

## MILL OF PAPPAS: AN EXPERIMENTAL CULTURAL HIVE



REGENERATION **EDUCATION** PLANNING  
ECONOMIC PUBLIC SPACE **ARTS NETWORK**  
**HERITAGE** CREATIVITY **LIFE-LONG LEARNING**

### 1. Context

Larissa is the capital of the Thessaly region in Central Greece and its largest city, with a population of 147.000. The city has a history of 8.000 years, with two ancient theatres within its urban structure, an important current cultural history and infrastructure (Museums, Municipal cultural organizations, venues, etc.) as well as more than 100 cultural stakeholders in almost every discipline (dance, music, theatre, cinema, comics, graphic design, folklore, painting, photography, writing, mosaic, sculpture, puppet theatre, etc.).



## 2. Larissa and culture

Larissa has a strong presence in cultural creation for many years. The oldest cultural entity is the Municipal Conservatory, founded in 1930. The Municipal Theatre was the first regional theatre founded in 1975 and was the inspiration for the later institution of Municipal Regional Theatres at national level. The Puppet Troupe was founded in 1984 and is still the only Municipal one in Greece. The Municipal School of Ballet (founded in 1989) was followed by the institution of the Higher School of Dance in 1996. So the city was always a pioneer and main drive in the cultural sector, although there wasn't always an integrated cultural policy behind it.

**IN THE SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF LARISSA, OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARE CONNECTED WITH THE CULTURAL SECTOR, THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND FURTHER BOOST OF THE TOURISM SECTOR.**

The "Mill of Pappas", located at the edge of the city centre of Larissa, is the most important monument of the modern period of the city and was the largest mill in Thessaly from the end of 19th century to the mid 1980's. The acquisition of the Mill by the Municipality in 1988 was a turning point towards culture being part of a greater policy of urban development. The Mill of Pappas was a flour mill from 1893 until 1986 and is listed as industrial heritage monument since 1989. The complex is in Tampakika district, one of the oldest districts of the city, near the Pinios River. It was a conscious decision to rejuvenate a declining district by giving new life and purpose to a city monument – that second life would have culture in its core. From the first day the planning was to create a multi-space for culture and creativity that would attract, educate, energize and interact with the local community as well as the whole city. That purpose was intertwined with the need for an urban rejuvenation of the





surrounding space and presenting a new philosophy for the conservation and re-use of historic buildings.

The Municipality of Larissa has a long standing policy of using urban interventions schemes to promote and integrate the city's cultural heritage in the everyday life of its citizens. That is evident in the cooperation with the Archaeological Service and the Ministry of Culture for the uncovering and promotion of the 1st Ancient Theatre, the over 30-year long project for the pedestrianisation of the city's centre and the re-use of monuments for housing culture. The Municipality has already a policy of providing free or with affordable cost events, as well as providing many public spaces for free, so that cultural production can be accessible to everyone, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, religion or length of stay.

The Mill of Pappas project begun as a means to connect heritage and urban development with culture through urban renewal, collaboration, cooperation and active synergies. In 1989 the Ministry of Culture officially declared the 11-buildings complex an industrial monument and the Municipality begun the 14 years-length renovation, funded by National and Regional Operational Programs as well as the city's budget. The belief that culture is an integral part of a city's environment and an opportunity for social and economic development was the reason why in 2015 Larissa was candidate city for the European Capital of Culture 2021, earning valuable experiences by both the local authority and the various stakeholders in the cultural sector.

### 3. Goals and project implementation

#### 1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The Mill of Pappas project is aimed at creating the conditions for the cultural sector to "discuss" with the city and connect heritage with contemporary creation. That included the renovation and re-use of



an abandoned shell that is part of the city's history, to create a cultural spot that would upgrade the area and emerge as a centre of cooperation and expression for many local cultural stakeholders – a place of dialogue between culture and society, the past and the present, but also between mediums of art and artists themselves.

**TODAY, THE MILL OF PAPPAS IS A HIVE OF CREATIVITY, HOUSING SOME OF THE MUNICIPALITY'S CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MUSEUMS, PROVIDING VENUES TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS FOR LESSONS, WORKSHOPS, PERFORMANCES, EXHIBITIONS AND CO-ORGANIZING EVENTS.**

## **1.2. Development of the project**

### **Main actions carried out**

The Mill building complex currently hosts the Culture and Sciences Mayoralty, the Municipal Ballet – Higher School of Ballet, the Municipal Theatre, the Municipal Puppet Troupe, the Puppet Doll Museum and the Grain and Flour Museum. There are also spaces offered to local organizations, groups and collectives that provide lessons and workshops, implement European projects, organize exhibitions, presentations, meetings, etc. The variety of themes is also impressive: theatre (amateur and professional productions, children plays), dance (modern, Latin, ballet, etc.), photography, sports and gymnastics (martial arts, aerial yoga, bridge, etc.), puppet theatre (performances, puppet creation, workshops, festivals, etc.), creative writing, comics, start-ups, etc.

On a daily basis, the activities taking place in the Mill include creative workshops, lessons and trainings, performances, concerts and cultural events, educational projects, events, festivals and conferences, exhibitions, bazaars and fairs. The yard area is also a place where lots of happenings and events are organized (concerts, performances, summer cinema, etc.), especially during spring, summer and fall.

