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From Cultural Facilities to The Cultural City Model. Key lessons from Valencia's *Faller Art City* [CAF] project

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ABSTRACT
This paper reviews the idea of cultural facilities with a view to broadening our grasp of the role culture plays in today's cities. In developing our argument, we first give a brief overview of the management and governance of major cities in Spain since the restoration of democracy, stressing the role played by cultural facilities. We then reflect on cultural facilities, situating them within the framework of the Cultural Democratisation Model — a public policy paradigm whose major limitations and shortcomings need to be addressed. Our proposed alternative is 'The Cultural City' framework, which provides conceptual tools for reorienting and reconnecting cultural and urban policies. This framework recognises the city as an artefact with three basic functions: Repository, Interface, and Stage, and puts citizens' cultural rights and needs first. The paper takes the case of the *Strategic Plan for the Fallas Art City* [CAF] to exemplify the scope offered by The Cultural City model. The case studied reveals a cultural strategy for fostering urban transformation, and a productive environment based on The Arts, creativity, and innovation. To this end, the project stresses cultural access, a collaborative locus of experience, encounter, and collaboration. The final goal of this approach to greatly broaden citizens' cultural rights.

Keywords: cultural democratisation; city; urban planning; cultural policies; Valencia; Fallas

SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of literature in various disciplines on the place of culture in the city. Debate on the subject was intense in the period spanning from the mid-1980s to the outbreak of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008. A number of successful theories emerged to stress culture's scope for fostering local development strategies (Evans, 2001; Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Scott, 2000; Zukin, 1995).

The general view of the many projects that sprang from this approach (especially ones promoted by the Spanish State) is that 'culture' usually played second fiddle to property speculation and other economic interests and was often merely a pretext for the latter (Hernández & Rius-Ulldemolins, 2016). Such critical analysis, though accurate in many respects, was often stuffed with commonplaces, and depicted a hollowed-out cultural policy model that simply served as a hoarding to hide bog-standard urban development schemes and growth models. The metaphor of 'a mere shell' (that is to say, cultural facilities that are all show and no substance) is borne out by many newly-created cultural facilities that were dreamt up as part of city development strategies and that merely paid lip service to culture.

In this paper, we refer to cultural facilities as publicly owned infrastructures whose building, renewal, and zoning regulations host culture in any shape or form (creation, production, exhibition, dissemination, consumption/participation, conservation). The

purposes that cultural facilities serve can be put under three heads: (1) provision of resources (physical, financial, relational, training, and symbolic); (2) semiotic signalling (by giving meanings and values to the processes they host); (3) fostering operational features (usability, communication, efficiency, accessibility, and transformative potential) (Ramos-Murphy, 2021). Cultural facilities provide the physical network in which cultural policy is implemented and takes form. As fixed elements over the short and medium terms, they shape cultural policy's scope in terms of design, articulation, action and impact (Rausell-Köster *et al.*, 2007).

To add depth to the usual discourse, we shall argue in the following paragraphs that the spawning of cultural facilities in the early 21st Century was not just a Neo-Liberal fad for pushing a real estate boom and the cause of 'the global city'. The vigour of cultural facilities has stronger roots than this, bringing together diverse elements within an overarching model that is still the hallmark of today's cultural policy. Such facilities both stem from and shape the cultural democratisation paradigm (Ramos-Murphy, 2021).

Throughout this paper, we will argue that a review of the notion of cultural equipment needs to go beyond issues of political legitimacy and economic sustainability (Rius-Ulldemolins & Rubio-Arostegui, 2016). That is because a broader vision is needed to cover the scope for deep reformulation of cultural policies in the contemporary city if it is to yield more effective, efficient and equitable outcomes.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF TRENDS IN LARGE SPANISH CITIES SINCE THE 1980S, TAKING THE ROLE PLAYED BY CULTURAL FACILITIES INTO ACCOUNT

In the Spanish context, the emergence of cultural facilities dates back to 1986, the year Spain joined the European Economic Community (EEC). Around that date, the Spanish political project for the restoration of democracy (led by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) began to gain experience, laying the foundations for an institutionalised, professional public policy. This was inspired by France, and soon became imbued with an enlightened, technocratic spirit.

