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"Cultural Policy": Towards a Global Survey

By Yudhishthir Raj Isar

Abstract

The field of "cultural policy" has acquired sufficient purchase internationally to warrant a comparative global survey. This article examines questions that arise preliminary to such an endeavour. It looks first at the problems posed by the divided nature of "cultural policy" research: on the one hand policy advisory work that is essentially pragmatic, and on the other so-called "theoretical" analysis which has little or no purchase on policy-making. In both cases, key elements are missed. A way out of the quandary would be to privilege a line of inquiry that analyzes the "arts and heritage" both in relation to the institutional terms and objectives of these fields but also as components of a broader "cultural system" whose dynamics can only be properly grasped in terms of the social science or "ways of life" paradigm. Such a line of inquiry would address: the ways in which subsidized cultural practice interacts with or is impacted by social, economic and political forces; the domains of public intervention where the cultural in the broader social science sense elicits policy stances and policy action; the nature of public intervention in both categories; whether and how the objects and practices of intervention are conceptualised in a holistic way. A second set of interrogations concerns axes for the comparison of "cultural policy" trans-nationally. One possible axis is provided by different state stances with respect to Raymond Williams' categories of national aggrandizement, economic reductionism, public patronage of the arts, media regulation and the negotiated construction of cultural identity. Another avenue would be to unpack interpretations of two leading current agendas, namely "cultural diversity" and the "cultural and/or creative industries".

Keywords: Cultural policy; cultural politics; sociology of culture; cultural theory; cultural industries; cultural diversity; creativity and innovation.

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"Cultural Policy": Towards a Global Survey

"Cultural policy" has acquired sufficient purchase internationally for a comparative global survey of different "cultural policy" stances and measures to appear both feasible and timely. The reflections that follow are prolegomena to such an endeavour, some of the necessary preliminaries to a systematic inquiry into "cultural policy" worldwide.[1]

At the outset, or even before the outset, two sets of issues should concern us. Both deeply influence the pertinence and usability of the literature one might have recourse to in carrying out such an ambitious project, short of carrying out an ethnographical inquiry in x number of selected or representative countries. First, the divided nature of research on "cultural policy": on the one hand policy advisory work that concerns itself little with higher ends and values, and on the other so-called "theoretical" analysis which has little or no purchase on policy-making. Could a third party deploy conceptual tools that could bridge the divide and if so how? The second set of interrogations concerns ways of comparing "cultural policy" trans-nationally. I shall suggest several axes of differentiation that appear relevant, but only tentatively, as I have yet to settle on an overarching analytical framework.

A house divided

What is understood by "cultural policy" and "cultural policy research"? My use of quotation marks so far in the present text is intended to signal my concern with the semantic bivalence of these terms: both are deployed, broadly speaking, in two quite distinct sets of ways by two different communities of inquiry, and for quite divergent purposes.

The first and most common understanding of "cultural policy" was neatly encapsulated many years ago by Augustin Girard (1983: 13): "a system of ultimate aims, practical objectives and means, pursued by a group and applied by an authority [and]…combined in an explicitly coherent system." Here "cultural policy" is what governments (as well as other entities) envision and enact in terms of cultural affairs, the latter understood as relating to "the works and practices of intellectual, and especially artistic activity" (Williams 1988: 90). Its analysis means studying how governments seek to support and regulate the arts and heritage. It also means analyzing how the arts and heritage are seen as "resources" and are used in the service of ends such as economic growth, employment, or social cohesion. Increasingly, this instrumental view of cultural expression as resources (Yúdice 2003) means that the attention and the moneys lavished on them are increasingly justified in terms of "protecting" or "promoting" the "ways of life"

that, for example, audiovisual culture in the European Union setting is considered to express, shape and represent (Schlesinger 2001).

