Culture and Planning in Zagreb and Rijeka: Anthropological Reading of Cultural Policy Documents

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ABSTRACT This article explores the role of culture within urban policy frameworks by focusing on two Croatian cities, Zagreb and Rijeka. Employing an anthropological perspective, the authors consider public policies as dynamic arenas where social meanings are constructed, negotiated, and institutionalized. The analysis centres on urban plans that articulate the cities' broader developmental visions as well as strategies specifically focused on culture. The authors first examine how culture is conceptualized and integrated within the cities' general development plans, identifying the expectations and functions assigned to culture in shaping urban futures. Subsequently, they delve into cultural strategies to reveal dominant narratives around culture's role, highlighting its association with progress, regeneration, and socio-economic benefits. They also show how the cities' urban strategies align with broader Croatian, European and international policy trends, reflecting the interplay of global, national, and local frameworks. The authors' findings indicate that, in the policies examined, culture is frequently framed as a key driver for urban transformation, guiding how cities envisage their futures. When this policy orientation is viewed alongside anthropological understandings of culture – as multilayered, heterogeneous, multivocal, and not inherently progress-oriented – it invites reflection on how culture is configured to align with developmental agendas, often through frameworks that prioritize quality assessment and institutional infrastructure. Ultimately, this

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article contributes to the anthropology of policy by highlighting how definitions of culture within urban governance serve as social and political constructs that shape the visions of urban development.

Key words: role of culture, cultural policy, anthropology of policy, urban planning, Zagreb, Rijeka.

1. Introduction: urban cultural policy[1]

> *"Cities now routinely look to culture in its diverse manifestations – as the arts, group identity and heritage, and media and design-based industries (e.g., film, music, architecture) – as urban policy tools to address a broad array of urban issues."* (Grodach and Silver, 2013:2)

With these words, Carl Grodach and Daniel Silver describe a shift from viewing culture as "primarily a national-level concern" to the "rise of a specifically *urban* form of cultural policy" (ibid.:1). In the context of this shift, the motivations behind the formulation of explicit urban cultural policies, as well as their impact on urban development and governance, have become some of the key research topics (ibid.:3). Similarly, David Bell and Kate Oakley identify the city as "perhaps the prime site of cultural policy development" since at least the 1980s (Bell and Oakley, 2015:76). Cities are not only the places where "cultural activities are concentrated", but also the "support infrastructure" for those activities "is inseparable from that of the city" (ibid.:80). Cities are arenas of policy coalitions and conflicts, sites where creativity, attractiveness and sustainability are conceived, shaped, and negotiated (ibid.:76-108).

This article aims to analyse the role of culture in urban policies, focusing on the cases of two Croatian cities: Zagreb and Rijeka. Zagreb is the capital of Croatia and serves as the country's political, administrative, economic, healthcare, cultural, and educational centre. In terms of culture, current policy documents describe Zagreb "as a vibrant stage that nurtures and promotes culture and the arts" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:18). They highlight the richness of the city's cultural life by listing its cultural institutions, independent cultural scene, and diverse cultural programs, activities and events. However, a range of development problems and needs – including low public interest in cultural events, inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, weak intersectoral cooperation, insufficient international positioning, and lack of long-term cultural planning – reveals some of the key obstacles faced by both cultural workers and citizens (ibid.:18–20; Grad Zagreb, 2023b:32-37). In 2020, Zagreb was struck by severe earthquakes that

caused extensive material damage across the city, particularly in the historical centre. Since then, a wide range of construction and restoration projects, many involving key public institutions like hospitals and schools, as well as heritage sites, have significantly shaped the urban landscape, as well as public policies.

Rijeka, the third-largest city in Croatia, has been historically defined by its strategic position in the northern Adriatic. Policymakers highlight the city's legacy as "one of the largest Central European ports and a powerful industrial centre" throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries (Grad Rijeka, 2013:10). Another narrative emphasised in policy discourse is the city's cultural diversity, grounded in a long-standing influx of migrants from different parts of Europe and the frequent redrawing of national borders, especially over the past century. Profoundly affected by deindustrialization processes since the 1990s, present-day Rijeka, through its policy frameworks, stress the role of culture as a driver of urban renewal (ibid.:5). This strategy culminated in Rijeka's successful bid for the 2020 European Capital of Culture (ECoC), under the theme "Port of Diversity". The initiative aimed to rejuvenate the city by investing in cultural infrastructure and hosting a wide array of public events. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted much of the programme, causing cancellations, downsized events, and infrastructure project delays. Still, the ECoC's impact is evident in how culture has been conceptualised as a tool for reshaping Rijeka.[2]

We approach public policy through an anthropological lens (cf. Tate, 2020; Lendvai-Bainton and Stubbs, 2024), viewing it as an arena where meaning is constructed, and as a dynamic field of naming, defining, mapping, ordering, and directing our social worlds. In line with these foundations, in this article we examine how culture is defined and mapped, and how it is utilised within urban policy documents. Thus, our focus is on one particular manifestation of urban policies: policy documents that outline broader urban visions and development goals, as well as those specifically dedicated to cultural development. Policy documents can classify, justify, condemn, empower, and silence (Shore and White, 1997:15). They bring certain issues onto the agenda while simultaneously omitting and silencing others. In this text, we are interested in how policy documents frame, shape, and assign roles to culture. Through a close reading of these documents, our aim is to understand how they define culture, which aspects, attributes, and processes they emphasise, and how they position culture within the broader framework of urban development.

The following section begins by outlining the theoretical framework and methodological choices that inform our policy research. Our analysis focuses on two main strands. Firstly, we examine how culture is conceptualised within urban development

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[2] For a discussion of our previous research on Rijeka and the role of the ECoC initiative in resemanticizing the urban identities, see Škrbić Alempijević and Gulin Zrnić (2022) and Veselinovič and Škrbić Alempijević (2023).

plans, i.e., we analyse how policymakers articulate cities' development objectives and what roles they assign to culture. We then shift our attention to cultural strategies, exploring how cultural development is framed and which understandings of culture are prioritised. Building on these insights, we discuss how local urban strategies resonate with broader national, European and international policy agendas. We conclude by comparing these policy conceptualisations of culture with anthropological approaches to culture.