It was against this background that worries about European canons began to grow, with these being addressed from both material and symbolic standpoints. A need was felt both at home and abroad to mark a newly democratic Spain's break with the cultural conservatism of the Franco dictatorship, and to join the modern world. One should note that the whole process coincided with a shift in Europe that put cities at the centre of things instead of The Nation State (Menger, 2010). The new model of the autonomous State was part of root-and-branch decentralisation. This context provided a propitious line of development and planning. Local governments armed themselves with new cultural flagship projects, redrawing the public image of cities in the incipient global scenario. These factors took root, marking the whole transition from the 20th to the 21st century. Valencia epitomises this shift (Rausell-Köster, 2010).

The building of new facilities for culture was key from the outset, marking both cultural policy and the urban landscape. Public initiative led the creation of direct management endowments, using standardised typologies that distinguished between the scale of proximity (libraries and cultural centres) and that of the city (contemporary art centres co-existing with large traditional museums). This evidences the tendency of Spain's cultural policy to adopt the Central-European model of cultural democratisation, where The State seeks a physical presence throughout cities to ensure access to and participation in culture. In the case of the city of Valencia, this phase is reflected in the building of the *Palau de la Música* in 1987 and the Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM) in 1989.

In the late 1980s, large Spanish cities began to redraft their General Urban Plans (PGOU), most of which are still in force today (Iglesias *et al.*, 2011). Where previous urban instruments had been limited to

monitoring and regulating growth, the new plans began to revolve around a "city model". This meant a future vision that was not only material but that also considered such narratives and the meanings a city sought to express.

The brief but intense crisis of 1992 occurred in the middle of a splurge on major cultural and sporting events (the Barcelona Olympic Games, the Universal Exhibition in Seville and the designation of Madrid as the European Capital of Culture), revealed the fragility of such dreams and helped drive a change in socio-political expectations that led to The Centre-Right winning an electoral victory in 1996. Then the Popular Party (PP) came to power and with it the transition towards the New Public Management formulas (Schedler & Proeller, 2005) — a trend that was already emerging in the earlier period and that then became consolidated.

At the risk of oversimplifying, we can say that the Neo-Liberal 'entrepreneurial turn' in urban policy and local government (Harvey, 1989) was presented as a broad strategic planning response to the rigidity of traditional approaches in the field (J. M. Pascual, 2001). The shift was so great that no fewer than three of Spain's biggest cities approved a Strategic Plan (Precedo & Míguez, 2014) during this period. Delving deeper into the idea of the city model, these new documents focused on the concepts of city 'strengths' and aspirations rather than on administrative or technical requirements (Borja, 2012). This was justified by the need to provide greater procedural flexibility to 'urban management'. The same arguments for pushing private investment in these plans were made with a view to boosting the scale of projects compared with that traditionally undertaken by municipalities or regions on their own.

The fixation on big urban projects was justified by the assumption that the benefits would be reaped by the city as a whole. Public investment was used to mobilise private investment (Sorribes, 2012) to tackle complex, multi-faceted urban schemes and major works. In many cases concessions were systematically resorted to. The reason was that such schemes were easier to plan and execute thanks to the immense power wielded by the Spanish construction sector (Gaja, 2015). Turning again to the production of cultural equipment in Valencia as an example, this way of making a city can be seen in the huge City of Arts and Sciences complex and its urban setting.

On another level, city cultural policy was also shot through by the New Public Management approach. The traditional legitimacy of cultural policy (based on the intrinsic value of culture) was partially replaced by the idea that culture is also a resource that yields positive social, economic or urban externalities (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Yudice, 2002). Among cultural facilities, this trend was reflected by lessening The State's role and giving a greater one to the private business sector and The Third Sector (Belfiore, 2004) — a process that has been carried out amid great tensions over its cultural outcomes (Hutter, 1997; Schuster, 1998).

CULTURAL FACILITIES AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE MODEL OF CULTURAL DEMOCRATISATION

The changes in the approach to cultural policy that occurred over the past few decades (including its connection to local development policies) took the form of accumulation and coexistence rather than of substitution (Bianchini, 1993; Négrier, 2003 ; Vidal-Beneyto, 1981). One can therefore say that cultural democratisation is both the foundational cultural paradigm and is the one that still dominates cultural policy in The West today. It also rests on the notion of equal access and participation is what governs the policies for the creation of cultural facilities (Ramos-Murphy, 2021). As a dissemination policy, cultural democratisation needs to be supported by a broad-based process for creating cultural facilities. This approach is expected to boost cultural offerings through a range of specialised facilities, by fostering expansion of cultural demand and with it, public cultural access and participation. It is a social pact that redistributes benefits and drove steady growth

in budgets that led to "the building of cultural facilities that proved to be self-sustaining over several decades" (Bouzada, 2001).

