

“SEEING LIKE A PROJECT”: HOW PROJECT-BASED GOVERNANCE SHAPES CULTURE-LED REGENERATION IN EU POLICY MOBILITY CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT – This article seeks to contribute to the academic debate about policy mobility processes in the field of culture-led regeneration (CLR), focusing on how this policy model is understood and realised through project-based collaborative governance processes established in the framework of EU projects. It uses the Horizon 2020 project “ROCK” as a case-study, to explore how particular local and supra-local governance dynamics shaped CLR in Lisbon, through selective processes of inclusion and exclusion of actors, ideas and practices. Within the EU, CLR is taking place in contexts where a project logic is prevalent, with associated constraints in the duration, structure and requirements of specific funding programmes. This case-study shows how this can lead to short-sighted, instrumental, fragmented and temporary forms of governing CLR, that influence how different actors and perspectives are engaged in these processes. The current tendency for “seeing like a project” in EU urban development action, is seen to limit what and who is seen throughout these processes, contributing to the reproduction of biased CLR narratives and fast policy initiatives that may be unsuited to local realities and capacities. The article suggests a need to move beyond project-based thinking and to strategically and consistently invest in collaborative governance approaches that open space for plural visions and practices to influence the speed, the content and shape of CLR initiatives.

Keywords: Policy mobility; culture-led regeneration; EU projects; collaborative governance.

RESUMO – “VER COMO UM PROJETO”: COMO OS PROCESSOS DE GOVERNANÇA COLABORATIVA MOLDAM A REGENERAÇÃO URBANA DE BASE CULTURAL NUM PROJETO DA UE EM LISBOA. Este artigo contribui para o debate académico sobre a mobilidade de políticas urbanas no campo da regeneração urbana de base cultural (RUC). Em particular, examinando como o modelo de RUC é entendido e implementado através dos processos de governança colaborativa estabelecidos no âmbito de projetos da UE. O projeto “ROCK”, financiado pelo programa-quadro Horizonte 2020 é usado como caso de estudo para analisar como dinâmicas de governança local e supra-local moldaram a abordagem à RUC em Lisboa, através de processos seletivos de inclusão e exclusão de atores, ideias e práticas. Dentro da UE, as iniciativas de RUC estão frequentemente enquadradas numa lógica de projeto, que está sujeita a restrições específicas dos programas de financiamento, tal como a uma duração limitada, a uma estrutura rígida e a requisitos rigorosos. Este estudo de caso demonstra que este modelo pode levar a formatos de RUC e governança colaborativa que são instrumentais e que impactam a forma como diferentes atores e perspetivas são envolvidos (ou não) nestes processos. Nomeadamente, através da reprodução de narrativas enviesadas que excluem diferentes visões e perspetivas de RUC, de forma a alinhar-se com modelos dominantes e com a lógica do projeto. Assim, a tendência de “ver como um projeto” nas práticas de desenvolvimento urbano da UE pode levar à contínua replicação de modelos de RUC que não se adequam a realidades locais, uma vez que o leque de atores, ideias e práticas que informam estes processos é limitado. O artigo defende uma mudança na lógica de projeto e um investimento estratégico e consistente em processos de governança colaborativa comprometidos, inclusivos e plurais, que possam influenciar as iniciativas de RUC de forma mais integrada e sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Mobilidade de políticas urbanas; regeneração urbana de base cultural; projetos da UE; governança colaborativa.

RESUMEN – “VER COMO UN PROYECTO”: CÓMO LOS PROCESOS DE GOBERNANZA COLABORATIVA CONFIGURAN LA REGENERACIÓN URBANA A TRAVÉS DE LA CULTURA EN UN PROYECTO DE LA UE EN LISBOA. Este artículo contribuye al debate académico sobre los procesos de movilidad de políticas urbanas en el campo de la regeneración urbana a través de la cultura (RUC), examinando cómo se entiende y se implementa este modelo de política a través de la gobernanza colaborativa en los proyectos de la UE. El proyecto “ROCK” del programa Horizonte 2020 sirve como estudio de caso para analizar cómo las dinámicas de gobernanza local y supralocal dieron forma a la RUC en Lisboa. Este análisis se centra en los procesos selectivos de inclusión y exclusión de actores, ideas y prácticas. Dentro de la UE, las iniciativas de RUC a menudo están enmarcadas por una lógica de proyecto, caracterizada por restricciones específicas de los programas de financiación, incluyendo duración limitada, estructura rígida y requisitos

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estrictos. El estudio de caso ilustra que tales estructuras basadas en proyectos pueden llevar a formas organizativas de acción RUC y de gobernanza colaborativa que son a corto plazo, instrumentales y temporales. Estas formas impactan el compromiso de varios actores y perspectivas, a menudo resultando en narrativas de RUC sesgadas e iniciativas de políticas rápidas que pueden no alinearse con los contextos y capacidades locales. La tendencia de "ver como un proyecto" en el desarrollo urbano de la UE restringe la visibilidad de diversos actores y perspectivas, perpetuando ciclos rápidos de políticas urbanas que pueden no ser adecuados para las realidades locales. El artículo aboga por un cambio de enfoques basados en proyectos hacia inversiones más estratégicas y consistentes en gobernanza colaborativa. Estas inversiones deberían promover la inclusión y el pluralismo, permitiendo que diversas visiones y prácticas influyan en las iniciativas de RUC de una manera más sostenible y sensible al contexto.