2. Theoretical frame and methodological notes

A seemingly straightforward definition of cultural policy as "the branch of public policy concerned with the administration of culture" (Bell and Oakley, 2015:45) quickly reveals itself as a complex field shaped by diverse actors, processes, and power relations. This richness makes cultural policy challenging to grasp and comprehend. Cultural policy, understood as "what governments at various scales choose to do or not to do in relation to culture" (ibid.:47), encompasses a "messy world of actors acting (or not) within specific contexts, with particular outcomes in mind, and whose actions produce effects (some intended, some not)" (ibid.:48).

Researchers engaged in the study of cultural policy come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and often find themselves "caught between critical and applied approaches" (ibid.:60). The former is "more research-driven and theoretically reinforced", while the latter leans toward a "stronger orientation toward practice and activist understanding" of cultural policy research (Primorac, 2021:132). Scholars working on (cultural) policies navigate a landscape shaped by personal, disciplinary, academic, economic, and public expectations, constraints and decisions.

We position ourselves within the field of the anthropology of policy, which defines policy as "a social, cultural and political construct" (Wedel and Feldman, 2005:1). Policies "reflect ways of thinking about the world and acting upon it. They contain implicit models of social organization and visions of how individuals should relate to society and to each other" (Shore 2012:100). From an anthropological perspective, policies are viewed as "important sites of classification, disciplining, and production of order and change" (Lendvai-Bainton and Stubbs, 2024). Anthropologists seek to understand how policies operate, why and when they fail, how they mobilise metaphors, how they construct subjects as objects of power, and how certain definitions of problems and solutions become normalised and taken for granted (Shore and Wright, 1997:3). In line with this, we follow the conceptualization of policy as "a generative realm of cultural production, producing and shaped by values, norms, identities, and practices" (Tate, 2020:85).

In this text, we primarily approach cultural policy as text (cf. Bell and Oakley, 2015:45-75; Shore and Wright, 1997:15), tracing the meanings contained within it. We acknowledge that by focusing primarily on policy documents, we set aside other important dimensions and actors involved in urban policymaking. The analysis of policy texts can only partially capture the richness and diversity of actions, processes, negotiations, frictions, and coalitions among various actors. Moreover, such an approach often conceals the processes behind the creation of these documents, as well as the multiple interpretations and perspectives that emerge during their implementation.[3] Nevertheless, we consider this approach valuable, as it offers insight into how city governments conceptualise and mobilise culture within their strategic framework. By analysing policy documents of two Croatian cities – Zagreb and Rijeka – our goal is to contribute to a broader understanding of cultural policy and the role of culture in urban governance.

Our analysis is based primarily on currently valid policy documents, except in cases where a new document has not yet been adopted. These include the development plans of the two cities: *The City of Rijeka Development Plan 2021–2027* (Grad Rijeka, 2021) and the *Development Plan of the City of Zagreb until the End of 2027*, along with its appendix describing development needs and potentials (Grad Zagreb, 2023a; Grad Zagreb, 2023b). Also, we analyse documents specifically focused on culture: the *Cultural Development Strategy of the City of Rijeka 2013–2020* (Grad Rijeka, 2013; a comparable strategy has not yet been adopted for the current period) and the *Culture Development Programme of the City of Zagreb 2024–2030* (Grad Zagreb, 2023c) and its appendix *Basic Analysis with an Assessment of the Current State and a SWOT Analysis* (Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023).[4] In order to understand the conceptualisations of culture and the roles ascribed to it within the mentioned development documents, we conducted a thematic analysis (cf. Wutich, Ryan and Bernard, 2015; Nowell et al., 2017). We carefully and repeatedly read the policy documents, coding them both individually and collaboratively. Through this iterative process of open and focused coding (cf. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995:142–168), we identified points of convergence and divergence between the two cities' policy documents. This enabled a critical examination of how culture is articulated, attributed, and valued within their development plans.

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[3] In our previous work (e.g., Kelemen and Škrbić Alempijević, 2012; Škrbić Alempijević and Gulin Zrnić, 2022), as well as in our ongoing research, our aim is to understand diverse positions, actions, and interpretations of various actors connected to and affected by cultural policy. We try to grasp where, why and how cultural policy is enacted and brought to life. In doing so, we strive to carry out what Bell and Oakley (2015:45-75) describe as "multidimensional analysis", which study policy as discourse, as text, as process, and as practice.

[4] Apart from the mentioned documents, we consulted other sources and we will refer to them where relevant.

Until recently, local-level cultural strategies were rarely adopted in Croatia. With the exception of Istria County, which adopted a cultural strategy in 2009, several cities – including Rijeka and Zagreb – adopted their first cultural strategies during the 2010s (Grad Rijeka, 2013; Grad Zagreb, 2015). These efforts were closely linked to the preparation for the ECoC (Primorac, 2023:10). While Rijeka has not adopted new cultural strategy since its ECoC-connected document, Zagreb adopted a new document in 2023 (Grad Zagreb, 2023c). Another significant impetus for the development of cultural – as well as other – strategic documents across all levels of governance has been the *Act on the System of Strategic Planning and Development Management of the Republic of Croatia* (*Zakon o sustavu strateškog planiranja i upravljanja razvojem Republike Hrvatske*, *Narodne novine*, 123/2017, 151/2022).[5] This is closely linked to the allocation of the European Union funding to national, regional and local governments (cf. Primorac, 2023:10). These two driving forces – the ECoC programme and national legislation connected to EU funding – illustrate the interconnectedness of various layers of cultural polices.