Policies for building cultural facilities are part of the political-ideological consensus. The drive to erect such facilities stemmed from an enlightened, progressive project that has always commanded support on both the right and left of the political spectrum. The weakness of political-cultural frameworks for managing the boom in cultural facilities as part of urban growth led to needless duplication. Under this cultural approach, strategic planning is replaced by a mish-mash of projects that are dreamt up as incidental, specific responses rather than as part of a sound, overall plan (Martínez Illa, 2015). The lack of reflection tends to boost rather than lessen the ideological rationale underpinning schemes for new facilities.

Delving deeper, one should note that cultural facilities have worsened the social distancing of those parts of the population that are less familiar with canonical cultural forms and avant-garde artistic expressions. The progressive specialisation of cultural facilities as repositories of High Culture and exhibition spaces for cultural programmes chosen by expert staff entails a contemplative, passive, reverential use of facilities that typifies culture's educational, civilising function within the democratisation paradigm (Urfalino, 2004).

Despite the ups and downs in cultural policies over time, the models for creating cultural facilities in The West have tended to converge and become more standardised. Within the contemporary city framework, cultural facilities designate a specific, delimited, and generally introverted place for cultural processes. Such places project a limited grasp of the links spanning the city and culture. They reveal the deactivation of public space as a preferential medium for the development of life in common and the construction of collective meanings (Borja, 2000; Sennett, 2014). The monumentalisation and architecturalisation of the urban public space can be seen as re-interpretations of the square and the street in the cultural facilities model, reflecting the same ideal of the urban landscape found during The Enlightenment (Delgado, 2016).

The central or peripheral creation of a cultural facility, its greater or lesser integration into the urban fabric, its conception, its design, its operation and its management method are all factors affecting the social density of an area, its public legibility, shared imaginary and the dynamics of community participation (Ramos-Murphy, 2021). Faced with all this, the urban marketing and iconic architecture policies that spread at the turn of the century boosted the functional and symbolic power of cultural facilities, worsening centre-periphery imbalances by managing matters in a strictly top-down manner and sundering local links (Cucó i Giner, 2013; Santamarina Campos, 2014).

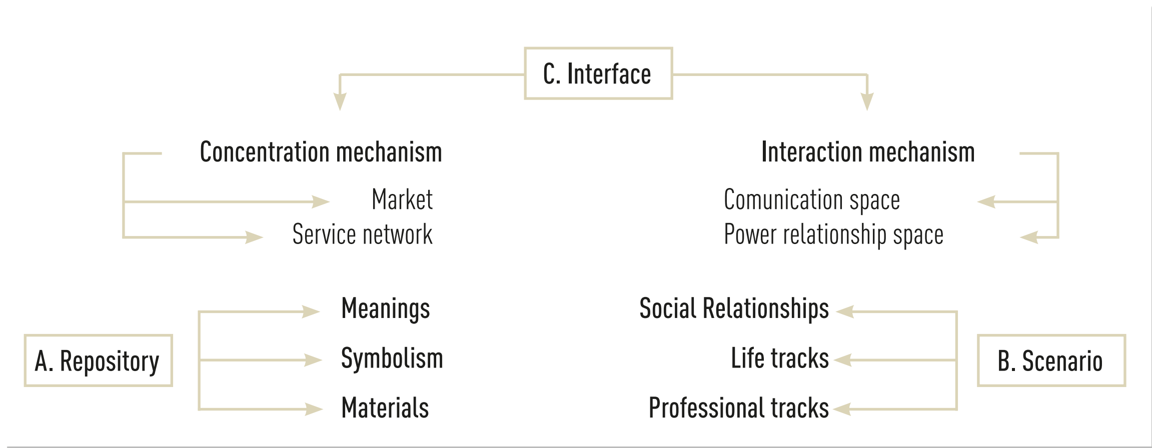
THE CULTURAL CITY, A CONCEPTUAL APPARATUS FOR RE-ORIENTING AND RE-LINKING CULTURAL POLICY AND URBAN POLICY

The problems and dynamics affecting the local scale today call for a deeper grasp of the city (Borja, 2003). New care elements are introduced into the urban agenda, while multidisciplinary, overarching measures are demanded, based on proximity, plurality and pro-activity (Subirats & Blanco, 2009). At the same time, the cultural field is becoming more complex and the measures taken in it are being rethought (Barbieri, 2014; Martínez, 2016; J. Pascual, 2012; Rowan, 2016). Putting the focus on this confluence, the links between culture and the city can be reconsidered from two angles: (1) thinking about our cities from the cultural point of view; (2) finding new ways of intervening in the cultural field from the urban standpoint (Segovia, 2019).