Palabras clave: Movilidad de políticas urbanas; regeneración urbana a través de la cultura; proyectos de la UE; gobernanza colaborativa.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Within the EU, CLR is taking place in contexts where a project logic is prevalent;
- The project-logic influences how different perspectives are engaged in CLR processes;
- Project's policy mobility narratives tend to ignore the project's complexities on the ground;
- This contributes to reproduce fast policy models that may be unsuited to local realities;
- Urban experimental projects need more integrated and democratic collaborative governance formats.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, the culture-led regeneration (CLR) policy model has been circulating rapidly, guided by competitiveness-oriented urban agendas and by transnational policy networks (McCann, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2015; Prince, 2012). In the context of its cohesion policy initiatives, the European Union (EU) is playing an important part in the promotion of the use of culture for sustainable urban development (SUD), through a range of EU projects. The specific formats and 'best practices' promoted through these policy instruments are seen to have a growing influence on the urban development approaches of EU member states but also outside its borders (Carpenter, 2013).

Recent scholarship, however, has been raising concerns about the specific visions, values and processes that are informing and contributing to the fast, global circulation of policy models such as CLR. In their view, these models are being mobilized through a selective assemblage of dominant visions and interests for SUD, based on experimental project-based governance settings that are biased and unsustainable. In particular, these are seen to be characterised by fragmented, temporary and standardized governance procedures that seek to organize 'policy innovation' and multi-stakeholder collaboration, in specific ways, based on normative assumptions that exclude or overlook other ways of seeing (see Montero et al., 2023; Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Thompson & Lorne, 2023; Torrens and von Wirth, 2021). In this way, even if CLR actions tend to be associated with collaborative and participatory modes of governance – including in the context of EU projects, where multilevel partnerships and collaborative forms of governance are strongly encouraged (see Van den Brande, 2014) – the operationalization of these governance principles within a project-logic is often quite complex.

In view of this, this article focuses on how CLR is being articulated within EU policy mobility projects and how that is influencing specific CLR paths that tend to give visibility to dominant actors, ideas and practices, while making other perspectives invisible. This urban regeneration model, has been gaining relevance over recent years as an approach to SUD that is used to address different policy goals: from improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of places, to stimulating economic growth and contributing to social inclusion and cohesion. Considering the importance of EU projects in directing CLR action in European cities and also the fragmented and power-laden policy mobility scenario highlighted above, this research explores how CLR is understood and realised through the collaborative governance processes established in the framework of the project ROCK: "Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural heritage in creative and Knowledge cities". This was an EU project for CLR, funded by the Horizon 2020 (H2020) programme, which was developed from 2017 to 2020.

Through the establishment of local and international “stakeholder ecosystems”, the project aimed to develop an “innovative, collaborative and systemic approach to CLR by implementing a repertoire of “successful heritage-led regeneration initiatives” related to seven ‘role model’ cities - Athens, Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven, Liverpool, Lyon, Turin and Vilnius - in three ‘replicator cities’ - Bologna, Lisbon and Skopje¹. Using ROCK as a case-study and focusing on how this project was implemented in Lisbon, my research analyses the characteristics and effects of this type of project-based governance and the extent in which it leaves space for alternative CLR visions and interpretations to be explored as possible paths to SUD in cities.

This case-study represents both an example of contemporary policy mobility trends and a unique case characterised by specific local features. In particular, it enables the understanding of how these global processes and trends acquire a peculiar form in Lisbon, that is better understood in light of Portugal's recent efforts to further align with global urban agendas, while taking advantage of EU funding schemes for SUD. If on the one hand, this is a context where Lisbon is seeking to consolidate its political and urban branding strategy as a global and cosmopolitan city in times of neoliberal budget cuts, on the other hand, these ambitions intersect with the highly bureaucratic and centralist culture that persists in this country in terms of urban policy and governance that make experimental and collaborative setups like ROCK challenging to fully implement (Ferrão, 2010). Furthermore, the celebration of cosmopolitanism and of global urban agendas, coexists (sometimes uncomfortably) with less celebrated city issues such as the high inflation rate, social deprivation, gentrification and the precarious provision of many public services. Hence, the promotion of global policy models and of temporary and experimental CLR projects in the city may exacerbate tensions and mismatches between the development visions and processes that underpin these agendas and more context-specific needs for local development. This is especially true since the latter may not always adapt to the same development logics, to the supra-local scale of these projects or to the multidimensional ambitions and accelerated pace of these interventions.

Hence, through an extended case study approach (Burawoy, 1998, 2009) that draws on doctoral research developed from 2017 to 2020 in the context of the ROCK project, I used different applied methods (participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and a participatory workshop) to explore how ROCK's project-logic and the interrelation of local and supra-local governance dynamics shaped CLR processes and outcomes in Lisbon. My findings show that contemporary policy mobility projects like ROCK may reproduce themselves in unsustainable ways, by obfuscating opposing views in its collaborative governance processes, which stay hidden behind a performance-driven, fragmented and experimental project logic, shaped by fake consensual views and by discursively mediated ‘success’ narratives, that compromise the promotion of integrated and long-term CLR responses.