Shared emphases, aligned objectives, and converging development visions found in various policy documents point to the existence of connections across different levels of policy-making. Policy is marked by processes of mobility and translation, requiring sensitivity to the "spatiotemporal complexities of policy, in terms of the constant movement of policy over time and across space" (Lendvai-Bainton and Stubbs, 2024). As policies circulate through varying contexts, they are continually transformed and translated (cf. ibid.). This process of interpretation and reshaping is part of the dynamic interplay between local, national, and international policies. Accordingly, understanding local policies is inseparable from the broader-scale visions and objectives.

3. The city and its culture: the role of culture in Zagreb and Rijeka development plans

The development plans of Zagreb and Rijeka define the cities' vision, strategic priorities, specific objectives, measures and activities, performance indicators, as well as other descriptive and numerical data essential for planning and assessing urban development within the designated period (Grad Zagreb, 2023a; Grad Zagreb, 2023b;

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[5] In line with this act, the development plans of Zagreb and Rijeka are "medium-term strategic planning acts, which are prepared and adopted for a period of five to ten years" (*Zakon o sustavu strateškog planiranja i upravljanja razvojem Republike Hrvatske*, *Narodne novine*, 123/2017, 151/2022). They are linked with the *National Development Strategy*, which represents a long-term strategic planning document covering a period of at least ten years. Medium-terms plans are operationalised further through "short-term strategic planning acts" (ibid.).

Grad Rijeka, 2021).[6] They are aligned with the *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030*, demonstrating how local priorities and objectives contribute to the nationally envisioned objectives.

Rijeka's vision is articulated as: "Rijeka 2030 – a smart, open and resilient city" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:81), while Zagreb's vision is defined as: "The City of Zagreb – a green, innovative and sustainable city. A city of solidarity and equal opportunities" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:2). To fulfil these visions, both cities define four priorities or strategic objectives, which are further articulated through specific objectives.

Rijeka's document outlines four strategic objectives through the following slogans: "Living in Rijeka 2030", "Working in Rijeka 2030", "Connect Rijeka 2030", and "Preserve Rijeka 2030" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:78-83). Zagreb's policy priorities are expressed in the following phrases: green and resilient economy; social equity, and high-quality and accessible social services; efficient and sustainable management of spatial and natural resources; green transition and digital transformation (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:108-111). Although differently phrased and elaborated, development priorities in both cases address four aspects of urban life: social, economic, spatial, and environmental.

The social aspect focuses on providing social infrastructure in the areas of education, healthcare, social security, sports, and culture. Emphasis is placed on the quality of life: Zagreb's document describes "infrastructure that is evenly distributed and accessible to all" as a "foundation for a healthy, active, and high-quality life" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:109). Similarly, Rijeka's document states that "at the core of the development concept is the quality of life of the individual and the commitment to a healthy, optimistic, just, and inclusive society, supported by public administration" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:78). Rijeka highlights city's diversity, while Zagreb emphasises social equality (Grad Rijeka, 2021:84; Grad Zagreb, 2023a:109). City governments aim to deliver high-quality (digitalised) services, with active citizens playing a key role – Rijeka stresses their engagement, whereas Zagreb highlights their inclusion in urban development planning (ibid.). The economic aspect addresses economic development, with employment prominently featured in Zagreb's document. Zagreb envisions a green and resilient economy (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:108), while Rijeka aims to "fully trans-

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[6] The development plans of Zagreb and Rijeka are extensive documents that provide data on the cities' geographic characteristic, social infrastructure, economy, communal infrastructure, transport, etc. They also include a SWOT analysis of society, the economy, space, and the environment. In the case of Rijeka, space and the environment are analysed together, while transport is treated as a separate category (Grad Rijeka, 2021:74-77). In contrast, in Zagreb, transport is included in the analysis of space (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:99-107; Grad Zagreb, 2023b:185-192). A similar difference in how Zagreb's and Rijeka's documents combine or separate transport, space and the environment is also evident in the definitions of their four strategic objectives which we analyse in this section.

form into a city of modern industries, particularly creative, technologically innovative, and green" by 2030 (Grad Rijeka, 2021:79). The spatial aspect focuses primarily on transport in Rijeka's case (ibid.). Zagreb's document includes transport, infrastructure, and waste management, and also mentions the use of city-owned properties, as well as brownfield areas as important resource (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:109). The environmental aspect is labelled "green transition and digital transformation" in Zagreb's strategy, with the goal of becoming "clean, healthy and resource-efficient" by 2030 (ibid.:110). Rijeka, on the other hand, aspires to be "a smart, green and clean city" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:82). In the context of environmental protection, communal infrastructure and space management, Rijeka's document highlights the continued reuse of urban spaces, particularly through the revitalisation of its cultural and industrial heritage (ibid.:79).

In such an outline of development priorities of Zagreb and Rijeka, culture is not treated as a separated domain of development but is included within the social dimension, alongside other areas such as education or social services. Additionally, certain cultural aspects can be identified in other areas as well: for example, within the creative industries which are mentioned in the frame of economic development, or in references to cultural and industrial heritage in Rijeka's document (Grad Rijeka, 2021:79).

In both Rijeka and Zagreb development plans, culture is explicitly defined as an important element of overall urban development within the sections of the documents dedicated specifically to culture. Rijeka's plan describes culture as a "key driver of development and new values" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:14), whereas Zagreb's document states that "the vibrancy of the city's cultural life is one of its greatest assets and a strong driver of its social, democratic, and economic development" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:132).

In Rijeka's case, culture is brought to the forefront in explanations of the significance of the ECoC 2020 title, which "enabled Rijeka to significantly improve the scope and variety of cultural offer in the city, expand access and participation in culture, strengthen the capacities of the cultural sector, and develop the audience" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:14). The title has also "increased the international visibility and profile of the city and the region" (ibid.). The most important legacy of the ECoC title is seen in the partnership with the University of Rijeka, the development of cultural democracy and activism, and the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship. As the development plan notes, the ECoC title is awarded to cities that, in the course of their candidacy, must "demonstrate that they view culture as an important area of their development and their transformation". The document continues: "Therefore, it is important to view culture in Rijeka as a key driver of development and new values" (ibid.). In this way, the ECoC title is directly used to argue for the central role of culture in Rijeka's development.