In this context, we put forward 'The Cultural City' framework as a way of seeing the city as a social construct enshrining integrated development that is committed to citizens' cultural rights. The proposed model is built on the basis of studies that underline

the growing importance of the cultural dimension in the governance of the contemporary city (Ferilli *et al.*, 2017; Pratt, 2014; UNESCO & The World Bank, 2021). Cities, in the current context, are no longer simple spaces that concentrate factors of production but rather are areas that support meanings, senses and stories, these elements being the ones that, in the medium and long term, determine their levels of well-being, sustainability and competitiveness (Rausell-Köster, 2013).

Figure 1 Integrated understanding of the cultural city



Based on these preliminary definitions, we formulate an integrated understanding of the cultural city articulated in three dimensions:

The city as a repository of resources

The first perspective from which we approach the idea of the city is as a geographical space where a large amount of resources are located, building up over time, and that can be used to perform various functions.

When talking about urban resources, one's first impulse is to think about physical objects (the urban fabric, streets, squares, buildings, monuments, facilities, etc.). By contrast, the cultural perspective helps us broaden our understanding to embrace the value of the multiple symbolic elements found in the city as a whole. Such considerations would include the representative landmarks, urban stories, the meanings projected by the built landscape, the values shared by a community, and citizens' lifestyles, rituals, and imaginaries.

A broad understanding of the meanings stemming from the material contents of a city leads us to grasp this symbolic dimension as a key pillar in the configuration of the sense of place and as a potential input to social, cultural and economic processes, and with great scope for creating collective value. The blend of resources that are brought together in the cultural city, in addition to shaping the identity of an area, also form part of city-dwellers' cultural and cognitive capital, playing a key role in how citizens are linked to the place and to one another.

From this first perspective, cultural facilities are seen as places of key but not sole importance. The public space, as we pointed out earlier, should also be seen as key in the deployment of cultural experiences and

dynamics. Cultural facilities also provide inputs that may boost citizens' cultural capital through cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and relational mechanisms.

The city as a connective interface

This second dimension addresses the conception of the city as a platform for boosting communication and exchanges. The concentration of resources in a given geographical space gives scope for interaction so that processes are activated that are vital to a city's success. The major role played by the urban environment as a meeting point and place for forging relationships is shown in the articulation of a marketplace. Such a market requires producers, a labour force and consumers. This spatial coincidence poses various kinds of organisational challenges (regulation, logistics, provision of services, etc.) without which the hub would collapse.

Here, one should note that the city as an interaction site articulates spaces for agreement (collaboration) but also for conflict of interest (competition). The city is thus defined as a political arena in which certain power relations are channelled (or not) in institutional architectures and concrete symbolic representations. Taking this into consideration, a commitment to democratic access, active participation, and equity become fundamental premises of urban government.

Thinking of the city as an interaction mechanism marked by diversity also leads us to consider its scope for fostering creativity, innovation and the development of human capital (Glaeser, 2011). Combining the ideas of Jane Jacobs on the economy of cities (Jacobs, 1986) with Schumpeterian notions on innovation, it is argued that the creation of new ideas, jobs, services and products is not only strongly nurtured by cities but indeed cannot take place without them (Florida *et al.,* 2017). Culture, creativity and innovation are thus seen as a socially, territorially structured system stemming from a complex network of production relations and ways of life in a certain place and at a certain time (Scott, 2006).

From this standpoint, cultural facilities become 'micro interfaces' of relationships among subjects within cultural processes and experiences. The diversity, quality, quantity, and intensity of interactions that cultural facilities foster become key aspects. These attributes will depend on factors that include the excellence of cultural programming, physical accessibility and (in governance terms), the accessibility of the cultural measures taken and their interplay with other urban infrastructures.