The article is set out in four sections. Section ii introduces the idea of “seeing like a project” that is seen to frame most CLR actions today, characterised by temporary, experimental and fragmented governance arrangements, developed through project-based formats like ROCK. Section iii discusses the ROCK's implementation in Lisbon, showing how its project-logic and the intertwining of local and supra-local governance dynamics, foreclosed the sphere of CLR debate and action. Section iv puts forward some concluding remarks about how the current tendency for “seeing like a project” in urban development policy and practice influences CLR approaches and limits what and who is seen throughout these processes.

II. “SEEING LIKE A PROJECT” IN CULTURE-LED REGENERATION

The search for global policy ‘fixes’ and for specific formulas for sustainable cities has intensified in recent years, connecting policymakers across the world (Cugurullo, 2021; Peck, 2011). In this context, the CLR model and its ‘creative city’ vision are considered “one of the more noticeable policy trends of recent years” (Prince, 2012, p. 327), precipitating a deluge of emulative programmes, developed in different cities. The exchange of urban policy ideas through EU projects and networks is contributing to the diffusion of ‘best practices’ and policy benchmarking, with the aim of establishing a clear reference point of already-proved solutions in order to steer development in an effective and faster way. Hence, as Temenos and McCann observe, along with structural pressures towards ‘fast policy’ - namely, towards more efficiency, speed, and predictability in the adoption of policies - this “leads local policy professionals to look for sure bets (2012, p. 9). That is, policies that have been

deemed by trusted contacts, professional authorities, and the policy consultancy industry, to have been successful elsewhere and that seem to be easily accessible in packaged, readily consumable, and mobile forms.

This is the context under which the ROCK project was established. More particularly in the framework of a 'post-urban regeneration' scenario (see O'Brien & Matthews, 2015) where cities no longer follow the previous structure of place-based strategic interventions and partnerships intended to deliver context-specific and integrated regeneration strategies. Instead, these approaches seem to become progressively replaced by a hotchpotch of experimental initiatives organized in the context of temporary projects. These projects are characterised by a specific approach to governing SUD actions, where the focus is on testing innovative tools and international 'best practices', through a combination of plannable tasks, involving complex and interdependent activities, subject to evaluation on a predetermined time frame and with pre-defined performance criteria (Torrens and von Wirth, 2021). This is seen to be an effective and controllable way to organise SUD action in cities, promising clarity, order and control through the adoption of standardised procedures (*ibid*).

The embrace of the project-logic can be understood in the context of particular ways of seeing that emerged in modern societies that assume "that both physical space and the space of governance are abstract, flat, and homogeneous" and, therefore, can be managed by the same type of rules, methods and principles (Valverde, 2011, p. 277). Accordingly, by referring to this project-based form of managing CLR (and other SUD interventions) as a way of "seeing like a project", the aim is to assert it as a new variation of the same kind of rigid and myopic view behind the top-down and expert-driven governmental gaze named by Scott (1998) as "seeing like a state". As the author explains, this term refers to "projects of legibility and simplification" – among which the ROCK project approach to CLR may also be included – which are often "an utopian dream" grounded on "the immanent logic of its techniques" (Scott, 1998, p. 18). Despite their compelling stories, they never get to be truly realised in practice due to the confrontation with contextual factors (human, natural, political, cultural) and with the values, desires, and objections of their recipients, which are often disregarded and excluded from project narratives (Scott, 1998, p. 7).

As exemplified below through the description of ROCK's experience in Lisbon, this kind of fast and standardised governance approach based on modern expertise is also reproduced through this type of policy mobility projects, even though their core principles often fail or get reshaped when they arrive in specific places, due to particular local interactions, 'resistances' or to projects' internal contradictions. Yet, this is asserted as a new variation - adapted to the current scenario of global and interconnected cities and of neoliberal urban governance techniques - because, unlike states, project-based governance lacks centralized permanence, being characterized by short-term, performance-driven and fragmented governance arrangements and by its external funding and expertise. However, despite these differences, just like Scott's "seeing like a state" perspective, the project logic is also blinded by authoritative rules, by projects' complex structure, objective standards and discursive practices, which prevent them to objectively recognise and to productively engage with the more relational, contradictory, hybrid and contextual way in which urban governance actually takes place in specific territories: Through a mix of both old and new gazes and of local and supra-local ideas, with unpredictable combinations, in a fluid way that Valverde refers to as the way of "seeing like a city" (Valverde, 2011, p. 281). According to Valverde, this is a more realistic perspective to look at cities' governance processes that recognizes how cities resist the homogenizing impulses of "seeing like a state" and "seeing like a project" programs and how these processes are actually marked by much more contingent and contested governance arrangements.

Hence, building on the insights of "seeing like a state" and "seeing like a city" analysis and on their contrasting views about how modern powers and governance techniques help shape governance practices in specific urban settings, I seek to establish "seeing like a project" as an important and distinctive theoretical contribution to the understanding of contemporary urban policy mobility contexts, marked by supra-local, fragmented, short-term and experimental governance arrangements. I do so, assisted by the relational and socio-constructivist perspective behind urban policy mobilities theory, which helps substantiate my analysis of how ROCK's project-logic, influenced CLR discourses and approaches and limited what and who was seen throughout this policy mobility process. Policy mobility is a useful lens to understand the particular dynamics of policy and governance that assist the global diffusion and contextual reinterpretations of CLR under a project-logic. This literature pays attention to the ways in which the global mobilisation of policy models and best practices and their adaptation to specific urban settings, is leading to significant mutations in the shape and outcomes of

policy models when these arrive in specific places, due to the interrelation of local and supra-local power-relations and governance dynamics (Healey, 2013; Peck; 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). Hence, despite the rationalist and objectivist principles that support the worldwide diffusion of global policies through project-based formats, this type of policy mobility processes is seen to involve a much more complex field of selective inclusions, conflicting interests and biased policy outcomes, which are not acknowledged in official project narratives.

