive base of local development. Nowadays this region shows one of the highest dependence rates on tourism revenues of the whole country (Duro and Rodríguez 2011) and has left behind its former emphasis on the primary sector together with the energetic and forest harnessing of natural resources that went on during the most part of the 20th century (Campillo et al. 1992). In the framework of the EU structural funds, tourism has been identified as a strategic development sector for rural and mountainous areas of Europe with otherwise weak economic and social structures and rather low figures of development and growth. Even though tourism was not completely new to the area, with the first steps to be found in the nineteenth century elite's hiking clubs or the first sky-resorts within the Spanish tourist boom of the sixties (Jimenez and Prats 2006), the progressive abandonment and reorientation of the agricultural and livestock activities until the final blow given by the entry of Spain in the ECC in 1986, made it one of the pillars of local development.

Therefore, tourism in the region has been one of the most heavily promoted sectors in recent decades (López-i-Gelats et al. 2001). This is reflected in the body of legislation passed with this respect, as well as in the different projects undertaken in the area. A series of ideas began to take shape in the 1980s, oriented to the preservation of natural mountain areas and the identification of new values from where to draw on possible resources. Rural areas were urged to foster new modes of development based on *providing recreation and leisure for the city-dwellers* (European Commission, 1988: 32), identifying cultural and intangible heritage (by then still called folklore) as key areas of development. Heritage in its varied array of expressions were presented as a basic strategy for the production of a tourist destination.

Many initiatives were prompted into this new direction, dragging the area into the new cultural economy fostering alternative productive sectors such as service industries, tourism, and leisure activities, as well as neo-artisanal forms of diversified production (food, clothes, etc.) (Throsby 2001; Pratt 2008; Scott 2008). The EC Leader Programme (*Liaison entre Activités de Développement de l'Économie Rurale*) operating since 1991, worked as a crucial funding channel aimed to promote the revitalization of rural areas throughout productive diversification, a focus on tourism and the boosting of endogenous development (Luzón and Pi 1999; Alonso and Macías 2014). By means of the consolidation of public/private partnerships, local elites and regional governments fuelled new forms of neoliberal corporativism consolidating specific forms of modernization and local development (Alonso & Macías 2014). While many investments are geared towards the promotion of rural tourism, some important resources were directed to what we referred here as the production of heritage, such as the restoration of Romanesque churches, the creation of local ethnographic museums (see del Mármol 2012) or the promotion of intangible heritage. Rural development in the form of tourism promotion was imposed as the right path towards modernization, in line with the extended new uses and consumption of rurality (Halfacree 1993), within what Sivaramakrishnan and Vaccaro (2007) called the new post-industrial landscapes.

For the sake of the argument, it is important to clarify that heritage in its varied and recent labeling (cultural, intangible and natural) is not considered here as a natural domain, as something given, following current trends of critical perspectives on heritage studies (see Smith 2006, Harrison 2013 among many others). On the contrary, heritage is taken as a complex concept involving the production of a political category, *a mode of cultural production in the present that has a recourse to the past* (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:7), and that involves a transvaluation of what has become obsolete (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Lowenthal 1998; Herzfeld 1991). In the Catalan Pyrenees, concrete actions included the declaration of Natural Parks, a set of urban planning regulations towards the protection of certain architectural traditional styles, the recovery of mountain paths and trails, and the promotion of new museums mostly focused on old local trades and activities turned into ethnological heritage. As we have seen, several documents, policies and plans both locally and from supranational instances such as the EU are clearly in favor of promoting tourism and heritage as fundamental development strategies (Bell and Jayne 2010), presented as panaceas for rural abandonment and depopulation. A clear longing for what is considered as more natural and authentic, as ecological food, antique fairs, and local rituals, underpinned from an ideological backdrop this reconceptualization of the region.

Even though heritage is often viewed and presented as an economic asset, accompanying developmentalist official discourses and narratives, it has not always fulfilled its promises of cultural and social cohesion (Selwyn 2007). The *demiurgic capacity* (Prats 2003) of heritage in its pairing with tourist policies, has in many cases failed to bring profit to broader social sectors. As have been highlighted by many analysts, the differences between access and power amongst actors are unequal (see Salazar and Porter 2005). The imposition of heritage labels onto previous social uses such as local celebrations, can turned into a resignification of popular culture including massification or a turn towards exhibition. Natural conservation has been largely denounced as new regulations restricting access and varied uses to local inhabitants (Frigolé 2007; Vaccaro and Beltran 2010), and urban regulations in some areas have induced an emphasis on decorative and aesthetic dimensions promoting the construction of residential areas and second homes (Vlès 2014; Del Màrmol 2017). While on the one hand many of the protective regulations on natural heritage and urban development based on the conservation of traditional styles (namely intangible heritage) helped avoiding extensive rural gentrification and the intensive ski tourism model experience in some areas of the region, on the other hand many voices were raised against the production of isolated landscapes that limited the uses of the land (see Tulla 1994). The risk of a model of development fostering speculative dynamics that give priority to tourism sectors such as building of second residences or rural lodges, can interfere with the aspiration of young inhabitants that are unable to find a place to live. During the recent sanitary confinement measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the requests from urban dwellers to move to this