The city as a scenario of life paths

This third approach covers the city's role as the main space in which the lives of city-dwellers play out. With cities being forecast to house 70% of the world's population by 2050, the city becomes a key factor in general levels of well-being. Thus, economic factors have a strong impact on well-being in low income areas. By contrast, greater stress is placed on freedom of expression, feeling recognised, commitment to the community, and enriching experiences in better-off areas (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

The success of cities depends more and more on the lifestyles they make possible. When it comes to citizens' symbolic needs, the city as a space for cultural creation and experimentation produces value by fostering integral, individual and collective development. This is achieved by encouraging creativity, pleasure pursuits, and the richness of experiences. The city can meet or thwart these expectations. The key on this occasion does not lie so much in the functionality and efficiency of economic mechanisms but in the social framework's scope for developing personal and social relationships.

Cultural facilities, from this third perspective, are seen as spaces where one can stage "a full life" (Peterson *et al.,* 2005). This desire takes the form of satisfying cultural rights in a broad sense, whether from the passive-consumer, active-expressive perspective or professional development in artistic, cultural and creative fields.

By incorporating these three dimensions and using the cultural city as a renovation framework, the defining axis of which is the quest to satisfy citizens' cultural rights. Achieving this means empowering people so that they can lead valuable lives (Sen, 1999).

From this perspective, the cultural city is a tool for overcoming a minimalist reading of cultural rights. The cultural democratisation paradigm is used to advance this goal by ensuring equal access (seen as equal opportunities) and participation (seen as instruction and consumption).

The integrated development concept enshrined in the Cultural City model is one in which social cohesion stems from shared values shaping things such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and identity — all of which have a strong bearing on happiness. Such cohesion also spurs added value and quality of life (given that cultural cities help people fully express themselves artistically, communicate, and share and feel aesthetic and cognitive emotions).

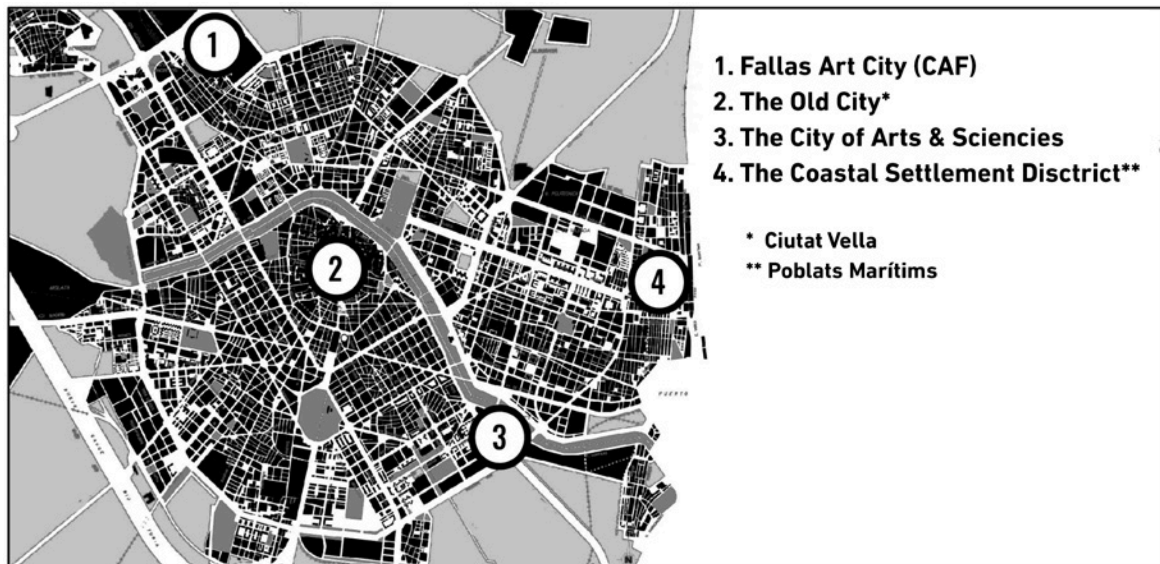
FALLER ART CITY [CAF] (VALENCIA): A SCHEME FOSTERING THE CULTURAL CITY

Valencia, Spain's third largest city by population, is a paradigmatic case in relation to the trends in urban management and the creation of cultural facilities described in the first part of this paper. Even so, it has received less attention than other Spanish cities such as Bilbao or Malaga[1] in relation to this cultural model. Among the singular features of Valencia's case is the *Ciutat de l'Artista Faller [Faller Art City]* or CAF). The CAF dates back to the mid-1960s and is an urban creative cluster focusing on the production of *Fallas* (large ephemeral sculptures that play a central role in a celebration that gained UNESCO listing as a World Heritage Site in 2016).