Even so, the development of urban experiments through projects has become a widespread policy trend for responding to sustainability challenges and to renewed pressures on policy mobility and governance for more open and collaborative efforts. This is particularly apparent within the urban policy field where “experimentation” and “projectification” (i.e. project-based forms of organising urban development strategies) are becoming the commonplace approach for addressing SUD actions due, to a great extent, to EU directives and funding requirements (Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Torrens & von Wirth, 2021). ROCK was designed in the framework of this new governance logic, where urban policy mobility experiments (often implemented through projects as in the case of ROCK), are seen as a way to accelerate innovation actions and to realise actual changes on the ground (Van den Brande, 2014). The concept of experimentation that underlies these projects, feeds on attractive notions of innovation and creativity while reframing the emphasis of sustainability from distant targets and government policies to concrete and achievable actions that can be undertaken by a variety of urban stakeholders in specific places (Karvonen & van Heur, 2014; Montero et al., 2023; Thompson & Lorne, 2023). In this way, it promises the development of collaborative and rigorous knowledge that both reflects and is shaped by the context of lived experience and which, as a result, can be applied in a faster, more democratic and successful way (Evans et. Al., 2016, p. 2).

However, as Torrens and von Wirth note, even if discourses around project-based “experimentation” point towards a rationalist and neutral process of design and implementation, in practice, this “depends on a contested process of negotiating priorities, epistemological assumptions, and normative goals while trying to create viable setups” (2021, p. 4). Thus, these processes are often seen to privilege “certain forms of action and certain forms of knowledge as desirable and legitimate, constituting a political process with biases and normative assumptions”, where specific actors and visions take centre stage (ibid, see also Whitney, 2022; Thompson & Lorne, 2023).

At the same time, particularly in the EU context, the project logic that frames urban experimentation (for CLR and other types of urban policy mobility initiatives) can hardly be dissociated from particular constraints such as the rigid timings and requirements of funding programmes. This leads to the establishment of restricted and temporary forms of organising policy mobility actions that influence how different actors engage in these processes (Torrens & von Wirth, 2021, p. 4). According to Torrens and von Wirth, this contributes to depoliticize these types of experiments and to generate a sort of “organised irresponsibility”, where no one is held accountable for the outcomes and continuity of project’s efforts (Torrens & von Wirth, 2021, p. 14). Hence, even if the project logic relies on the assumption that it is possible to ‘scale up’ to other temporal and spatial contexts, the effective commitments, the ‘learnings’ and the steps that should be followed for establishing consistent and long-term alternatives are hardly clear nor guaranteed (Evans et. al, 2016, p. 3) since the support of real ‘innovative’ pathways is “suppressed by the operational pressures of individual initiatives” (Torrens & von Wirth, 2021, p. 14). In this way, the ability of these policy mobility projects to be radical in ambition while limited in scope underpins a vibrant debate concerning their capacity to promote effective and sustainable change (Evans et al., 2016; Karvonen et al., 2014; Montero et al., 2023; Thompson & Lorne, 2023; Torrens & von Wirth, 2021).

At present, as the experimental project logic guides much CLR action in EU cities, these interventions are seen to intersect with political, social and economic power relations at a local and supra-local scale and to be often used as tools to serve specific urban agendas (Duxburry et al., 2012; Estevens et al., 2019; Peck, 2012; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Thus, some patterns associated with CLR discourses and its ambiguous practices, where urban creativity promotion is accused to often contribute to socio-spatial inequalities like cultural segregation, exclusion and gentrification (Garcia, 2004; Seixas & Costa, 2010) reflect questions over how culture and creativity are being understood and articulated within particular CLR projects, through their specific policy mobility processes and over their capacity to effectively address sustainable development goals.

As discussed in the next section, Portugal has been embracing the global ‘creative city’ agenda, guided by EU directives and with the support of its structural funds for the implementation of specific policy projects. As these agendas privilege CLR visions based on competitiveness, economic growth,

creative entrepreneurship and technological innovation, these may narrow and/or be contradictory to an inclusive and just interpretation of SUD. Particularly, when CLR meanings and (best) practices are developed within project-based policy mobility contexts, marked by short-term, performance-driven and fragmented governance arrangements. The discussion of ROCK's experience in Lisbon shows how the intertwining of dominant CLR agendas with the way of "seeing like a project" (i.e. an approach to urban governance characterized by a 'fast policy' approach, by fragmented governance processes and by instrumental and selective inclusions) contributed to power imbalances in its collaborative governance processes, foreclosing the sphere of CLR debate and action.