The ECoC's importance in shaping the city's future is further emphasised through the naming of one of the plan's specific objectives: "The capital of culture after 2020".

Among the fourteen specific objectives outlined in the document, this is the one explicitly dedicated to culture. Together with the objectives focused on education, social services and urban governance, it makes part of the strategic objective titled "Living in Rijeka 2030: A city of diversity, in which a high quality of life arises from cooperation between smart city administration and engaged citizens" (ibid.:84–85). Rijeka in 2030 is envisioned as a continuation of the ECoC legacy, where culture is a "a strong actor that thinks about the future, re-examines the past and the present, and in strong synergy with both institutional and non-institutional sectors, every day provides opportunities for new insights, spaces for dialogue and idea exchange, and constitutes an essential value for the life of every citizen" (ibid.:93). Cultural programmes in Rijeka 2030 are described as "inclusive and participative", and culture is positioned as a component of both education and economy, primarily through cultural entrepreneurship and cultural tourism (ibid.). Measures and activities outlined as steps toward the stated goals include two specific city areas with revitalised industrial and maritime heritage envisioned as key cultural nodes. They also point to the need to connect Rijeka and its surroundings in a joint cultural offer, as well as to foster the ECoC legacy through participative governance in culture (ibid.:93-94).

Rijeka's document does not provide a definition of culture on which the plan is founded, but from the explanations of Rijeka's characteristic and its envisioned cultural development, it can be inferred that culture includes: cultural institutions, democratisation and participatory governance, youth programmes, NGOs, volunteering in cultural activities, institutional culture and independent cultural scene, creative industries, cultural projects, cultural events, and cultural heritage (ibid.:13-15, 49-51).

In Zagreb's development plan, the idea of culture as one of the city's "greatest assets" and "a powerful driver of its social, democratic, and economic development" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:132) is present in the description of one of the seventeen specific objectives. The objective titled "Empowering culture and creative production" is the one specifically dedicated to culture. It emphasises the "improvement of the city's culture governance system", which "will stimulate the presence and relevance" of culture and "ensure the conditions for its further development" (ibid.). The city aims to strengthen Zagreb's recognition as a "European cultural centre", which would also enhance its appeal as a tourist destination. Special attention is given to building professional capacities, digitalising artistic production, and developing the cultural and creative industries. According to the document, culture "should be equally accessible to everyone", and therefore, the plan is to ensure the availability of spaces for cultural activities in all of the city's districts (ibid.).

Besides the goal specifically dedicated to culture, Zagreb's development plan briefly and indirectly mentions culture in several other objectives. For instance, it includes the creative and cultural industries within the objective focused on developing a sus-

tainable and competitive economy (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:112-114); cultural tourism is referenced under the goal of "supporting sustainable, resilient, and competitive tourism" (ibid.:120-122); and there is an emphasis on the "enhancement of the system for the protection and valorisation of cultural heritage" (ibid.:140) within the objective aimed at improving city asset management (ibid.:139-143).

The role of culture is also evident in the strategic projects outlined in Zagreb's development plan. Out of the twenty-seven listed projects,[7] two are defined as contributing to the objective of "Empowering culture and creative production", and described as the projects of cultural heritage revitalisation (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:185-186). One of these is the reconstruction of the Social, cultural and film centre Kino Europa. The other is the construction of the new City Library and the socio-cultural centre Paromlin, whose primary goal is "the revitalization of cultural industrial heritage into a space of intense public life, with dominant public and cultural content" (ibid.:185). Culture is also implicitly reflected in several other strategic projects. For instance, five projects falling under the objective of city asset management focus on revitalizing former industrial sites for various public (and among them cultural), residential, and business purposes (ibid.:187-191).[8]

Similar to Rijeka's document, Zagreb's plan does not provide a definition of culture. Nevertheless, based on the descriptions of Zagreb's characteristics and development objectives, it can be inferred that culture encompasses: cultural institutions, cultural events, the independent cultural scene, cultural/creative industries, city libraries, publishing, museums, theatre and dance production, music, visual arts, audiovisual arts, cultural centres, cultural and artistic amateurism, interdisciplinary and new artistic and cultural practices, the programme "Culture and Art in the Community", and cultural heritage (ibid.:18-19, 132-134).[9]

In both Zagreb's and Rijeka's development plans, culture is recognised as relevant, as a driver of development. Within this framework, Rijeka uses the ECoC title as a key argument in emphasizing the importance of culture, and as a foundation for planning future development. The legacy of the ECoC, as outlined in the development plan, is

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[7] Zagreb's development plan includes two lists of strategic projects (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:173-195): the first comprises twenty-seven projects under the authority of the City government and connected bodies, and the second contains five projects outside its jurisdiction.

[8] Projects of revitalization of the former industrial areas relate to the following sites: the former "Janko Gredelj" railway rolling stock factory, the former City Slaughterhouse and Livestock Market Zagrepčanka, the Zagreb Fair, the Badel Block as the space of the former distillery, and the former "Sljeme" meat industry in Sesvete (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:187-191). Those projects are defined as crucial "for urban renewal and development, as well as for creating new value for the City of Zagreb" (ibid.:173).

[9] In some parts of the document, cultural heritage is treated separately from other cultural fields (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:8-9), while in others it is included alongside them in the explanation of cultural development (ibid.:132-134). In both Zagreb's and Rijeka's documents, cultural heritage refers to heritage protected by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia.

expected to continue through cultural programme, established cultural infrastructure, and participatory governance.