A further step was taken in 2020, following other measures to strengthen the CAF (such as sectoral studies, citizen participation initiatives, and agreements on general guidelines). The step taken in 2020 was the Valencia City Council's commissioning of a Strategic Plan for the CAF, and that from the outset was seen as an exercise in strategic thinking and planning to project a 'cultural city'.

1 It is only recently that research on the links between Urban Planning and Culture began in The City of Valencia. Even so, most of these studies have been led by Valencian authors (Boix *et al.*, 2016; Giner, 2013; Rius-Ulldemolins *et al.*, 2016; Rius-Ulldemolins & Rubio Aróstegui, 2016; Santamarina Campos & Moncusí, 2013) and have sparked little interest outside the region.

Figure 2 Location of CAF and other key sites in the City of Valencia.



Built in 1965 thanks to the initiative of the Guild of *Fallas* Artists of Valencia, CAF is a highly singular urban complex, being one of the first in Europe to integrate residential uses with spaces specifically earmarked for artistic production. Throughout its first half century, this proto-cultural district, sited on the northern outskirts of Valencia, suffered from creeping urban blight and obsolescence, rendering it uncompetitive and poorer.

Detailed analysis of the CAF's current state reveals that although the district is in a delicate state[2], it still has great potential to reposition itself in urban and socio-economic terms. The plan is framed within an overarching strategy that draws on European innovation and sustainability programmes.[3] The scheme focuses on CAF's work space, driving its modernisation.

The renewal of the CAF area is part of an urban policy whose goal is to reinvigorate and change one of the key components to of Valencia as a cultural city. This approach ties in with the conceptual framework covered in the previous section and is based on the power of artistic, creative and cultural activities to spark smart development processes that deliver inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability. The scheme will boost the social, economic and symbolic aspects of citizenship.

The axes for turning the CAF into a cultural 'city' are:

1. Stressing the singular nature of the area: Back in the 1960s, CAF was a highly innovative scheme and was the fruit of a clever blend of highly local features and international ones. Making the CAF a valuable part of the collective heritage once again means reclaiming its pioneering character and *avant-garde* spirit. Now, stress will be placed on CAF's value as a highly symbolic, cultural repository.

2. Conceptual, thematic and territorial re-scaling. The original CAF project brought together various professions and bodies of know-how (carpentry, tailoring, painting, sculpture, etc.) to consolidate the making of *Fallas* (the aforementioned ephemeral sculptures). Today, the opportunity lies in drawing on *Fallas Art* and know-how and applying these to other related areas. The heritage value of Fallas Art is treated as a high-value resource that is productive, a badge of local identity, and a competitive cultural product. Yet the goal is also to expand the art form's impact on other sectors and processes. Thus, one should not only see the CAF as a resource depository but also as a linking interface.

3. New models for recovery based on culture, creativity and innovation: CAF aims to: (1) become a setting for driving creative production and professional development; (2) be a space for training cultural agents and the citizenry; (3) boost the City of Valencia and its region's international cultural links. From this standpoint, the CAF is a tool for enriching citizens' lives.

4. Urban regeneration at the neighbourhood scale that carries weight at the city level: CAF and Benicalap (the district in which CAF is sited) should be seen as a unique setting that brings together art, work, culture, leisure, celebration and daily life. Such an enclave will tie in with the rest of the city and attract broad interest. Yet it also combines urban centrality and proximity. Thus, these cultural facilities bridge the gap between the city and district scales, putting both on an equal footing.

5. The CAF as an innovation prototyping hub. Given the CAF's importance in both cultural and urban strategy, it is conceived as a setting that both makes and tests products, drawing on the disciplines and knowledge sited in the area to rise to urban challenges and foster citizens' well-being. CAF's scope for furnishing an innovation-producing setting is based on an overarching understanding

2 According to indicators drawn up by Valencia City Council. These indicators cover income per capita, the concentration of vulnerable persons, and average educational attainment.

3 Between 2017 and 2022, the CAF undertook a pilot project for *GrowGreen*, funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 programme. The project focused on coming up with nature-based solutions applicable to urban settings.

of its three dimensions, namely as: (i) a resource repository; (ii) a linking interface; (iii) a scenario fostering experiences.