III. THE ROCK PROJECT-LOGIC IN ACTION

1. The project's fast policy approach

Inspired by global policy ideas in a period where Portugal is seeking to improve its competitive profile, 'culture' and 'creativity' have become key vehicles to boost the local economy, to promote tourist development, to create new products and services for internal and external consumers and to attract creative professionals from abroad. At the same time, they are being used as resources to address social exclusion and to improve areas considered declining or unappealing, while seeking to rebrand the country as a culturally diverse and creative destination (Duxbury et al., 2012). These trends are particularly evident in the capital city of Lisbon which, over recent years, has become a popular tourist destination and has been seeking to align with global urban agendas, as part of its efforts to promote the city as a 'green', 'smart' and 'creative' place to live, work, visit and invest (Estevens et al., 2019; see also Veheij & Corrêa Nunes, 2020).

Within this context, the Portuguese government recognizes the importance of EU programmes to improve cities' profiles and visibility and to advance urban actions in the country, with the help of EU funds. Therefore, the participation of Portuguese cities in EU programmes is being strongly encouraged both at a national and municipal level. It is against this backdrop that Lisbon decided to join the ROCK project's consortium.

ROCK was created in the framework of an EU call for funding for the H2020 – a research and innovation programme dedicated to drive economic growth and to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive development, while securing Europe's global competitiveness. The project responded to the instructions of a specific call, focused on the promotion of "Cultural heritage as a driver for sustainable growth". The proposals submitted within this topic should address the following requirements: "actions should develop and deploy via large-scale demonstration projects, novel heritage-led systemic approaches (...) and solutions for sustainable growth. In order to pave the way for their rapid replication and up-scaling, a 'Role models' and 'Replicators' approach should be implemented"ⁱⁱ.

The project was, therefore, designed by its consortium members to fit with these principles and requirements and compacted into a catchy acronym that could be easily mobilised in global policy arenas. In particular ROCK's CLR strategy involved replicating a selection of "successful" CLR practices associated with 10 "role-model" cities (Athens, Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven, Liverpool, Lyon, Turin and Vilnius) in 3 selected "replicator" cities (Bologna, Lisbon and Skopje), which were characterised within the project as "afflicted by physical decay, social conflicts and poor life quality". The aim was to transform these places into "creative and sustainable districts" through the collaborative development of new environmental, social and economic processes.

Towards this goal, a group of SME's, Universities, consultancy groups, associations and data managers were engaged in ROCK's consortium, which included 33 partners from 13 different countries. The inclusion of a wide range of partners, besides being a requirement of this specific H2020 call (which particularly valued interdisciplinary, intersectoral and inter-city cooperation), was justified internally by the complexity of the ROCK challenge and the need to cover the skills and value-chain to address its objectives and maximise its impacts. Accordingly, Lisbon decided to join the project, motivated by the opportunity to access EU networks and funds and to implement already proven "successful initiatives", as explained by one of the project's local coordinators at Lisbon's municipality: "What seemed more interesting was the relationship between role models and replicator cities and the possibility of replicating previously tested models".

The interest in 'learning from approved models' and in replicating international 'best practices', can be understood in the context of the previously mentioned 'fast policy' scenario, which exerts an

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increasingly dominant role in cities' policymaking processes. This is marked by a preference for the adoption of policies that have been internationally branded as "best" and that seem to be easily and rapidly accessible in packaged forms, allowing a fast and smooth replication (Peck & Theodore, 2015). Supported by this policy-making paradigm and considering the city's development agendas, Lisbon selected an area of Marvila and Beato (two contiguous post-industrial neighborhoods in east Lisbon), as the ROCK local intervention-site (see fig. 1). This decision was based, on the one hand, on the growing public and private investments in this part of the city, which are strongly in line with the 'creative city' imaginary (eg. with the re-conversion of former industrial complexes into 'creative hubs', galleries and startup' incubators). On the other hand, it was based on an acknowledgement of the existing cultural potential and the many socio-economic challenges of this area that ROCK could potentially help address (Falanga & Corrêa Nunes, 2021).



Fig. 1 - The ROCK intervention-site in Lisbon.
Fig. 1 - A área de intervenção do ROCK em Lisboa.

Source: CML

However, the imposition of these external agendas and CLR priorities in Marvila (in an area with limited access to basic goods and services) was not well received by some actors in the field. Their perception was that the contextual relevance and the concrete impacts of ROCK's actions seemed to have secondary importance, while the main concern was if activities could fulfill the H2020 agenda and requirements and if they conformed with eligible expenditure:

I have always felt quite lost with this project. (...) On the one hand this was a project that we had to replicate, that is, to replicate what seemed to have

happened in the other cities. But on the other hand, none of that was very adaptable to this specific territory.

According to this interviewee (a representative from a public cultural institution based in Marvila), several meetings were developed at the start of the project to discuss different possibilities for CLR in Marvila. However, the 'options on the table' seemed to be often limited by the coordinators' conclusion that "things had to be done in the way they were described [in ROCK guidelines and grant agreement]". In this way, even if ROCK's CLR model was not seen as very effective to address local challenges, he declared feeling that they "were essentially obliged to replicate what had happened [in other places] and that was it". He further added that this performance-driven governance logic (where pre-defined tasks, objectives and tools had to be implemented based on strict auditing procedures) affected local actors' motivation and restrained a wider engagement and support towards ROCK. Ultimately, they felt limited by its pre-determined model, which restricted the nature and scope of the CLR interventions that could be developed: "If the basis of the project was this one, what could we do?".

Similar views were shared by local residents in Marvila, when some of the project's initiatives were presented at a community meeting. Their general understanding was that this development approach was not being directed to address local needs, but rather to serve "external agendas": "Culture is good but I can not live off or eat culture", "In this neighbourhood 'culture' is getting ahead of other pressing needs".