In both documents, culture is connected with economy, primarily with creative industries and tourism.[10] Zagreb's plan includes support for the creative and cultural industries and their promotion as part of initiatives to encourage investment in new and green technologies, as well as the development of innovative products and services (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:112-113). Rijeka, as mentioned, aspires "to transform into a city of modern industries", where creative, technologically innovative, and green industries are placed at the forefront (Grad Rijeka, 2021:79). Tourism is regarded as significant in both cities. In Rijeka, renovated cultural buildings, events, museum exhibitions, and academic programmes – seen as the ECoC's lasting legacy and intended for both residents and visitors – are considered important for the continued development of tourism (ibid.:49). In Zagreb, the goal of strengthening the city's recognition as a "European cultural centre" is linked to its tourist appeal (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:132).

In both cities' documents, culture encompasses cultural institutions, diverse cultural sectors, programmes, projects and events, cultural heritage, creative industries, and the independent cultural scene. Rijeka's document places particular emphasis on participatory governance and volunteering, while Zagreb's plan mentions a specific programme – "Culture and Art in the Community" – aimed at increasing the visibility of cultural activities across the city's districts and empowering local communities and civil society to engage in the city's cultural life (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:19).

The concepts of cultural participation and inclusivity (in Rijeka), as well as its accessibility and equal distribution (in Zagreb), reflect an effort to bring cultural infrastructure and activities closer to citizens. However, these efforts are not further elaborated and their implementation remains unexplained.[11] Policymakers also refer to somewhat vague notions regarding the importance of culture: Zagreb's document mentions its

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[10] Although the analysed cities' cultural development strategies do not specify what is encompassed by the term "creative industry", Zagreb's earlier cultural policy document draws on the 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* and defines the sector as comprising industries rooted in "individual creativity, skills, and talent", with "the potential to generate profit and create new jobs through the creation and use of intellectual property" (Grad Zagreb, 2015:44). Zagreb's current development plan maps the sector through examples of architecture, design and film as examples of cultural and creative industries (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:132), while Rijeka's document does the same through examples of "enterprises engaged in various fields such as advertising, media, marketing agencies, software companies, film, design, and more" (Grad Rijeka, 2021:50).

[11] Notions of inclusivity, participation, participatory governance, accessibility and others are central to the studies of cultural policy. This text does not engage with the complex questions of their political, organisational, and other aspects. For useful insights within the Croatian context, see Vidović (2018). Related to this, Jaka Primorac raises an important issue of social inequality connected to culture in present-day Croatia, calling for research that would "question the stratifying elements of cultural consumption, distribution and production" (Primorac, 2021:142).

relevance, while Rijeka's plan describes culture as an essential value in citizens' life and as a force for creating new values. However, neither document clarifies what kind of relevance is intended or which specific values are envisioned.

Those somewhat vague notions are made more concrete through specific measures and projects. As already mentioned, Rijeka's document outlines four measures and activities: two city areas of revitalised industrial and maritime heritage are envisioned as important city's centres; the participative governance in culture is promoted (citizens will take part in deciding the allocation of funds for cultural programmes); and connecting Rijeka with its surroundings to provide joint cultural offer is planned (Grad Rijeka, 2021:93-94). Zagreb's plan defines two measures: supporting the development of culture and artistic production, and supporting the development of cultural and creative industries. The activities listed under the first measure are wide-range and include cultural heritage, community development through participation and engagement in culture and art, cultural infrastructure in city districts, cultural programmes for children and youth, cooperation between cultural institutions and independent cultural scene, digitalisation, spaces for storage, and cultural programmes for people with disabilities (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:132-133). Similar to Rijeka's emphasis on revitalisation of cultural and industrial heritage, the strategic projects defined in Zagreb's plan indicate the infrastructural aspect of culture: the renovation of cultural buildings and the reuse of former industrial areas for, among others, cultural purposes (ibid.:185-191).

Lastly, concretisation of the role culture plays in the development plan can be observed through the financial resources allocated for achieving culture-related objectives. Zagreb's development plan provides a financial framework for its implementation (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:196-198).[12] The share of funds planned for the specific objective connected to culture ("Empowering culture and creative production") accounts for 2.59% of the total budget. In comparison, the largest shares are allocated to: transport (21.22%), healthcare and social services (15.3%), city asset management (12.69%),[13] energy transition (10.87%), education (10.23%), and communal infrastructure (10.09%). Additionally, the plan states that 42.64% of the indicative financial framework is needed for the implementation of strategic projects (ibid.:197). Since those projects are largely focused on the construction or renovation of communal infrastructure (such as transport, street lighting, water supply, and waste management), as well as sports, healthcare, education, social service facilities, and affordable

[12] Unlike in this document (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:196-198), the analysed Rijeka's development plan (Grad Rijeka, 2021) does not include a comparable overview of the financial assumptions for the implementation of its objectives and measures as an integral part of the publicly accessible document.
[13] Since this objective includes five strategic projects aimed at revitalising former industrial sites – serving various purposes, including cultural ones – a portion of these funds can also be considered as allocated to culture. However, the funds planned for these five strategic projects represent only 3.75% of the total funds allocated to the objective related to city asset management.

housing (ibid.:173-195), it could be argued that a significant portion of funding is directed toward addressing underdeveloped or poorly maintained urban infrastructure.

In sum, policymakers assign a role to culture within the overall development plans of both Rijeka and Zagreb. In both documents, culture is not treated as a separate domain but is integrated across various dimensions of urban development, most prominently within the social sphere. Based on the proclaimed values such as inclusivity, participation, and accessibility, it aims to foster cultural activities and to enhance the quality of life. Although neither document defines clearly the concept of culture, both acknowledge it in its material form, through the development of cultural infrastructure, and in its intangible aspect, through the support of cultural programmes. In Rijeka, the ECoC serves as a justification for the importance of culture and also as a guiding framework for future development. Culture is a part of the vision for living in Rijeka in 2030, while in Zagreb culture is embedded in social equity planning. Both development plans dedicate a specific development objective to culture. However, when other objectives, project priorities, and budget allocations are taken into account, culture does not hold a top priority. Infrastructural projects tend to take precedence. While the relevance or value of culture is mentioned in the documents, it is not elaborated on, leaving its broader roles largely unexplored.

