THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY APPROACHES: FRANCE, THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

MONICA GATTINGER AND DIANE SAINT-PIERRE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the origin and evolution of national cultural policy approaches in France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. Governments in these countries have long supported the arts, heritage, cultural industries, libraries, etc., but have done so in differing ways. We develop an analytical framework to highlight the distinctive policy and administrative arrangements in each of these countries at their origins, distinguishing them based on their conception of culture and rationale for cultural policy, and the extent of centralization/decentralization in administration.

The analysis demonstrates that the traditional French approach has closely aligned culture and state, and has opted for centralized administrative arrangements. The British approach has historically placed a distance between culture and the state and supported the arts for their intrinsic value. Administratively, the British approach is decentralized, notably via the arm’s-length principle. The US has established a predominantly market-based system with private philanthropy and foundations playing a central role. State support is mainly indirect and channelled through the tax system. Canada, for its part, has developed what can be termed a hybrid approach, drawing on policy and administrative characteristics of France, the UK and the US, countries with which it has close ties. Canada, nonetheless, has developed a number of distinctive traits over time, notably official bilingualism and multiculturalism. While France, the UK and Canada have developed increasingly hybridized arrangements, they all retain vestiges of their origins in policy and administrative terms. As for the United States, the federal government’s approach has remained relatively stable.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the relative strengths and limitations of these various national approaches to respond, adapt and capitalize on the changing arts and cultural context (evolution in artistic practices and audience tastes; blurring lines between creator, producer and consumer; fiscal austerity and economic uncertainty, etc.). We advance three observations. First, the decentralization of the British, American and Canadian approaches may better equip them to adapt to rapid change. The multiplicity of actors pursuing a diversity of cultural activities might better position them to experiment, innovate and learn. This is contingent, however, on the existence of mechanisms to facilitate learning across organizations and sectors. Where such mechanisms are inadequate, more centralized approaches may better position them to experiment, innovate and learn. This is contingent on the existence of mechanisms to facilitate learning across organizations and sectors. Where such mechanisms are inadequate, more centralized approaches may, paradoxically, have greater capacity for planning, anticipating and responding to change. This is the second observation, but it is contingent on the capacity for coordination and timely action in centralized approaches – if they have built up large, unresponsive bureaucracies, this potential may go unrealized.

Third, the contemporary context of change is likely to challenge policy approaches linking state and culture (i.e., pursuing national unity, sovereignty, etc., via arts and culture policy). These approaches are liable to find it increasingly difficult to pursue these objectives in an artistic milieu where borders of all types – political, disciplinary, industrial, etc. – are eroding.

Overall, the analysis underscores the need for cultural policy researchers and practitioners to attain a better understanding of how different policy and administrative arrangements are responding to change and to what effect. Existing mechanisms for cross-organizational, cross-country and cross-sectoral learning need to be strengthened and new channels created. Practitioners need to know what works, why and under what circumstances.
INTRODUCTION

Governments in France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada have long intervened in the cultural sector in support of the arts, heritage, cultural industries, libraries and the like. They have done so, however, in very different ways, with France adopting an approach closely aligning the concepts of culture and state, the UK opting for an approach placing a distance between culture and the state (the arm’s-length principle), and the US developing a predominantly market-based system. Canada, for its part, has developed something of a hybrid approach, adopting and adapting various policy and administrative characteristics of France, the UK and the US, three countries with which it has close historic, political, economic and geographic ties.

Given the distinctiveness of the French, British and American approaches to cultural policy, they can be thought of as ideal-types when it comes to government intervention in the cultural sector. This paper explores them in this sense, drawing out their unique characteristics at their origins, while recognizing that they have all evolved and hybridized over time, adopting various features of their counterparts. We begin by developing an analytical framework to analyze each country’s cultural policy and administrative arrangements. While other researchers have developed models for comparative analysis at the national level (see, for example, Colbert, d’Astous and Parmentier, 2004; Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989; Mulcahy 1998, 2000), their work has focused mainly on the arts sector alone. It is our view that a fulsome understanding of a national government’s arts policy necessitates an appreciation of the broader cultural policy context of the country (understanding of culture, government’s role in the field, etc.).

We use this analytical framework to sketch out the chief characteristics of national cultural policy and administration in each country. We conclude by assessing the relative strengths, limits and capacities of each system to change, respond and adapt in the face of transformative change in the cultural policy context (digital technologies, demographic change, evolution of cultural practices, etc.), with a particular focus on the arts sector.