There is something missing in these sorts of approaches. This is because state policy is far from being the only determinant of what we might call the "cultural system". Clearly, today a range of other forces are at work: the marketplace, or societal dispositions and actions, notably civil society campaigns related to cultural causes and quality of life issues, impact on the cultural far more deeply than the measures taken by ministries of culture… At the forefront of India's contemporary cultural system, for example, stands the popular culture generated and disseminated by "Bollywood" and other major centres of film and television production. The "policies" of the ministries responsible respectively for "culture" and "information" impinge but superficially on particular universe. Instead, they support institutions of "high culture", offer awards and prizes to artists and writers, and pursue efforts of cultural diplomacy (the latter in particular pales into insignificance in comparison to the international reach of the private film industry). Furthermore, in India as in many other multi-ethnic nations, cultural policy thinking at the governmental level is inscribed in terms so narrow that it misses both the ways in which discourses of nationalism, development, modernization and citizenship have mobilized different forms of cultural expression, and the ways in which subtle hierarchies in these discourses trump officially sanctioned notions of "authenticity" or "tradition" (Naregal 2008).

What is more, this kind of cultural policy research is overwhelmingly descriptive. The culture of the "cultural policy researchers" – most of whom work as consultants for one public authority or another – is a mostly unproblematised object, analyzed in more or less functionalist terms. Their critical research questions rarely range beyond the delivery or non-delivery of *outputs* (in turn generally just the outputs of governmental action), but the premises on the basis of which those outputs are defined, the values they embody, or the sometimes covert goals they pursue – in other words the *outcomes* – are rarely questioned.

Totally different is a field of academy-driven scholarship for which "cultural policy" means

> the politics of culture in the most general sense: it is about the clash of ideas, institutional struggles and power relations in the production and circulation of symbolic meanings… (McGuigan 1996:1)

In the same vein, Lewis and Miller see "cultural policy" as "a site for the production of cultural citizens, with the cultural industries providing not only a ream of representations about oneself and others, but a series of rationales for particular types of conduct" (Lewis and Miller 2003: 1). This academic tradition emerged relatively recently – only in the 1980s in fact. Influenced largely by cultural studies (as well as by critical sociology, e.g., that of Pierre Bourdieu – who, paradoxically, disparaged cultural studies), the perspective here is inherently contestatory and critical: cultural policy is "cultural politics" – and hence broadens its remit to

include the workings of the marketplace, usually doing so in admonitory terms. In many cases it also cites the increasingly vigorous claims of "cultural civil society." It should be noted in passing that in European usages there is some slippage around and between "cultural policy" and "cultural politics". While *politique culturelle* in the Francophone world concerns the taken-for-granted role of the public authorities in cultural provision, and their role alone, the German notion of *Kulturpolitik* is inherently ambiguous; it could involve only such cultural provision, or embrace the critical dimension we are alluding to here.

As the ideological moorings of much of this work are radical leftist and/or libertarian in inspiration, constructive engagement with policy-makers themselves is rarely part of the programme. Often, such engagement is deliberately shunned. Not surprisingly, the findings of this brand of scholarship are unpalatable to policy-makers, for most of the latter cleave to overtly instrumental agendas. Also, it must be said, much "cultural theory" often expresses itself in terms so abstruse and convoluted to be hermetic to the policy-making audience.

There are of course other, humanistic, traditions of research that do not involve the "flattening of human complexity and meaningfulness" as Rothfield put it (1999: 2); yet he too rues the limited purchase of such scholarship in the face of the political and economic forces that dominate, in his case, the American cultural system. It is possible nevertheless to apply a critical rationality to the "broad field of public processes involved in formulating, implementing, and contesting governmental intervention in, and support of, cultural activity" (Cunningham 2004: 14).

Such is the triple wager set out just over a decade ago by Tony Bennett. First, to understand how cultural policies are "parts of a distinctive configuration of the relations between government and culture which characterise modern societies"; second, to encompass "complex forms of cultural management and administration" in ways that deliver adequate historical understanding and theoretical purchase; third, to forge "effective and productive relationships with intellectual workers in policy bureaux and agencies and cultural institutions – but as well as, rather than at the expense of, other connections and, indeed, often as a means of pursuing issues arising from those other connections" (Bennett 1998: 4).