4. Culture and its city: cultural planning in Zagreb and Rijeka

In both Rijeka's and Zagreb's cultural strategy documents, the role of culture is, understandably, more thoroughly articulated. These documents outline the visions, priorities, objectives, measures, and activities for cultural development (Grad Rijeka, 2013; Grad Zagreb, 2023c; Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023). Zagreb's document covers the period from 2024 to 2030, while Rijeka has not adopted a new strategy, so our analysis refers to Rijeka's strategy for the period 2013-2020.[14]

In Rijeka's case, culture is defined by emphasising what it is not: it is neither "an isolated social sphere" nor "a hermetically sealed system" (Grad Rijeka, 2013:5). The cultural sector is envisioned as playing an active role in "addressing the social, economic, spatial, ecological, and other challenges that Rijeka faces", thus contributing to the city's overall development (ibid.). Since the document was adopted in 2013, in the context of Rijeka's bid for the ECoC tile, the candidacy itself was identified as one of the strategic priorities. It was conceived as "a sustainable project whose cultural,

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[14] The documents of Rijeka and Zagreb differ in both structure and the way they define their objectives. Rijeka's document outlines thirteen general strategic objectives, eight priorities (key projects), and four specific objectives (Grad Rijeka, 2013). Zagreb's document identifies six priority areas and seven specific objectives (Grad Zagreb, 2023c). Additionally, Zagreb's document has a comprehensive appendix, titled *Basic Analysis with an Assessment of the Current State and a SWOT Analysis* (Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023).

economic, and social impacts will be long-lasting, providing the necessary impetus for the final transformation of Rijeka into a city of creativity and knowledge" (ibid.:26).

The vision of Rijeka's culture in 2020 is expressed as follows: "Rijeka as a city in which citizens recognise culture and the arts as the foundation of their shared identity, their sense of connection and belonging to the city, which is recognizable for its cultural and artistic vitality in both the national and international context" (ibid.:15). A "stronger and culturally recognizable Rijeka identity" is one of the key strategic objectives. The strategy envisions diverse and interesting cultural programmes accessible to citizens, while also appealing to tourists. Rijeka is portrayed as "open to cultural differences, artistic innovations, and entrepreneurial initiatives" (ibid.).

In Zagreb' document, numerous cultural institutions, NGOs, artistic organizations, private cultural actors, artistic educational programmes, cultural and creative industries, as well as the loyal audiences of local cultural activities, are recognised as "significant potentials not only for the development of culture, art, and creative production, but also for community development, enhancement of social cohesion, and the contribution of culture to the city's economic development, that is, to the overall urban transformation and sustainable development of the city" (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:1).

Zagreb's vision of culture is encapsulated in the slogan: "Culture that makes the city, the city that lives culture" (ibid.:3). Culture is envisioned as inclusive and resilient; cultural and artistic programs are accessible to all, integrated into daily life, and contribute to the quality of life while creating a stimulating atmosphere. "Artistic production, local communities, and socially responsible cultural development" are central to this vision, shaping "a city of imagination, innovation, and experimentation". Cultural and artistic education is considered vital for acquiring advanced knowledge and new skills, as well as for fostering critical and creative thinking. Culture is framed as a key element in "building a sustainable city of the future". On an international level, Zagreb is envisioned as a hub of cultures (ibid.).

Both strategic documents strive to achieve the development of artistic production and the preservation of cultural heritage by improving working conditions in the cultural sector, increasing funding for infrastructure and programming, implementing institutional and governance reforms, and strengthening the international visibility of local culture. In both cities, culture is linked to other sectors. In Rijeka, this includes arts education, cultural tourism, and the cultural and creative industries (Grad Rijeka, 2013:69-71). In Zagreb, culture intersects with education, tourism, health, and the environment (Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023:81-88). Notably, Zagreb's policymakers advocate integrating health and environmental issues into cultural policy.

The concepts of cultural accessibility and inclusivity, present in both cities' development plans, are elaborated in their respective cultural strategies. Two of Rijeka's

strategic objectives are especially relevant in this respect. The first emphasises that culture, as a "public good that belongs to everyone", must be accessible to all citizens. This includes affordability (especially for the unemployed, the economically disadvantaged, people with disabilities, and the elderly), equitable spatial distribution of cultural activities across the city, a diverse cultural offer, and the removal of physical barriers (Grad Rijeka, 2013:20). The second objective focuses on strengthening public art – bringing it closer to citizens – as a means to foster social cohesion. The strategy notes: "Parts of the city become space where arts projects merge with the local community" (ibid.:24).

Similarly, Zagreb's document highlights the goal of "bringing cultural and artistic activities, as well as cultural and artistic education, closer to audiences across the entire city of Zagreb and to all groups of citizens" (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:5). Measures to achieve this include promotional efforts, the enhancement of educational programmes, and initiatives within local communities (such as the "Culture and Art in the Community" and "Zagreb Neighbourhoods of Culture" programmes). Specially designed programmes also target specific groups, including migrants, children, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and users of the social welfare system (ibid.:5-6, 10–13).

