

The sustainability of the Cultural Development Strategy of Guimarães

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The small and medium-sized European cities which in the past have been directed to the manufacturing industrial production, are facing important challenges arising from the loss of their economic base. In an increasingly interdependent world, marked by global dynamics and local specificities, many of these cities developed strategies to renew their economies through culture and tourism. The Portuguese city of Guimarães illustrates this new positioning, because, to overcome the decline of the textile industry in Portugal, focused its economic development of its own material and immaterial heritage. After several years investing and boosting the cultural sector of the city, by opening new showrooms and giving a new life to the historic center, Guimarães become a national cultural reference. This process culminated with the celebration of the city as European Cultural Capital in 2012. The city's culture-led policy has been clearly used as an instrument to mobilize local actors and to build a new brand for the city.

This paradigm of urban development policies based on cultural industry raises questions about the sustainability of its outcomes. Thus, this paper presents a study on the state of the cultural sector of Guimarães between 2013 and 2014. It develops around a sustainability analysis based on the strategic dilemmas of the urban cultural policy, originally developed by Bianchini and Parkinson in 1993. Through the presentation of data about the distribution of cultural offer in space and time, as well as the distribution of the investments in the cultural sector, it is showed the existence of a strong social component in the city's cultural dynamics, which ensures a bond of the population to the cultural sector. However, the paper also identifies elements that can compromise the economic sustainability of Guimarães' cultural strategy, like the excess of cultural spaces for the existing demand.