Winning Bennett's wager would appear to be somewhat out of reach still. The divide between the two versions of "cultural policy" remains deep. This divide was addressed by another Bennett, Oliver, in an essay reviewing the Lewis and Miller *Reader* cited above and the late Mark Schuster's book *Informing Cultural Policy: The Research and Information Infrastructure.* Each work represents a world "largely oblivious to the preoccupations of the other" (Bennett 2004: 237), the first limited by "an uncritical attachment to a simplistic notion of the progressive", while for the second "what constitutes both cultural policy and cultural policy research seems broadly to be what governments, their ministries of culture, arts councils and related organisations determine them to be" and is limited to

"the investigation of instrumental questions through empirical social science" (ibid.: 242). Although he is happy to recognize multiple approaches because of the "intellectual vitality" that could be engendered by their encounter, Oliver Bennett still sees an unavoidable "clash" between two worlds that are, adapting Adorno, the torn halves that can never add up to a whole. The arena for the clash in question is the English-speaking West; Bennett (building on Ahearne 2004) contends that it does not exist in France and Germany, where many public intellectuals have contributed to cultural policy debate. His point is made principally to challenge the claim to representativity of the Lewis and Miller *Reader*. Yet there is little evidence that, on the "continent", the conversation between academic inquiry and policy-oriented advocacy work is in reality less divided, despite Ahearne's evocation, for France, of collaborations between government and the likes of Bourdieu and de Certeau. These, he claims, "have played an important part in the elaboration of what one might call a nationally available critical cultural policy intelligence" (Ahearne 2004: 11). This seems overstated. Although both Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau among other social scientists were commissioned in the 1970s by Augustin Girard at the French ministry's *Département des etudes et de la prospective* to carry out research that would enrich official reflection, the record shows that scant use was made of their findings. Much of their work was most probably never even reviewed by ministers and senior officials.

On the one side, then, we see entities such as research funding bodies or councils, departments and programs in universities that have a remit for research on cultural issues, university-level programmes in policy studies and/or public administration (or other fields) that include a focus on the culture and media sectors, or dedicated university-based or independent research centres. In the other camp (and only sometimes do they involve the same people), stand those who provide paid analytical services to ministries and art councils; to government-commissioned survey bodies; to agencies in the arts, cultural and media industries; to private foundations and to regional and international organizations, such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Bennett 2002).

While it may appear inevitable that the two camps will continue to advance separately and in parallel, some sub-disciplines appear to be bridging the gap. Cultural economics, for example, engaged as it is by necessity with market forces, informs policy-making for culture in to some extent the same way as do economists who deal with money, employment or industrial development, or like sociologists and political scientists whose findings inspire guidelines for the governance of various social and political sectors. But analogies in other domains are hard to find. Most "cultural" research seems only to enjoy purchase on policy when done in the name of some form of institutional promotion or advocacy. To be sure, public policy is intrinsically instrumental in nature. Clearly, in the current climate, it would be difficult for it to be otherwise, as neo-liberal frameworks favour privatisation and deregulation, threatening in the process hitherto secure

funding levels of the subsidized cultural sector: witness the proliferation of "economic impact studies" in the 1980s, the "social impact" work of the 1990s (Bennett 2004), and all the boosterism around the "creative industries" today.

How to bridge the divide?

A way out of the quandary would be to privilege a line of inquiry that analyzes the "arts and heritage" both in relation to the institutional terms and objectives of these fields but also within a broader "cultural system" whose dynamics can only be properly grasped in terms of the social science or "ways of life" paradigm that embraces state, market and civil society together so as to encompass the constitutive position of culture in all aspects of social and public life (Hall 1997).

This solution has its dangers. There is the problem of over-extensivity, of a definition so broad that it is of limited analytical usefulness, leading to the kind of generalized confusion that Marshall Sahlins warned about "when culture in the humanistic sense is not distinguished from "culture" in its anthropological senses, notably culture as the total and distinctive way of life of a people or society. From the latter point of view it is meaningless to talk of "the relation between culture and the economy", since the economy is part of a people's culture…" (World Commission on Culture and Development 1996: 21). Yet in reality, since the adoption of the totalizing grab-bag definition proffered by MONDIACULT, the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico, not just international organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, but also most national governments would now claim, rhetorically, that the true reading of culture today is this vexingly expansive, so-called "anthropological" definition.[2]

We know of course that this rhetorical trope is honoured far more in the breach. Yet there are significant exceptions such as the advocacy of a "cultural exception" (now transmuted into "cultural diversity") for audiovisual goods and services (Isar 2006). The argument is made for the latter not principally for their own sake, *qua* the sector of audiovisual production, but because they are seen to embody the distinctive "soul and spirit" or "cultural identity" of different peoples or nations. The champions of this reading of "cultural diversity" are on to something though, for their perspective does oblige us to begin to articulate a critical discourse on what ministries of culture do that embeds these activities in broader societal dynamics and processes (Dubois and Laborier 2003). Such an inquiry would need to address: i) the ways in which subsidized cultural practice interacts with or is impacted by social, economic and political forces; ii) the domains of public intervention, e.g. home affairs, social welfare or immigration, in which the cultural in the broader social science sense elicits policy stances and policy action; iii) the nature of public intervention in both categories – whether subsidy or investment, directly controlled or at arms length; iv) whether and how the objects and practices of in-

tervention are brought together and conceptualised conjointly as actually constituting a "cultural policy".