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY APPROACHES

Cultural policy is a relatively immature field of study (Bennett and Mercer, n.d.) and systematic international comparisons of countries’ cultural policy approaches are scant. The main exception to this of course is the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, a joint venture of the Council of Europe and the ERICarts Institute. The Compendium uses a detailed template for production of country reports in Europe (Canada’s federal government also produces a report). Compendium researchers have identified a range of alternative models of cultural policy - arm’s length, interventionist, centralized/decentralized, mixed, etc. - distinguishing them based on distinctive policy rationales and administrative structures. As noted above, there is little scholarly research that seeks to systematically compare cultural policy approaches writ large. This is our aim here.

Such a comparative venture requires us to train our sites on a limited number of key variables, a need inherent in comparative public policy analysis. As Bennett (1996) notes, five policy dimensions can be studied in comparative public policy: goals (objectives and rationales), content (laws, policy statements, etc.), instruments (grants, regulation, taxes, etc.), outcomes (evaluation of impacts) and styles (different ways of developing policy). This text focuses on objectives and rationales, beginning, most importantly, with the manner in which governments conceive of culture and cultural policy, a characteristic which can differ significantly across jurisdictions. These cultural policy aspects are captured in Table 1.

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1 See http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/index.php. For the French report, see http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/france.php, the UK, see http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/unitedkingdom.php and Canada, http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/canada.php. There are also national-level studies comparing the cultural policies of a limited number of jurisdictions (see, for example, Devlin and Hoyle 2001).
We also explore the main policy instruments governments use to pursue their cultural goals. These administrative dimensions are captured in Table 2, which focuses on the management of government intervention in the cultural domain: cultural powers, the role of main organizations, regional and local governments, as well as financing and its distribution across levels of government and sectors.

**Table 1: National Cultural Policy Approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>“Classic” French approach (+ State)</th>
<th>Canadian Approach (+/- State)</th>
<th>“Classic” British approach (- State)</th>
<th>America approach (Even less Federal State)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conception of culture &amp; role of the state</td>
<td>Fusion of State/Nation &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Close connection between State &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Independence between State &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Relative absence of the Federal State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The State, maître d’œuvre of cultural policy</td>
<td>But Distance between State &amp; Culture for administration</td>
<td>Culture a “private affair”</td>
<td>Averse to state control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for government intervention</td>
<td>Strong identity and national sovereignty</td>
<td>Creative independence and freedom of expression</td>
<td>Protect and conserve artistic and heritage resources</td>
<td>Non-intervention in culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative independence and freedom of expression</td>
<td>Cultural institutions as guardians and promoters of national culture</td>
<td>Cultural institutions as guardians and promoters of national culture</td>
<td>Freedom of the market economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Often political ends</td>
<td>Political ends</td>
<td>Autonomy of arts/ culture</td>
<td>Freedom of choice and “market culture”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National/ int’l visibility</td>
<td>(unity/ sovereignty/ biculturalism/ multiculturalism)</td>
<td>Access/ participation (democratization of culture)</td>
<td>Considerable tax credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access/ participation (democratization of culture)</td>
<td>Autonomy of arts/ culture</td>
<td>Excellence and self-management in cultural sector</td>
<td>(Art. 501 c.3) to support philanthropy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transmission of culture</td>
<td>Access/ participation (democratization of culture)</td>
<td>Excellence and self-management in cultural sector</td>
<td>Matching Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural education</td>
<td>Transmission of culture</td>
<td>(partnership of public/ private financing)</td>
<td>for the survival, autonomy and freedom of arts and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>Cultural education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Administration of National Cultural Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>&quot;Classic&quot; French approach (+ State)</th>
<th>Canadian approach (+/- - State)</th>
<th>&quot;Classic&quot; British approach (- State)</th>
<th>America approach (Even less federal State)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main organizations</td>
<td>(1) Ministry of Culture (predominant organization) (2) Public Commissions: &quot;1% for Arts&quot; Commission (1951); National (1976) and Regional (1982) Funds (seed for contemporary art)</td>
<td>(1) Necessary presence of autonomous agencies / Arts Councils (arm’s length) (2) 1980: Ministry of Communications (Secretary of State before that) (3) Public Commissions: many over the years, but especially since 1960s</td>
<td>(1) Necessary presence of autonomous agencies / Arts Councils (arm’s length) (2) Necessary presence of National Cultural Funds and/or Foundations (3) UK, 1992: Ministry of Culture (4) National lottery (1994) for “good causes”</td>
<td>(1) Necessary presence of Private foundations (1000) (2) Central organization: NEA: funds fewer cultural activities than other arts councils; ensures freedom of artists and institutions (3) Necessary presence of arts councils in states and in large cities (arm’s length)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of local-regional or state gov’ts</td>
<td>In “Cooperation” Prior to 1980s, limited role Decentralization laws 1982-83</td>
<td>Some competition/ conflict with provinces (esp. Québec) Local governments under provincial jurisdiction (not federal)</td>
<td>Partnerships with private sector and with higher orders of government</td>
<td>Central Some 4000 cultural or arts agencies in American cities; presence of state arts councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support to the arts and culture</td>
<td>Central government (vast majority of funding) Substantial state support 1990s: search for new sources (public-private partnerships, development of sponsorship, creation of corporate foundations)</td>
<td>Federal, provincial and municipal governments all active funders, with lower levels representing an increasing proportion of spending (esp. municipalities) Modest private funding</td>
<td>State in partnership with other actors of civil society State support for operational expenses Private sector and philanthropy</td>
<td>Two pillars Philanthropy (public and private charities, fundraising, endowment funds by donations and bequests; and voluntarism and tax credits (public support for donations to cultural activities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While most jurisdictions – including France and the United Kingdom – can now be characterized as hybrid cultural policy approaches, our aim here is to identify their distinctive characteristics at their origins and in recent times. As for the United States, as described below, the American approach has remained relatively stable in terms of its fundamental principles and characteristics (large role of the private sector and foundations, relatively small federal expenditures, etc.). Canada, for its part, can be characterized as a hybrid
approach from the outset, with successive federal governments drawing on various aspects of the French, British and American cultural approaches.