The following specific goals have been set to achieve the overall goals of renewing and transforming the CAF:

1. To raise the density of the artistic and creative activities housed by CAF while designing a framework of uses that has *Fallas Arts* as the project's main plank, forging links with other creative fields to drive broader, related activities.

2. To foster urban renewal and the development of vacant land to create a mix of uses: Offering economic incentives that meet quality and public interest criteria and to open up a host of options in building a broad-based network of private actors.

3. To jointly activate a new creative infrastructure (*La Gabia*): At first, *La Gabia* was presented as a tool for re-siting the *Fallas* workshops during the urban renovation stage. Yet it can also be thought of as a device for linking actors, for steadily defining contents, and for forging collaboration with its tenants. In the final transformation stage, *La Gabia* will end up being a new cultural space that lays on operational and semiotic resources for CAF's cultural processes.

4. To build an open setting that facilitates the free exchange of knowledge, and that fosters sustainability by: (i) Contributing to networked relationships among the hosted activities and helping project them so that they drive cultural, social, economic, and environmental development. In short, it is about boosting connective capabilities. As we shall see below, attention will have to be given to both the layout of the built space and to ensuring a range of options when it comes to use and management.

The CAF plan is based on a set of guidelines for urban and architectural layout that boosts the 'Cultural City' approach. Here, the following intervention and regulation criteria are proposed:

1. A range of non-uniform building types and urban renovation schemes: The ability to attract and host communities and activities is strongly linked to the variety of building types (in terms of construction type, age, symbolic attributes, and prices) (Curran, 2010; Jacobs, 1961). Thus, the planned urban renewal will ensure variety by adopting a public-private collaboration model that offers a wide range of options. This point clearly bears on the CAF space as a linking interface and for maximising diversity and the processes and relationships arising from the scheme.

2. Facilitating regulations: In work settings such as those in the CAF (where an ever-changing technological component forms part of complex artistic production), built spaces must be versatile to ensure they remain practical and have long working lives (Buhigas, 2014; Grodach *et al.,* 2017; Savini & Dembski, 2016). At the same time, new cultural spaces base their success on mixed uses and on avoiding over-specialisation (Segovia *et al.,* 2015). Thus, a specific planning model is proposed that is both flexible and precise, eschewing rigid, pre-set zoning and building areas (Marrades *et al.,* 2021). This approach will address the need for more versatile physical spaces and variable material flows, tying in better with the 'Cultural City's' repository and interface aspects.

3. Shared resources to support production and boost collaboration: The creation of common resources is justified on financial and efficiency grounds, hence the use of 'Third Party' space (Oldenburg, 2006). These resources also aim to create spaces fostering informal encounters, collaboration, and group autonomy. In relation to the 'Cultural City' framework, this point covers two dimensions: (1) facilities as a linking interface; (2) a scenario for 'experiences'.

4. Public space as a platform for activity and extension of the workplace: CAF's open spaces foster

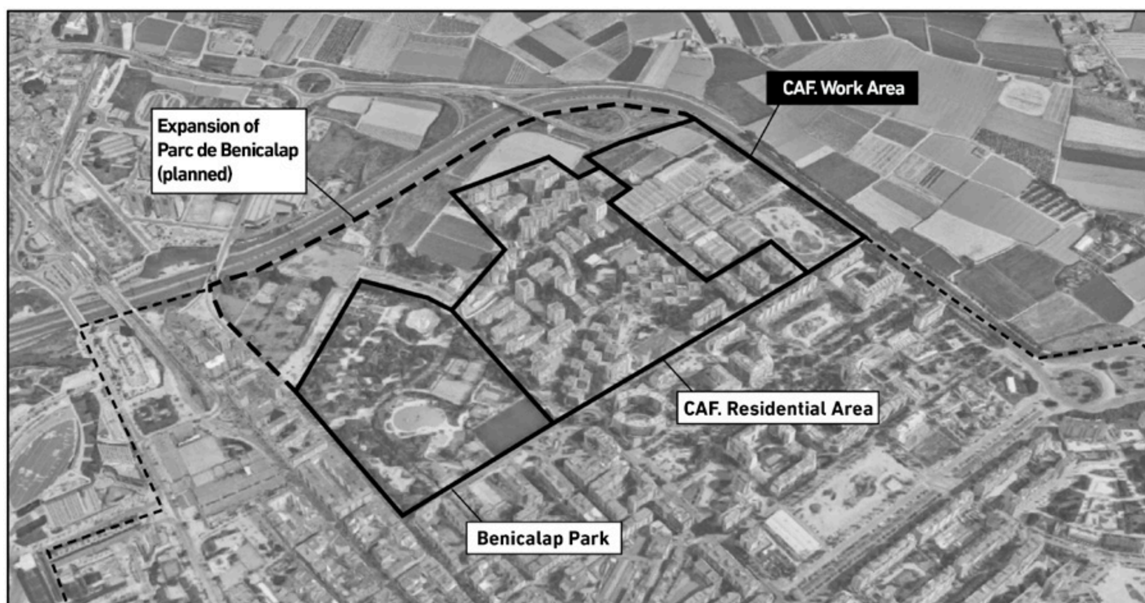
operational and perceptive cohesion among the hosted activities, and also create a platform spurring cross-fertilisation of ideas and the emergence of new projects. Open spaces are also treated as an extension of the built ones to make activities more accessible and more likely to spark ideas in kindred fields. Once again, this point covers the forging of links between cultural facilities and activities, enriching both.