The project was implemented in three phases:





First phase: Restoration of the building complex. It took 14 years and 3 funding periods to complete. The Municipality received funding from National and Regional Operational Programs to restore the main building, while the supporting buildings were funded from the city's budget.

Second phase: Housing the Municipal cultural entities. The Municipality began to house in stages some of its cultural entities upon completion of works in the supporting buildings. First was the Philharmonic Orchestra in the mid '90s, followed by the Ballet School, the Puppet Troupe & Museum and the Municipal Theatre, while the Mayoralty of Culture was housed in 2014.

Third phase: Creating and Operating the Hive. Once the Mill was established as the Municipal focal point of culture, the next step was to expand that focus to the local creative stakeholders. In 2014, the Mayoralty addressed an open call to all cultural entities of the city to participate in the creation of a network that would cooperate, support and reciprocate to city's cultural activities, events and trainings. There are now more demands than available spaces and times (within the first year the 5 proposals submitted were approved, for the 2017-2018 period only 14 out of 50 submissions have been approved due to lack of space). The pinnacle of the project is the yearly week-long "Mylos Performing Arts Festival", where all the hosted organizations have to provide activities, in reciprocation for being part of this Cultural Hive, which are evaluated for the next year's call.

Since the Mill complex is a Municipal property, the budget for the operational costs of the buildings and municipal entities is part of the city's overall budget and is approximately 700.000€. That budget also includes the costs of three Festivals that take place in the Mill: the "Mylos Performing Arts Festival" (October), the "Week of Dance" (last week of April) and the "Puppet Theatre Festival" (end of May).

## 4. Impacts

### 1.1. Direct impacts



### Impacts on the local government

Energizing the local government and its cultural entities: As a focal point for culture and the “house” for many of the Municipal cultural organizations, the Mill plays the role of a melting pot where closeness creates interactions and interesting joint ventures. That results in other municipal cultural entities outside the Mill to participate more actively in joint events and projects and offer more diverse content.

### Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

Culture seen as an equal contributor in city development: Cultural industries and the creative sector have great possibilities of job creation, financial results and stabilization role in a time of crisis, while they can provide ample opportunities for more active citizens. The cultural sector has strong affiliations with tourism and can add to the economic growth of the city. Recently Larissa was one of the EDEN cultural tourism destinations of excellence in Greece. Culture can also drive social entrepreneurship and awareness for the acceptance and promotion of cultural and social diversity in a global community.

**THE MILL WAS THE FIRST TO INCORPORATE MODERN USES IN A HISTORIC MONUMENT, CHANGING THE PERSPECTIVE OF MONUMENTS FROM A “FROZEN” STRUCTURE TO A “LIVING AND BREATHING” PUBLIC SPACE. THIS HAS LED TO SIMILAR PLANS AS PART OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN HERITAGE AND SOCIETY.**

Showcasing the power of cooperation and synergies: The experiment of the Hive presented in a public and open way the momentum that can be created and utilized when stakeholders work together and cooperate for a common goal. Proving the transferability of this experience and the recognition it had from the core of the city, the Learning City Network has implemented and expanded on involving a lot



of different organizations in a common vision for lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship, with culture playing an important role.

### **Impact on the territory and population**

Build social cohesion and recognizing diversity: All the cultural entities now offer diverse programs (trainings, workshops, educational projects, etc.) for more social groups, schools, children and adults, people and artists with disabilities, various art disciplines and professionals. Also, all the festivals' programmes are designed after open calls, the main focus being to include as many diverse activities for all citizens and visitors.

#### **1.2. Evaluation**

The Mayoralty makes an assessment of the creative hub's design, implementation and results to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The evaluation allows the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of the people involved. The Mayoralty collects quantitative and qualitative data, using indicators on level of participation, engagement in cultural programs, diversity of activities and projects, number of new arts and culture partnerships with new communities & businesses, increased economic activity, business turnover, tourism, employment resulting from cultural programs, etc.

#### **1.3. Key factors**

One key aspect is the concrete and shared vision on an open and inclusive cultural hub, which has ensured the continuity under the same principles with a new mind-set of cooperation and exchange of knowledge. The right team and leadership is another important factor. The commitment of the local authority and the Municipality's team as well as the cooperating organizations have been vital, along with the evaluation procedures and the ability and flexibility to transform and improve.

Finally, another key point of success is the fact that a true need for the people was identified and its fulfilment was approached in an innovative and participatory way that allowed transferability to other endeavours.





#### 1.4. Continuity

Larissa will continue to put efforts in the promotion of the lifelong learning philosophy and cultural development, strengthening existing projects and events (festivals, facilities, networking, Summer Camp in the City, cultural clubs, adding new spaces to the Mill of Pappas, etc.), and implementing new ones (Citizens' University, Cultural Village, Sustainable Urban Development Strategy) to respond to the needs of all citizens, with attention to vulnerable groups.

Sharing the experience gained from the Mill cultural hub and transferring the know-how to other initiatives, as is currently the case with the Larissa Learning City project, is one of the commitments of the local government. The Municipality of Larissa has significant experience in developing and implementing cultural projects and actions (Learning City Award, EDEN), and despite the socio-economic crisis is making effective use of the resources and exploring opportunities for funding in national and international level.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO INVOLVE NOT ONLY KEY STAKEHOLDERS BUT ALSO AUDIENCES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS TO REINFORCE THE ACCURACY OF THE EVALUATION FINDINGS WITH DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

### 5. Further information

Larissa was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2018, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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