The French Approach\(^2\). Although one could return to the French Revolution or even the time of the monarchy to trace the origins of what is often referred to as the ‘Cultural State’ or ‘French Statism,’ it was only under the 5\(^{th}\) Republic, with President Charles de Gaulle and his minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux, that French cultural policy became focused and ambitious. The French approach begins with the conception of belonging to a nation and fuses the concepts of culture and the state. The central tenet underpinning policy is the state’s right to use its power to encourage the cultural flourishing of its citizens and to promote the development of a strong national identity. This manner of conceiving of the state’s role has yielded a distinctive model, in which the ministry dedicated to this end, created in 1959 and headed by André Malraux until 1969, plays a central role. To this day, despite initiatives toward decentralization in France\(^3\) and the growing role of local authorities in the country, France retains a cultural policy approach and administration that is highly centralized.

In France as elsewhere, the country is influenced by the European community and international organizations (e.g., Council of Europe, European Union, UNESCO), as well as its own domestic cultural and artistic milieus. However, even if the French state increasingly resembles a hybrid approach,\(^4\) its rationale for government intervention in the cultural domain still rests on a number of fundamental precepts: that culture contributes to a strong national identity and strong national sovereignty; that cultural policy must support cultural specificity, the foundation of national consciousness; that creative autonomy and freedom of expression constitute fundamental values; that the state must support access to and participation in cultural life for all French citizens (democratization of culture), and that government interventions must contribute to a diversified and rich culture (diversity of cultural expression).

In sum, even though the French approach is debated and its objectives and outcomes contested (see Ahearne 2002; Donnat 2003; Dubois 2003; Gentil et Poirier 2006), French cultural policy remains associated with a tradition of direct public intervention in culture, even at the local level (regional councils, departments and cities), where governments, overall, ‘have integrated norms, values and ministerial criteria [of the central government] in the development of their policies’\(^5\) (Négrier 2008, 176).

The British Approach\(^6\). In the traditional British approach, culture and the arts are above all ‘private affairs.’ This is not to say there is no role for the state nor that the private sector dominates the cultural sector, but rather, that culture and cultural expression are affairs of the ‘private’ or ‘individual’ sphere, and that the role of government is to support cultural expression as an end in itself (as opposed to linking culture and the state or culture and sovereignty as in the French approach). This view of culture and the arts as private affairs translates into a policy approach characterized by independence vis-à-vis public authorities, the famous ‘arm’s length’ principle. This is evident, notably, in arts funding decisions, but also in

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\(^1\) This section is based on Dubois 2003, 2010; Gentil and Poirier 2006; Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989; Martin 2011; Thuriot 2010.  
\(^2\) Four forms of decentralization can be identified: (1) deconcentration: the transfer of responsibilities to lower geographical levels of administration (local, regional, territorial) but within the same level of government; (2) delegation: the transfer of responsibilities to organizations at the margins of central administration that have administrative and financial autonomy (arm’s length); (3) devolution: conferring powers and competencies to local/regional governments (large cities and regions); (4) privatization: transfer of responsibilities previously undertaken by the government to private organizations, for profit or not. See Rondinelli and Cheema 1983.  
\(^3\) French cultural policy has been decentralized to some extent through the decentralization laws of 1982-1983. It now also includes legislative provisions to support sponsorship and the creation of corporate foundations (Law\(^1\) 87-571, 23 July 1987 on sponsorship development and Law\(^2\) 90-559, 4 July 1990 for the creation of corporate foundations).  
\(^4\) Authors’ translation of original text.  
\(^5\) This section is based on Autissier 2010; Fisher 2011; Gray 2000; Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989; Losseley 2011; Martel 2006; Mulcahy 1987, 2010; Saint-Pierre and Audet 2010; Tobelem 2011.
cultural programming such as public broadcasting. Traditionally, the arm's length principle is to the British approach what the Ministry of Culture is to the French approach.