mountain area have drastically escalated⁷. But the main problem identified by several civil servants working locally was the lack of available housing, since residents must compete into a highly gentrified rural property market. In a similar vein, protective actions within natural parks or protected areas have direct impact on agricultural and livestock farming practices, unable to compete for scarce land in mountain areas. It goes without saying that this has a direct impact on the migration rates of the region, with limited possibilities of employment and important problem on the housing market.

While our research in the Catalan Pyrenees has delivered enough evidence of the restrictive and coercive facet of heritage politics widely conceived (including its footprint as a hegemonic idiom stretching the classical domain of cultural policies), it is relevant to bring up the Janus-face of heritagization impinging on local contexts. One of the most boosted cultural policies from the 2000s on in the Catalan Pyrenees was the opening of ethnographic museums (Abella et al. 2012), celebrating traditional trades that were on the other hand relentlessly exterminated by the capitalization of agriculture and husbandry during the 20th century. As an example, we can cite the Turpentine Women Museum, a local exhibition in a highly depopulated valley of the Alt Urgell. With less than 100 people living in the central town of the valley in the early 2000s, the memory of the Turpentine women celebrating the local tradition of wandering peasants selling off mountain herbs and turpentine around Catalunya, allow the local council helped by the regional government (Consell Comarcal) to promote a new development path. The language of heritage enabled the town to seize local funds in order to inaugurate the museum and promote academic research (see Frigolé 2006), prompting the neglected valley to reconfigure a local identity organizing an array of activities to boost the local economy based mainly on handicrafts and a few of rural inns. This example is in tune with the definition Di Giovine (2009:9) gives us of the field of heritage production and the field of tourism production:

a multi-layered, global social structures wherein individuals struggle and negotiate to create, define, and promote formative encounters with place

4. Conclusion

This study enables us to test several well-established theories on the analysis of cultural policies, tourism and sustainability developed in different contexts. As has been widely analysed, cultural policies are conditioned by the lack of legitimacy which forced policy makers to integrate in the same framework the discourse on democratization of culture and economic development through the promotion of cultural industries. This process results in the instrumentalization of cultural policies and heritage in order to promote and enhance the territorial chances of economic

⁷ Interview August 2021. Local government agent.

development. Furthermore, the cultural policy process can become monopolized by few agents strategically positioned in the cultural sector further enhancing corporativism and political inequalities.

This chapter also explains how cultural policy makers build the legitimacy of cultural policies based on concepts such as “normalisation” (or standardisation), an attempt to define Catalan culture as any other national culture. This process implies a certain idea of modernity, based firstly on a link between culture and national identity, and then including in the same framework notions as competitiveness or economic attraction. Identity, creativity, and experience are merged and condensed in the economic dimension of culture. In the same vein, we have discussed the paradoxical implications of merging cultural heritage to local development and tourism, with its associated risk of packaging a culture to sell by the pound.

Having said that, our case study highlights several aspects that are usually underestimated in previous research. Firstly, the role of cultural assets that are normally understood as resources, that is inputs rather than outputs, open the way to further questioning. We have indeed called attention on the complex process of cultural production, which blurred the established frontiers between inputs and outputs. In this way, cultural assets can be both identified or produced, and must be critically analysed in further investigation.

Secondly, this chapter highlights how complex and paradoxical can be the relationships between culture, heritage and politics. In particular, new policies regarding cultural tourism can be an opportunity to foster more sustainable development processes (in cultural and economic terms), but at the same time an arena for new paths of the instrumentalisation of culture and status-quo reproduction. We also consider this issue as potentially relevant in future research.

Finally, the interdisciplinary approach adopted in this chapter has been a strength and a weakness at the same time. Applying concepts and methods coming from different disciplines can be considered puzzling and “time-consuming”, but from our point of view it is essential to understand the complex relationship between sustainability and commodification in cultural and heritage policies. An epistemic and methodological effort for leaving behind the social science’s partition into unconnected vessels is key for moving beyond partial portrayal of contemporary processes.

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