Such research would do justice to two dimensions of the centrality of culture. On the one hand it would allow the analyst to capture the epistemological weight of culture today, its position in relation to knowledge and concepts, how "culture" is used to transform people's understanding, explanations and visions of the world. On the other it would help her uncover the substantive centrality of the cultural: the actual empirical structure and organization of cultural activities, institutions and relationships and their "significance in the structure and organization of late-modern society, in the processes of development of the global environment and in the disposition of its economic and material resources" (Hall 1997: 236). In so doing it would also compensate for the persisting anomaly of restricting cultural policy to arts policy, thus excluding media and communications, arenas that are so intricated with the substantive centrality of the cultural…

Such an approach could also do much to reduce the gap between what governments frame as cultural policy and a cultural landscape that is increasingly dominated by both the global market-driven cultural economy and civil society activism. The activities and processes of the former in particular "sit uneasily within the public policy framework", as Pratt points out (2005: 31). Policy-makers have engaged in very limited ways with market-driven culture, whether "high" or "low". Instead, they have focused on providing support in the form of subsidy to expressive cultural forms as public goods. The mainly not-for-profit cultural sector remains the principal object of cultural policy, in a relationship of increasing tension vis à vis the mainly for-profit cultural industries. As I have observed elsewhere (Isar 2000), most ministries/departments responsible for cultural affairs have neither the mandate nor the technical expertise to grasp the complexities of cultural production, distribution and consumption. A great deal of the latter is market-driven; outputs do not conform to traditional canons of valuation and valorisation and they requirement measurement in terms that challenge the assumptions, such as market failure or public goods, on which policy rests. Conversely, cultural sector actors find that their environment and needs are simply not understood by the policy-makers. In culture as in other fields, the state needs to play the role of interlocutor, advisor, honest broker, persuader and "incentiviser", to coin a term…

Policy-makers face three further interconnected sets of challenges; each demands an analytical response (Pratt 2005). First, the challenge of *a transversal approach* that embraces different agents (the public authorities at different levels of government; the private sector; civil society) and different domains of action such as tourism, education, environment, foreign affairs and labour, amongst others. Second, the need to forge conceptual tools that address *strategic longer term questions,* in other words to dispose of the information needed for some degree of indicative planning of future policy, particularly as regards the ways cultural pro-

duction and consumption are organized. Third, the need for *new infrastructures of public participation* in order to sustain a sufficient momentum in favour of this holistic approach, in other words a more open and democratic form of decision-making. The cultural policy "consultants" cannot provide the analytical tools required for such purposes; nor will policy-makers obtain them from the academic world, for want of the right theoretical and methodological frameworks.

The more general challenge therefore is to be able to inform both policy-makers and academia through research that has sufficient conceptual and empirical purchase on the cultural systems of today and tomorrow. This is the horizon identified already in 1996 by the World Commission on Culture and Development, which devoted a chapter of its report, *Our Creative Diversity*, to the idea of "Rethinking Cultural Policies" (World Commission on Culture and Development 1996: 231-253). Meeting the challenge would contribute to reconciling Tom O'Regan's four purposes for cultural policy studies, viz. state, reformist, antagonistic and diagnostic (O'Regan 1992: 418). It is also why, for the purposes of *The Cultures and Globalization Series*, we adopted the following working definition of the "culture" for our publication:

> Culture in the broad sense we propose to employ refers to the social construction, articulation and reception of meaning. Culture is the lived and creative experience for individuals **and** a body of artifacts, symbols, texts and objects. Culture involves enactment and representation. It embraces art and art discourse, the symbolic world of meanings, the commodified output of the cultural industries as well as the spontaneous or enacted, organized or unorganized cultural expressions of everyday life, including social relations. (Anheier and Isar 2007: 9)

What axes of differentiation?