5. An expressive, accessible, unique cityscape: Recognising *Fallas Art* as creating distinctive value means boosting participation in building the CAF landscape to shape a diverse artistic and manufacturing base. By taking the semiotic contents of the space into account, CAF directly reflects the work carried out there and projects a distinctive image, rooted in the *Fallas* tradition. Fostering the active involvement of CAF users in the creation of the common space also boosts the value of the physical and symbolic capital of which the place is a repository. It also forges links and a scenario for experiences, both individual and shared.

6. Innovation for improving and sustaining urban life. While architecture is one of the elements structuring the space, one must also come up with alternative stories and build common values to drive cultural projects. CAF's transformation will feature high sustainability, underpinning social commitment to the environment. This point both enhances the project's capital and helps citizens lead more socially responsible lives.

7. A differentiated, fully accessible enclave that melds into the urban setting: Cultural, creative and innovation processes develop more fully when they take place in fully accessible, complex contexts (Esmaeilpoorarabi *et al.,* 2018). Hence, the new CAF district avoids navel-gazing and instead is well integrated in the urban setting by mixing uses, blurring bounds, and spreading its activities further afield. The goal is thus to make CAF a fully accessible hub of excellence for advancing citizens' development.

Figure 3 The CAF's spatial layout



To sum up, we can say that the Strategic Plan for the CAF is for a 'Cultural City' by creating a setting that exploits, enriches, and boosts the value of the area's cultural resources within a rich urban fabric. To these ends, the CAF will provide an accessible urban space that provides rich experiences and a host of encounters and collaborative ventures. The main aim will be to fully materialise citizens' cultural rights by letting citizens express themselves, be who they will, and communicate through living, accessing, and taking part in the community's cultural life.

CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS

One can often settle for tricky academic positions when the aim should be to engage in critical thinking. Such an approach often falls into generalisations such as arguing that urban strategies based on culture only follow Neo-Liberal approaches that end up driving property speculation, commodification, gentrification and touristification. Many such discourses argue that cultural facilities are merely used to distract from the underlying property speculation.

Yet if one pays more attention to the nature and consolidation of cultural facilities, one discovers that while such spaces did go through many ups and downs at the dawn of the 21st Century, they are still firmly anchored in the dominant cultural democratisation paradigm.

Based on these observations, we argue that alternative formulations are possible, which start from overcoming a blinkered vision of cultural facilities to come up with a wider notion of the role culture plays in contemporary cities. To this end, we propose that the 'Cultural City' framework incorporate three basic functions of the city as a human artefact, namely those of: Repository; Interface; Stage. Such an approach will do much to give real meaning to citizens' cultural rights.

Under The Cultural City prism, culture acquires a key role within an integrated concept of development that is based upon social cohesion. Among other things, such cohesion is achieved by building shared values, boosting happiness, fostering a sense of belonging, self-esteem, identity, and commitment to the community. This in turn raises citizens' quality of life and gives individuals' greater freedom. This is achieved by creating inspiring, accessible, dynamic settings in which people can fully express themselves and participate to their heart's content.

The scope of the proposed facilities are exemplified in *The Strategic Plan for the Fallas Art City* (CAF), an exercise in strategic thinking and planning carried out in Valencia to plan a Cultural City.

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