The poor receptiveness towards this project in Marvila illustrates some of the consequences of "seeing like a project" and of its fast policy approach. Instead of investing in structural and integrated development strategies, these projects are developed within prescribed boundaries, based on a rather straight-forward replication of dominant policy formulas and tools (Karvonen & Van Heur, 2014). Leveraged by best-practices' discourses and framed within an 'urban experiment'-based logic (such as the development of policy prototypes within specific piloting processes in the context of local demosites) these projects gain legitimacy and power in global policy networks.

By contrast, at a local scale, this kind of project-based governance does not seem to require many efforts with policy negotiation nor personal engagement with local partners, subjects and settings. Ultimately, what this logic entails is following standardized procedures that have already been branded as "best". Therefore, complying with the project's discursive structure and approach, seems to be enough to legitimise these actions to the outside and to generally present them as effective SUD solutions. This is the case, even if the actions, processes and outcomes of these projects in the field may in fact be rather contradictory, contested or disappointing.

Thus, as fast policy projects like ROCK are often arriving in selected neighborhoods, with predefined visions and strategies of urban 'problems' and needs - based on specific agendas and imaginaries of what are 'positive' or 'negative' elements to promote in cities (Amin, 2005; Baeten, 2004) - this often prevents them from "seeing like a city" (Valverde, 2011) and from recognizing and engaging with contextual particularities and with alternative possibilities for creative and sustainable cities that may involve other timings, values, processes and practices.

2. The project's fragmented governance processes

In parallel to the imposition of "external" CLR solutions in Marvila, also the fragmented governance processes that characterizes the project logic (i.e. its supra-local authority, funding and expertise) led to challenges when implementing the project in Lisbon. While the access to external funding and networks is generally considered an advantage of EU projects like ROCK, the lack of centralised permanence and control may lead to difficulties in reaching clear and consensual views between project partners and, consequently, the effective engagement of people and resources throughout the process. This was particularly evident in Marvila, where the local "translation" of ROCK's broad CLR scope (which included the articulation of environmental, technological and cultural heritage-focused actions) and of its ambitious supra-local collaborative governance structure, posed significant challenges. To an extent, this can also be explained by the fact that the integrated and participatory governance trends that have been reshaping European urban policies were belatedly and complex to implement in Portugal, which is still marked by an hierarchical, bureaucratic and centralist governance culture (Ferrão & Campos, 2015; Mourão, 2019; Tulumello, 2016, p. 120). Therefore, it

was not easy for this city to smoothly adapt to ROCK's intersectoral, multilevel and collaborative logic, as highlighted in an interview by one of the project's local coordinators:

We could benefit from funding that otherwise was not available, but it has also led to a great dispersion of technicians and resources (...) In the beginning it was not easy at all to understand the [ROCK] Grant Agreement. It was too complex (...) and in municipalities with strict rules you are just adding complexity to more complexity.

Despite the general recognition of the importance of EU programmes to advance certain actions in cities, this awareness is not always sufficiently followed by the enhancement of existing technical and organisational capacity in participating municipalities nor by the necessary adaptations in local bureaucratic and governance processes, to more swiftly adapt to these programmes' requirements (cf. Falanga, 2016; Ferrão, 2010; Torrens & von Wirth, 2021). Hence, even if the participation in the H2020 and other similar programmes is becoming more and more common in Portugal, local actions are not always capable of fully reconciling the integrated, intersectoral and collaborative dimensions of these strategies (Mourão, 2019), especially in the context of fast policy projects characterized by a high fragmentation of people, ideas, resources and authority. Therefore, besides the acknowledged difficulties in understanding and adapting ROCK's complex Grant Agreement to the local governance culture and to the specificities of the local intervention-site, there were also supra-local governance dynamics and conditions that prevented a more integrated approach to CLR in Lisbon.

At a supra-local scale, partners had to follow a Grant Agreement which was allegedly too complex and ambitious and where the CLR approach being proposed was not always clear and consensual. This has led to difficulties in establishing inter-partner trust, exchange and collaborations, as noted in an interview by one of ROCK's international coordinators:

Even a solution that seems simple and fantastic, if you do it, you will realise that there are contrasting interests and maybe that is not the best one to everybody. So this was for sure something that we would have taken more into account. But when you write [these] proposals you are required to put so much stuff into the proposals, you know...

Indeed, although all ROCK partners had some kind of interest in CLR actions, there were limited previous connections between the actors involved, and the scope and substance of their common ground varied considerably. Furthermore, there were several imposed formats and instrumental decisions that conditioned the type of partnerships, processes and CLR 'solutions' being proposed, that were essentially made to conform to the H2020 programme's requirements. This contributed to generate a kind of "fake consensus" (Brulin & Svensson, 2011) around ROCK's CLR strategy, where both the project's consortium and the local partners in the field did not necessarily fully agree with the CLR approach being followed but, nevertheless, complied with the project-logic since that was what was expected and required by the project funders. This was pointed out during an interview with a representative of an association hired to implement one of ROCK actions in Lisbon:

It was not a prototype because we thought that a prototype is the best thing in the world. It was a prototype because that was what was possible (...) We don't have the importance, throughout the process, of changing the way in which things are made.