If cultural systems – government, market, civil society – are to be analyzed comparatively in meaningful ways, what axes of differentiation might we use? On what basis to construct a typology of stances and situations? Before addressing this question, let me first take up a more general need, which is to take into account a range of contexts in which cultural systems exist. By "context" I mean the overall economic and socio-political environment in which policies are articulated and enacted, as well as the histories within which these have developed. In much of Asia and Africa, for example, the institutionalized cultural sector is small and of relatively recent origin; most cultural life does not take place in venues such as theatres and museums. Such institutions exist, together with bodies devoted to heritage preservation, both as colonial legacies and recently developed tools of cultural "modernity", adopted as adjuncts to nation-building. The budgets of the cultural ministries responsible for such bodies are minute; their action too is often largely rhetorical. Many societies have not experienced the societal changes that have made "culture" a recognized domain of public intervention – I am not referring here to the special case of the United States, which still rejects such a gov-

ernmental role on principle, but to the overwhelming majority of countries where the reverse principle obtains, but is not respected. In Latin America, (excepting perhaps those of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico), the role of cultural ministries may well be as marginal to the cultural system as they are in South Asia, although the institutionalized cultural sector does have deeper roots. In these settings, where the state has played a role in broader cultural policy debates, the question, as García Canclini asks, is how different groups, ethnic communities, and regions have been represented. In many ways, the process of definition of national cultures has "reduced their local specificities to politico-cultural abstractions in the interest of social control or to legitimate a certain form of nationalism" (García Canclini 2000: 303). Yet cultural ministries have been relatively weak in pursuing goals such as these, ill-equipped as they are to develop adequate regulatory instruments, incentives, infrastructures, and the like.

Throughout the world, political rhetoric uses the "ways of life" notion: the "cultures" of different nations, as in the MONDIACULT definition already cited. But in every case, "high" culture is the real remit. The issues arising from the broader notion are addressed by other departments than the ministry of culture or not at all. Recently, however, "ways of life" notions are beginning to receive policy attention to the extent to which the latter are perceived as threatened by global forces. These anxieties have given a bit of edge to cultural policy. The rapidity and intensity of the flows of cultural content and products present new challenges to "cultural identities", clearly enhancing the salience of domains such as culture, tourism and sports – in all of which we can observe a range of different domestic pressures to stem, encourage, or take advantage of culture flows (Singh 2007). There is another sense in which the issue of context arises: these recent developments also challenge the relevance of the nation-state "container". As a result of globalization,

> the nexus of culture and nation no longer dominates: the cultural dimension has become constitutive of collective identity at narrower as well as broader levels… What is more, cultural processes take place in increasingly "deterritorialized" transnational, global contexts, many of which are beyond the reach of national policies. Mapping and analyzing this shifting terrain, in all regions of the world, as well as the factors, patterns, processes, and outcomes associated with the "complex connectivity" (Tomlinson 1999) of globalization, are therefore key challenges (Anheier and Isar 2008: 1).

Returning now to the possible bases for cross-country comparison, McGuigan (2004) recently revisited the not-very-well known five axes of state/culture relations defined by Raymond Williams in 1984. On the basis of the distinction he drew between "cultural policy as display" and "cultural policy proper" Williams suggested the following articulation: under the first category, "cultural policy as display": 1) national aggrandizement and 2) economic reductionism; under the second, "cultural policy proper": 3) public patronage of the arts; 4) media regulation and 5) negotiated construction of cultural identity. The five categories in the

template remain germane, despite the fact that the distinction between what is "proper", i.e. what the welfare state is supposed to do conscientiously and perhaps even disinterestedly and what is (mere) "display" is no longer tenable. Not only have the lines between the two become irreparably blurred, the disinterested propriety of Williams' vision may well have been an illusion in the first place. Yet if cultural policy as display is here to stay, and right across the board, each of the five categories remains pertinent (although media regulation, i.e. media policy, is all too often hived off from cultural policy studies. Perhaps nowadays one would simply want to add to the understanding of both 2) economic reductionism and 4) media regulation, the policy issues raised by the much more prominent place of the cultural industries, as discussed in the previous section.

