

### **Session III | University's role in shaping the cultural strategies of Cities**

**Panel V** – *The session will look into the contribution of the University's tangible and intangible heritage to the process of rethinking the City's cultural identity and the City's cultural (re)development.*

I would like to thank the organization of this meeting for the invitation to participate in this panel and also to warmly greet its moderator, Catarina Vaz Pinto (councillor for culture of the Lisbon City Hall), and my other round table colleagues.

My intervention will be very brief indeed, and necessarily influenced by the fact that I am a historian, or rather, a medievalist historian, who has been focusing her research on medieval towns, and who, in that quality, has some experience of working in a collaborative form with institutions of culture or municipalities and their archives, cultural cabinets and heritage departments.

Forty years of democracy and a considerable improvement in the economic situation have enabled the Portuguese society to integrate culture in its list of important, if not basic needs.

I think that such reality is quite obvious and it has even resisted the very considerable impact of the serious crisis which we have been through, as is proven by:

✓ **the continuous presence and concern about culture:**

a) in the national and local political agendas;

b) in the media;

c) in the interventions of the so-called civil society in Portugal → either the individuals as single persons or in associations (ex. as an example the defence of the patrimony or heritage – and the recent successful bids for Portuguese to integrate world heritage- from *fado* to *cante* and *chocalhos*).

**Such concerns and interventions reveal:**

1 - A new paradigm in what concerns the mission of the cultural institutions - museums, archives, libraries, etc. – in which we can testify the growth of a clear and very new cultural strategy, as reflected in:

- Programmes for the dissemination of contents aimed at wide and diversified publics and audiences;
- Dynamics of the interfacing of different cultural manifestations (artistic, musical, theatrical, performative arts, etc.);
- Education for culture and the rise of the general awareness for issues of heritage through the formation and schooling of wide publics.

2 - The protagonism that culture assumes in a progressive manner in the programmes of the activities of most municipalities:

- In the small Portuguese towns (cities) the *Câmara Municipal* (municipality) assumes itself as the main or sometimes even the only agent who propels cultural activities;
- When the urban dimension demands it, the municipalities have been able to generate institutions whose aims are the management of cultural sites and equipment, and the promotion of such sites, such as EGEAC and Lisbon.

Side by side with such urban reality, the Universities, traditionally and in reality installed in cities where they can play an important role as cultural dynamic agents, have had a say in the renewal of cultural paradigms – not only in the case of the big cities, but also in smaller rural towns in Portugal.



Universities enable the convergence of specialised knowledge, critical mass and a significant capacity for producing new knowledge: just to give you an example that I know quite well, my own Faculty has produced a vast quantity of theses, articles, books on Lisbon which amass knowledge derived from all areas of Social Sciences and Humanities



But it is fair to say that Universities have been progressively opening up to a greater sensibility to the introduction, as their specific mission, and as main tasks:

- continuing education for its citizens;
- dissemination of knowledge to wider publics;
- answering problems and assessing greater need from the present day society, through its capacity for mobilizing advanced research.

Thus contradicting a certain traditional isolationism of academy in relation to Portuguese Society, whose reasons it would be quite tedious to go into at this moment.

But it is nonetheless also necessary to draw your attention to this; the University itself also has many resistances and difficulties to overtake in this process.

It is not always simple to compaginate such demands with the international research agendas from the International Funding Bodies that often do not value too much the research in Social and Human Sciences.

- research topics of more local / or strictly national nature;
- use of the Portuguese Language.

What I would like to stress is that quite a lot of the knowledge produced in the University can, with advantage, sustain the new strategies and the new cultural practices which the Portuguese society demands.

I therefore believe that there is a serious possibility for a fruitful meeting of these two realities:

- **The university and the city**

**Provided a real dialogue is established between**

- Academia

- Institutions of Culture and Cultural Agents

- Municipalities



**Which will allow (enable)**

- after a first mapping of the main problems, questions and needs



**The establishment of joint strategies:**

The construction of educational programmes and formative modules which may contribute to an improvement in the preparation and quality of cultural agents

- The improvement of the cultural offer already existent through, for example, the provision of more updated and rigorous scientific contents for heritage sites, museums and archives

- The creation of new cultural continuous education programmes/products, which may contribute to the formation of a deeper awareness and critical knowledge available to the wider public and to more demanding audiences.

**To sum it up, strategies which will favour**

A vision of culture which will be inclusive for all people and which will take their needs into account, and having as guidance their identities as inhabitants of a certain town or city.

In order for this intervention not to be just a presentation of well-intentioned common places, and bearing in mind that I belong to the Nova University of Lisbon, which identifies itself, in this case, with Lisbon, I therefore specifically propose:

- The creation of an Observatory on Cultural Lisbon, which may serve for uniting University, Municipality, EGEAC and all the cultural institutions hosted within the city of Lisbon. Such Observatory should be destined to map, debate, discuss and propose cultural

strategies which will imply the joint action of all such institutions.

- A programme of studies, at post graduate level, which will promote the multidisciplinary study of the city of Lisbon, joining in all the scientific areas of Social Sciences and Humanities, allowing for a coherent but multifaceted approach to the study of the town, its past, its development and its future.
- The creation of a consortium of research units who may get together to set up research projects, and thereby provide the scientific background and support which may enable the better knowledge of Lisbon

Lisbon, 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2016

Amélia Andrade, Full Professor at FCSH/NOVA (Department of History)

International Conference "University, Culture and the City"