Hence, even if the ROCK model assumed "collaborative governance" and the engagement of a "local ecosystems of stakeholders" as central components in its circular structure and action plan, its concrete operationalization under this project-logic was difficult and/or disappointing for most of the partners involved. While the international consortium felt poorly engaged and quite overwhelmed by the complexity of the project, the "local ecosystems" felt obliged to conform with a pre-defined CLR model that was not seen to be adapted to local dynamics and needs.

In this regard, Ferrão has noted how contemporary urban governance mechanisms are often characterised by overly ambitious [collaborative] approaches that end up hindering the efficient and just application of specific policy instruments (2010, p. 136). Namely, by offering "a very linear perspective towards the principles of collaboration between different actors and of coordination and integration of policies, without previously guaranteeing the necessary institutional, organisational and instrumental requirements. That is, without sufficiently acknowledging the need to build contexts of cooperation". He further adds that "while ignoring the unequal power and resources that are held by each of the actors involved and the asymmetrical relations that may be established between them, a high level of complexity is created that is unlikely to be proportionally translated in terms of the efficiency of their actions and also in terms of justice and democracy of their results and impacts".

According to Ferrão, within time, this tendency contributes “to demobilise the involved actors and to damage the credibility of these [governance] instruments” (Ferrão, 2010, pp. 136-137).

These concerns are particularly pertinent in the context of project-based governance, which is marked by high levels of fragmentation (of authority, actors and resources) and by high collaborative ambitions, developed within a fast policy framework, where the adoption of specific processes is not treated as important for results. Instead, the project logic – with its specific processes, practices and tools for urban experimentation - is seen as working clearly, fairly and effectively irrespective of the context and regardless of the time and effort invested in establishing trust and consistent relationships with people and places.

In the case of Lisbon, given an overall non-conformity between the initial expectations about the transformative potential of a project like ROCK (with its transnational scale and the wide amount of resources, expertise and skills involved) and its tangible local results – a gradual sense of delusion and frustration was installed between local residents and partners, who started to lose trust in ROCK’s capacities to promote relevant and sustainable change. The quotes below, from interviews with representatives of organisations involved in ROCK actions in Lisbon, illustrate this general feeling:

I think that a great expectation was generated about what ROCK could be and the level of transformation that it could bring to the territory and, right now, that perception and expectations are falling short of what is visible to the people (...) this is a shame because it could actually have quite a big importance. It is a shame to waste a big part of a big opportunity.

Projects such as ROCK and Horizon 2020 are very huge [structures] and they have such an underlying network and bureaucracy (...) it is a pity the limits that are created to the implementation of activities. It is a project that becomes a bit theoretical: “Let’s create some prototypes and see what comes up”. [That is,] these are projects that always look better on paper. And then it all depends a lot on the actors [involved].

In fact, the operationalization of ROCK principles and practices in Lisbon resulted in selective inclusions (of actors, ideas and CLR elements) and disconnected processes and activities, which lacked follow-up and had limited institutional impact. CLR actions were developed as temporary prototypes with limited impact and poor articulation with ongoing development efforts in Marvila. Against this backdrop, the coherence and efficacy of ROCK’s CLR vision and strategy was much better articulated through compelling project narratives in public presentations and reports (see fig. 2), rather than through its efficient realisation and perception in the Lisbon intervention-site.



Fig. 2 - Sketchnote created during “ROCK Open Knowledge Week”, the project’s final conference where ROCK’s results were shared with the public.

Fig. 2 - Sketchnote criado durante a “ROCK Open Knowledge Week”, conferência final do projeto, onde foram apresentados os resultados finais do ROCK.

Source: ROCK project.

3. The project's instrumental and selective inclusions

Based on ROCK guidelines, the CLR approach that was followed in Lisbon focused on developing temporary prototypes that could foster local dynamics of transformation, creativity and innovation. Namely, by testing and validating new CLR products, services, systems and technologies to be applied in Marvila. The way in which these actions were selected and implemented evidenced, however, some limitations of this project-based approach to collaborative governance. In particular, specific CLR ideas were pre-selected, according to ROCK's requirements and to the local coordinators' interests and preferences for the area. The local partners involved throughout the process were essentially selected 'stakeholders' that were only invited to participate in specific moments and actions while local communities' perspectives and their effective participation in the CLR process appeared to be of secondary importance (Falanga & Corrêa Nunes, 2021). This resulted in a selective 'curation' of participation and collaboration in specific moments and contexts of the project, without seeing the inherent contradictions of this logic in what concerns the democratic quality, the engagement capacity and the sustainability potential of the project (Thompson & Lorne, 2023). The consequences of this approach were made evident in an interview by a representative of a public institution based in Marvila:

Well, I think that it all started by imposing some ideas. And then some attempts to organise meetings with residents had very bad results because people could not understand very well what was being proposed.

Ultimately, the participatory process envisioned in ROCK's for the selection and implementation of local activities (operationalized through the concept of ROCK Living Labsⁱⁱⁱ), was commissioned to a selected group of experts (namely local NGO's and urban practitioners with a track record in participatory UR projects in Portugal), invited by the project's coordinators in Lisbon to develop ROCK key actions in Marvila, based on previously identified priority intervention topics: i) "urban voids" (focused on the activation and rehabilitation of unused spaces and ground floors in Marvila); ii) "ecological networks" (focused on improving access to and quality of urban greening in the area); iii) "territories of continuity" (focused on improving urban mobility and connectivity within and to/from the neighbourhood); iv) and "local communities under gentrification" (focused on promoting local tangible and intangible cultural heritage and on preserving local cultural identity and memories). Likewise, these priority intervention topics were also pre-defined by the local coordinators, based on ROCK's goals and on the local coordinators' vision and agenda for the area.