In both cities, cultural accessibility and inclusivity are to be achieved through the decentralisation of cultural activities and the development of tailored programmes that respond to citizens' diverse needs. The overarching goal for the cultural sector is to be "directed toward well-being of all citizens", as outlined in Rijeka's document (Grad Rijeka, 2013:20), or for culture "to play a more prominent role in citizens' lives at the micro level", as stated in Zagreb's strategy (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:5). In Zagreb, the decentralisation of cultural activity is closely linked to the decentralisation of cultural infrastructure, including the construction and renovation of spaces for cultural activities and the refurbishment of existing cultural centres.[15]

Zagreb's document also connects quality of life to two additional specific objectives. The first focuses on strengthening the role of creative industries, art, and culture in sustainable urban development and transformation, as well as in fostering "sustainable, resilient and competitive cultural tourism". Culture is viewed as an integral part of urban planning and spatial interventions. The integration of cultural, environmental, and economic policies is seen as essential (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:6-7, 14-15). Implementation is planned through cultural programmes that promote environmental sustainability and the adoption of green business practices within the city's cultural

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[15] A detailed discussion on the roles of cultural centres in promoting cultural accessibility, participation, and decentralisation lies beyond the scope of this text. For recent and insightful analyses, see, for example, Galjer and Lončar (2021); Kardov, Klasić and Ostojić (2023); Tomašegović and Kardov (2023); Vidović (2018); Žuvela and Tonković (2023).

institutions. The second objective addresses cultural heritage, emphasising its "renovation, vitality, and sustainability", especially in light of recent earthquakes. While industrial heritage is mentioned in this context, specific sites are not identified (ibid.:7, 17–18).[16] In contrast, Rijeka's strategy highlights the renovation of the former Rikard Benčić factory as "probably a turning point in Rijeka's culture after WWII", expected to "revitalise and re-urbanise an important space near the city centre" and bring Rijeka's culture into a new era (Grad Rijeka, 2013:26).

One area where the cities' strategies differ is in how they connect culture with identity building. In Rijeka, culture is seen as "the foundation of a shared identity" of citizens, "their sense of connection and belonging to the city" (Grad Rijeka, 2013:15). In Zagreb, identity and belonging are less explicitly addressed. However, they are implied through the emphasis on "local communities" at the core of the city's cultural vision (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:3), and more directly in the explanation of cultural centres as "substantial potential in building local cultural identity through the collage of neighbourhoods' cultures, which affirms the diversity of Zagreb's culture" (Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023:44). Thus, in Zagreb, identity is framed more at the neighbourhood level.

Finally, both documents affirm the intrinsic value of culture, not merely its instrumental values in serving certain other objectives. In Zagreb's document, this is implied in the assertion that the cultural sector "will indirectly act as one of the drivers of the city's development" (Grad Zagreb, 2023c:1).[17] In Rijeka's strategy, this view is made explicit: "Culture is a value in its own right, and not merely a tool for achieving other goals" (Grad Rijeka, 2013:17). Thus, in both cities, culture is conceived as having value in its own right, not merely as a means to other ends, but as a contributor to the city's overall development.

5. Culture in policy documents: scopes, scales, and potentials

Our analysis of the policy documents demonstrates that both Zagreb and Rijeka acknowledge the strategic importance of culture, which is largely conceived as a driver of development. Adopting an anthropological perspective allowed us to approach the

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[16] Paromlin, which is described in Zagreb's development plan as "the revitalization of cultural industrial heritage" (Grad Zagreb, 2023a:185), is not associated with industrial heritage within Zagreb's cultural strategy.

[17] At the public presentation of the document in September 2023, the head of the City's Office for Culture and Civil Society, Emina Višnić, explained the potential contribution of culture to sustainable urban development, urban transformation, and cultural tourism. She emphasised: "not viewing culture and art as instruments for achieving other goals, but rather recognizing that through what we do in culture, and what we wish to do and develop, we can contribute to these goals" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc6Wf3dc20A).

documents not merely as reflections of existing meaning-making strategies, but as arenas where multiple meanings of culture are produced – where culture itself is turned into a generator of change. Following this analytical approach, our focus on the urban development plans led us to conclude that both cities position culture within a broader social framework, integrating cultural objectives alongside goals in education, healthcare, and social services. Examination of the cities' cultural strategies further elaborates on culture's multifaceted role, highlighting its significance in addressing contemporary challenges, fostering social cohesion, supporting community development, and shaping collective identities. As we have shown, in both cities' documents culture is closely linked to issues of accessibility, inclusivity, and the overall quality of life. Finally, both strategies attribute transformative potential to culture. In contrast, the *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030* situates culture under the objective titled "Competitive and innovative economy", within the priority area "Encouraging the development of culture and media" (*Nacionalna razvojna strategija Republike Hrvatske do 2030. godine*, *Narodne novine*, 13/2021). This priority encompasses artistic production, cultural participation, heritage, and media, and places particular emphasis on the cultural and creative industries. Whereas the national strategy explicitly links culture to economic growth, the local strategies of Zagreb and Rijeka emphasize its multifaceted roles. Although culture is not treated as an independent domain of development at the local level, rather integrated into the broader social dimension, it is nonetheless not subordinated to economic objectives.[18]

The local cultural strategies align with the *National Culture and Media Development Plan 2023-2027* in mapping the cultural sector. The national plan outlines specific objectives related to artistic and cultural production, cultural heritage, and the system of archives, libraries, and museums (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2023) – all of which are also reflected in Zagreb's and Rijeka's strategies. Cultural infrastructure is a shared concern: while local documents list planned reconstructions of key institutions, the national plan identifies infrastructure as "perhaps the greatest challenge in cultural policy" (ibid.:9).

Another important aspect stressed in the national plan is the notion of excellence. It states: "In all artistic and cultural areas, the emphasis is on identifying, evaluating, and encouraging excellence, as well as monitoring the dynamics of development across the entire cultural sector" (ibid.:11). The idea of excellence also appears in the Appendix of Zagreb's cultural strategy, in relation to amateur cultural activity. The document describes this activity as socially significant, but "not necessarily an expression of high culture that meets the criteria of excellence" (Grad Zagreb and IRMO, 2023:46). This

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[18] The relationship between culture and economic development requires careful attention. As critical literature has noted, the logic of the cultural economy and creative industries can be highly problematic, with well-documented negative effects such as precarity, commodification, gentrification, inequalities, and social polarization (Hollands, 2023; Primorac, 2021; Primorac, 2022).

framing embraces amateurism as part of cultural life, while simultaneously contrasting it with "high culture".