As regards 3), public patronage of the arts, Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey's typology of State stances (1989) – the Facilitator State, the Patron State, the Architect State and the Engineer State – also retains its relevance, although recent developments, particularly multiple convergences and the growth of the cultural industries, have complexified the landscape. Briefly put, the *Facilitator State* funds the arts essentially through foregone taxes or tax deductions, provided according to the wishes of individual and corporate donors, the marketplace being the main driver. The United States alone embodied this model when it was first proposed as it still does today. Most, however, remain the *Patron State*, e.g., the United Kingdom, that honours the "arm's length" principle, or the *Architect State* that constructs an official system of support structures and measures (France and The Netherlands). An increasing number of countries, including according to Mangset et al. (2008) the Nordic countries, may be a cross between the two. The final model, that of the *Engineer State*, ideologically driven and owning the means of cultural production, is no doubt an almost extant species, yet many aspects of the Engineer role are aspired to in developing countries that practice a *dirigiste* cultural discourse.

Another analytical grid could be built on the basis of the binaries put forward some years ago in a Council of Europe publication: choices between competing visions, imperatives or priorities that can be conceived as a "balancing act" (Matarasso and Landry 1999), between. Two of the "framework" choices – so-called because they determine cultural policy positioning in relation to political, social and ethical values – would serve our purpose well.[3] One is the distinction between the *democratization of culture* and *cultural democracy:* either giving people *access* to a pre-determined set of cultural goods and services or giving them tools of agency, voice and representation in terms of their own cultural expressions. The first approach assumes that a single cultural canon determined on high can be propagated to "the masses." Nor has it been successful, as the unequal distribution of "cultural capital" in society has made access to culture either problematic or unsolicited by the intended beneficiaries, while the scale of market-driven cultural industries has reduced the reach of subsidised cultural provision. C*ultural democ-*

racy on the other hand, seeks to augment and diversify access to the means of cultural production and distribution, to involve people in fundamental debates about the value of cultural identity and expression, while also giving them agency as regards the means of cultural production, distribution and consumption…

Given the prevalence of instrumental rationales for cultural policy already discussed, a second useful axis of differentiation is between *culture for its own sake or for the sake of other benefits*. The option here is between intrinsic "quality of life" arguments for cultural expression and other related cultural values versus the idea that they should be tools or instruments for other social and economic purposes. The instrumental position is now challenged in both Western Europe and North America (Holden 2006); in many settings elsewhere, it has not yet taken hold to anywhere near the same extent, if at all.

Other choices explored in the volume are also relevant; these arise in various other areas, such as implementation, social development, economics and management. Most of these, although presented as choices to be made within cultural administrations, could also be the basis for comparisons between them, e.g., in the realm of implementation, the options between consultation or active participation, between the search for prestige as opposed to community development, or between national (local) visibility or international; in the realm of social development, the definition of the "community" in singular or plural terms, a monist definition of culture vs. a pluralist one, a privileging of the past (heritage) or of the present (contemporary arts), of visitors (tourists) over residents, of an external image in favour of internal reality.

International Agendas in Cultural Policy?

Finally, what leading agendas internationally might be foregrounded for comparative purposes, or so as to discern major long-term trends? I would suggest two, both of which require clarification and unpacking, as they are now used as catchwords in a plethora of ways. These are i) *cultural diversity* and ii) *the cultural and/or creative industries*.

As a consequence of the culturalism of our time, which Appadurai nicely characterized as being "the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics…" (1996:15), *cultural diversity* is no longer just a given of the human condition but has become a globally shared normative meta-narrative. In addition, the debate at UNESCO around the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* has transubstantiated the notion into the right and responsibility of nation-states to support the production of cultural goods and services that express their "national identity". This rather reductive understanding of a hitherto more capacious theme emerged through a discursive reframing of the *exception culturelle* that had been the rallying cry of the Canadian and French governments since the

end of the Uruguay Round in the mid-1990s. The shift from "exception" to "diversity" as the master concept allowed their cultural diplomacy to move from a negative to a positive stance; more importantly, it enabled it also to tap into a variegated range of anxieties everywhere, stemming from the real or perceived decline in "cultural diversity", this time understood very much in the anthropological sense. Thought to be dramatically accelerated by globalization, this very decline has, dialectically, generated a dynamic of culturalist repluralization.