In this way, it was ensured that the overall focus of the project kept being on the promotion of 'progressive urban planning' ideas for urban experimentation, developed by "trendy urbanists" (Whitney, 2021, P. 15). In particular, the 'options on the table' were reduced towards the preferences of local coordinators and towards the best-practices celebrated by global policy networks, which tend to focus on market-led priorities such urban entrepreneurialism, competitiveness and technological innovation. At the same time, the efforts with CLR negotiation and participation were overcome by directly inviting urban 'experts' to implement pre-defined actions and by reducing wider participation to specific moments and contexts of the project. However, this specific project-based approach to urban experimentation whilst simplifying collaborative governance procedures, is inevitably biased towards "particular ways of seeing". As Whitney points out, it reflects specific privileges and instead of promoting sustainable urban responses can perpetuate inequities by benefiting dominant interests and some city residents over others (ibid).

Indeed, instead of using ROCK to effectively explore new paths towards a 'better' city for all, the project entailed a continuation of CLR decision-making controlled by privileged actors in Lisbon. At the same time, while focusing on following a 'progressive' CLR 'script' and on engaging with global and 'trendy' CLR visions, actors and tools, the project failed to "see" and to engage with other existing actors and visions that propose alternative CLR responses in Marvila. Among these are local actors and creative expressions that were less in line with the "progressive" CLR vision that the project wished to promote. Namely, cultural agents, which were never involved in ROCK but which shared their impressions about the prevailing CLR agendas being followed in the area, during a participatory workshop in Marvila:

Marvila and Beato are being subjected to a city-branding strategy that can be misleading in what concerns the true state of culture in this territory.

There is a need to overcome dominant perspectives about what 'local development', 'urban regeneration', 'culture' and 'cultural heritage' are and to open the debate to different points of view.

However, even if the exclusion of alternative CLR visions and actors generated resistance to ROCK's CLR model in Marvila, the existence of conflicting views was never acknowledged in the project's official narratives, which continued to sustain the consensual validity of its CLR model. In this way, the project's collaborative governance logic seem to have been largely performative and ultimately based on instrumental and selective inclusions, focused on validating a pre-defined CLR format, framed by specific discourses, practices and tools for "seeing like a project".

Against this backdrop, the way in which fast policy projects like ROCK are reproducing themselves by excluding alternative views and by obfuscating a lot of their real impacts on the ground was made particularly evident during ROCK's final conference, in the (success) stories shared with the public. In particular, the project's efficacy and 'upscaling' potential was strongly reinforced in the "take-home message" shared by the European Commission's DG Research & Innovation Policy Officer's, which was widely diffused in the project's networks and communication platforms: "(...) The ROCK project proved heritage's role as a catalyst for urban transformation; now let's work together and scale up its ambition".

IV. CONCLUSION

The analysis of ROCK's experience in Lisbon improves the understanding of current processes of CLR policy mobility and governance established in the framework EU projects for urban policy experimentation. The idea of "seeing like a project" is introduced as an approach to urban governance, marked by a specific structure and organisational logic that affects how urban policy experiments (such as CLR) are mobilized and reshaped in the context of projects. The promotion of collaborative and participatory forms of governance plays an important part in legitimising the continuation of these kind of experimental and "progressive" urban policy approaches, by helping to justify their democratic quality. However, this case-study showed how project-based governance can be limited by constrained rationales, formats and requirements imposed by fast policy frameworks that favour an instrumental and selective inclusion of actors, ideas and practices. These limitations are likely to narrow the scope of urban policy experiments, falling short of engaging sources of knowledge other than those predefined by the formal logics of projects.

Hence, dominant policy perspectives maintain their legitimacy, credibility and power in global policy arenas, since most of the "real stories" about project's policy mobility processes stays hidden behind discursively-mediated project's narratives that obfuscate ambiguity, resistance and opposing views. This contributes to a biased reproduction of policy models that may be unsuited to local realities, potentially exacerbating inequities in cities like Lisbon, with limited collaborative governance culture and which increasingly rely in these projects to direct and fund local urban development actions. As the EU and other major international institutions currently play an important part in the global mobilisation of urban policy experiments through project-based governance formats, this article sought to highlight key characteristics and challenges of the project logic and how it can shape the scope, the processes and the results of urban experimentation in specific places. While suggesting a need to strategically invest in governance processes that open space for plural visions and practices to influence the speed, the content and shape of projects like ROCK, this research opens relevant perspectives for further exploring issues of governance and power in project-driven policy mobility contexts.

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¹ See <https://rockproject.eu/> (accessed 4/10/2022)

² See: https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020_SC5-21-2016-2017 (accessed 07/09/2022)

³ Different LL formats are being increasingly used in urban regeneration contexts for collaborative designing and testing new services, products or processes (of social, cultural or technical character) in real-life settings, with real potential users. By making use of lo-fi technologies (such as pop-up initiatives, university-led activities, civic-hacking events, etc), different co-creation workshops are organised with citizens and stakeholders, aimed at 'solving' local issues in a collaborative and participatory way.