More broadly, the policy framing of culture emphasises institutional infrastructure and quality assessment of culture. Culture is portrayed as a driver of positive development, measured through indicators such as event numbers, audience figures, public funding, and expenditure. Similar to how cultural heritage refers to assets officially protected by the Ministry, culture is framed as something curated, evaluated, and legitimized through formal cultural infrastructure, funding schemes, and public calls. In this sense, Laurajane Smith's concept of "authorised heritage discourse" (Smith, 2006; Smith and Waterton, 2012), can be expanded to describe an authorised cultural discourse – one that privileges officially confirmed forms of culture while sidelining more informal expressions.

Keywords found in Zagreb's and Rijeka's policy documents – such as just, green, sustainable, innovative, resilient, smart, and open city – echo the language of recent European and international urban policies, including the *New Urban Agenda* (2016), the *Urban Agenda for the EU* (from 2016), *The New Leipzig Charter* (2020), and the *Territorial Agenda 2030* (2020).[19] These initiatives frame cities as key actors "taking over responsibility and leading the transformation towards just, green and productive societies" (*The New Leipzig Charter*, 2020:1), with urban governance as a central mechanism for this transformation. Cities become sites of policy formulation and implementation, arenas where "organizing principles of society" (Shore and Wright, 1997:7) are imagined, articulated, and practiced. Simultaneously, policies remain mobile and multi-scalar, continuously moving among and across local, national, and international contexts.

While many international urban policies frame culture in terms of cultural production and heritage, some – such as the *New Urban Agenda* – adopt a broader view. This document references "social and cultural interactions", "cultural diversity", "cultural integration", "intercultural dialogue", and "culturally sensitive sustainable solutions" (*New Urban Agenda*, 2016). Such language aligns more closely with an anthropological understanding of culture – one that goes beyond cultural production and creative industries to regard culture as a way of life. Heterogeneity and multivocality, positionality, power relations, and negotiations lie at the core of anthropological approaches to culture.

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[19] A detailed discussion of the parallels in the use of core concepts lies beyond the scope of this article, but it presents an interesting avenue for exploring policy mobility. For instance, Saša Poljak Istenič and Valentina Gulin Zrnić (2022) conducted a comparative study on strategic urban planning and city visions in eight Slovenian and Croatian cities (including Zagreb and Rijeka), focusing in particular on how these cities understand the concept of sustainable development.

Potential meeting points between this anthropological lens and the cultural framings in Zagreb's and Rijeka's policies can be found in initiatives that promote participatory governance, cultural decentralisation, and community empowerment. Such initiatives may open space for cultural practices that challenge authorised, top-down, and curated culture models. Similarly, Rijeka's vision of culture as a space for dialogue, and Zagreb's notion of culture as something that "makes the city", would benefit from a broader and more inclusive cultural framework – one that deepens the interpretation of these ambitions by incorporating the perspectives of diverse actors.

Although such forms of dialogue and city-making may resist easy evaluation within existing policy frameworks, they are essential for fostering meaningful encounters and shaping the kinds of cities we aspire to live in. If we accept the notion of cities as sites where "there is most contestation over questions of what culture is valued and resourced" (Durrer et al., 2023:7), then urban cultural policies become important arenas for challenging dominant authorised discourses of culture. From this perspective, cities hold the potential to cultivate a more inclusive understanding of culture – one that addresses inequalities and vulnerabilities in cultural and artistic production, and also expands the concept of culture beyond institutionalised arts and officially recognised heritage to include everyday practices, lived experiences, and social interactions. However, embracing such a holistic approach to culture demands that cities move beyond the conventional view of culture primarily as a driver of development and a guarantee of positive change, and instead engage with its everyday manifestations.

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Kultura i planiranje u Zagrebu i Rijeci: antropološko čitanje kulturnopolitičkih dokumenata

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Sažetak

Ovaj se članak bavi ulogom kulture u javnim politikama na primjeru dvaju hrvatskih gradova, Zagreba i Rijeke. Primjenjujući antropološko očište, autorice pristupaju javnim politikama kao dinamičnim sferama u kojima se konstruiraju, pregovaraju i institucionaliziraju društvena značenja. Analizu temelje na planovima koji artikuliraju šire razvojne vizije gradova te na strategijama specifično usmjerenima na kulturu. Autorice najprije razmatraju kako se kultura konceptualizira i uklapa u opće gradske planove razvoja, pri čemu utvrđuju koja se očekivanja i funkcije u oblikovanju urbanih budućnosti pripisuju kulturi. Zatim analiziraju kulturne strategije, u kojima utvrđuju dominantne narative o ulozi kulture, povezane s konceptima napretka, regeneracije i socioekonomske korisnosti. Urbane strategije dvaju gradova također postavljaju u odnos spram širih hrvatskih, europskih i međunarodnih javnopolitičkih trendova, upućujući na međudjelovanje globalnih, nacionalnih i lokalnih okvira. Istraživački uvidi u analizirane politike otkrivaju da se kultura u njima često prikazuje kao generator urbane transformacije, usmjeravajući pritom načine na koje gradovi zamišljaju svoje budućnosti. Usporedba ovog javnopolitičkog pristupa s antropološkim razumijevanjem kulture – koje je tretira kao višeslojnu, heterogenu, višeglasnu i ne suštinski usmjerenu prema napretku – upućuje na potrebu za promišljanjem načina na koji se kultura osmišljava u skladu s razvojnim agendama, često mehanizmima koji primat daju vrednovanju kvalitete i institucionalnoj infrastrukturi. Konačno, ovaj članak daje doprinos antropologiji javnih politika time što pokazuje kako pri upravljanju gradom definicije kulture funkcioniraju kao društveni i politički konstrukti koji oblikuju vizije urbanog razvoja.

Ključne riječi: uloga kulture, kulturna politika, antropologija javnih politika, urbano planiranje, Zagreb, Rijeka.

Sociologija i prostor