Unsurprisingly, multiple interpretations of its scope now appear to be crystallizing around the UNESCO Convention, as different constituencies, including subnational communities and minorities, see the treaty as a powerful tool to advance cultural claims other than those of "cultural goods and services" or for that matter, just States alone. There is a growing awareness, as Stolcke has put it (1995: 12), of the "political meanings with which specific political contexts and relationships endow cultural difference. It is the configuration of socio-political structures and relationships both within and between groups that activates differences and shapes possibilities and impossibilities of communication." It is for such reasons that in our Brief for the third volume of *The Cultures and Globalization Series* (Anheier and Isar 2010) devoted to the topic "Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation" we asked contributors to address questions such as the following. What are the dimensions of diversity in cultural expression: artistic languages, repertoires and practices? Are there diversifying genres, fields, regions and localities, or professions and organizational systems, or certain types of clusters? Conversely, are there other areas that show less diversity or appear to be either stable or regressive? How is diversity in cultural expression being communicated and exchanged on the global canvas?

Finally, some reflections on the *cultural/creative industries*, simply because this sub-sector has become a, if not *the*, dominant paradigm in Western European cultural policy discourse. This conceptual development sits so well with the instrumentalizing frameworks of the reigning neo-liberal capitalist system that its hegemonic status it is acquiring equally hegemonic status elsewhere, from Brazil to China. An ubiquitous new "creative industries" hype needs to be deconstructed, if only to better grapple with the very real issues that lie behind it. Today, an ever-increasing range of economic activity is concerned with producing and marketing goods and services that are permeated in one way or another with broadly aesthetic or semiotic attributes. The aesthetic has been commodified; and the commodity has been aestheticized. While the industrial and the digital mediate practically every cultural process, "cognitive-cultural" goods and services have become a major segment of our economies; their production and distribution mobilize considerable human, material and technical resources.

In the process, the idea of "creativity", that till recently artists had the principal claim on, has been vastly expanded and is applied today to a very broad range of activities and professions, many of which are far removed from artistic creation.

In this capacity, the "cultural" has become a key economic policy issue. Witness the 2006 study *The Economy of Culture in Europe* done for the European Commission and the subsequent foregrounding of the field in EU policy. The question is whether all types of cultural production can be justified in terms of economic gain. While the cultural sector itself may find it opportune to do so rhetorically, if only to garner support for its activities and institutions, such opportunism pinions it to neo-liberal understandings. It is therefore crucially important, as a range of cultural economists, geographers and other social scientists are already doing, to explore this segment of the "cultural system" more deeply. In eliciting contributions from such researchers for the second volume of *The Cultures and Globalization Series* on "The Cultural Economy" we asked them to address questions such as the following. How do commercial viability and artistic creativity relate to each other in this context? To what degree do the imperatives of the market threaten (or possibly foster) collaborative or process-based arts activity? How do market-driven phenomena create new figures of the creative artist in increasingly hybrid and precarious working environments? What are the current and emerging organizational forms for the investment, production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services? As cultural production becomes part of a mixed economy at the national level, what are the emerging patterns transnationally? Who are the "winners" and "losers" as the cultural economy becomes globalized? Are some art forms and genres being marginalized, becoming increasingly excluded, while others move to the centre of transnational cultural attention and economic interests?

Concluding thoughts

Both sets of questions raised in this article concern "big" issues. Both have to do with lacunae that must be transcended if cultural policy research is to rise to the challenges of our time and, *a fortiori*, if robust international comparisons are to be made. For "culture" today crystallizes great expectations and great illusions. The two go together; both stem from visions yet at once overblown and truncated, from simplifications that are both partial and reductive, and ultimately from readings that are excessively instrumental. The agenda adumbrated here is designed to escape these pitfalls, but it is no doubt easier to advocate than to accomplish.

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Notes

1 An earlier version of this article was published as "Cultural policy: issues and interrogations in an international perspective" in Svante Beckman and Sten Månsson (eds.), *KulturSverige 2009. Problemanalys och statistik*, Linköping: SweCult.

2 The MONDIACULT definition: "…culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, values systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO, 1982).

3 The authors list the narrower and broader notions of culture as their first overarching "framework" choice. Their word, "dilemma", is surely too strong. For in actual practice there is no such duality: cultural policy still deals preponderantly with "high" culture. The challenge of moving it forward is how to broaden its scope.

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