These two approaches flow from very different conceptions of the administration of cultural policy: one that opts for a ministry with local and regional 'branches' of the government, the other that is based on a system of autonomous agencies beyond the political influence of public authorities (self-management and distribution of grants based on peer evaluation).

In the British approach, the fundamental rationales for government intervention derive from the belief that culture is a right of each citizen and the related belief in the intrinsic value of the arts and artistic expression. In contrast to France, where government support of the arts is a longstanding tradition, the United Kingdom, for its part, adopted this approach much later, first with the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) in 1946 (formerly the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts), an organization with a high degree of autonomy. This model of a national arts council was subsequently developed in many countries, including Canada, as discussed below (the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957), the United States (the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965) and Australia (the Australia Council for the Arts in 1968)7. In 1964, on the initiative of the new Secretary of State for the Arts, Labourite Jennie Lee, the country began to promote culture through the white paper Cultural Policy, which saw the Arts Council's budget triple in nine years.

While the ideas of democratization of culture and cultural democracy tended to dominate in the 1970s (notably as a result of increases in public expenditures on culture), the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 heralded important changes. Upon assuming power, the new Conservative government undertook a vast program to reduce the size of the state. During this period of state disengagement, the Arts Council budget stood static. Public financing of culture increased somewhat at the beginning of the 1990s, but this was only to last for a short time. Then, in 1995, two years after creation of the national lottery, the government allocated a portion of lottery revenues to culture. During this period, in return for state support, arts and cultural institutions and organizations were subject to increasingly stringent and complex regulations as well as ministerial directives.

As in France, the United Kingdom has also come to resemble a hybrid approach, notably with the creation of the Department of National Heritage in 1992, which became the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 1997. Prior to this time, the culture minister was not part of the government’s cabinet (Matarosso 2008).

The American approach8. The United States supports culture in a very unique way: the federal government is largely absent from the cultural sector, funding it primarily through indirect means, and the private sector plays a substantial role, accounting for the majority of arts and culture funding. The term ‘cultural policy’ is not often used in the United States given its dirigiste connotations (Schuster 2002). The overwhelming presence of the private sector in the cultural domain leads to a predominantly market-driven system, with few underpinning federal policy rationales or objectives.

There is no formal federal cultural policy, but rather, a ‘policy in support of the arts’ (Schuster 1985, 5). In addition, there is no formal government department responsible for culture, and cultural programs are highly fragmented because of concerns that a unified bureaucracy might unduly interfere with the sector. Nonetheless, since the mid-1970s, the National Endowment for the Arts' chair has been seen as the 'official spokesman in national policy-making [for the arts]' (Mulcahy 1987, 324).

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7 For a comparison of Canada and the United States, see Rushton 2002 and for a history of the Australia Council for the Arts, see Gibson 1999.
Funding is mainly undertaken through tax exemptions or credits to non-profit associations registered under Article 501 c.3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The value of these credits is substantial: it was estimated at $6 billion in 2003 (see Valade et al. 2007, section B.1.). Under this system, various types of arts are promoted without discrimination based on government preferences or quality assessments. Having said this, the federal government does fund a number of key cultural agencies, notably the National Endowment for the Arts (founded in 1965), the Smithsonian Institution (1846), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (1976). These organizations are arm's-length agencies, receiving their budgets directly from Congress. They are largely self-governing and support fewer areas than their counterparts in most other OECD countries (e.g., they do not fund historic monuments, libraries and archives, cultural industries, and professional arts training).

The government distinguishes between commercial and not-for-profit arts and supports primarily the latter (e.g., cinema is not supported because it is considered for-profit entertainment). In the main, libraries are funded at the local level, and heritage is generally a responsibility assumed by state and local governments. Each state has an arts council and at the local level, there are more than 4,000 arts agencies: relatively independent public and private organizations that fund artists and professional organizations (mainly in large cities) and promote community arts activities (mainly in smaller towns). State and local governments also fund culture through such measures as hotel levies and tax check-offs (Mulcahy 2000, 152-156).

According to Martel, the preponderance of the private sector and foundations in the American cultural approach aligns with core values of the country: freedom of the market economy, American generosity and mission, and civic nationalism (2006, 329-330). There are approximately 1,000 foundations devoted to culture in the United States, each with their own policies and funding criteria (most fund cultural activities but do not undertake them themselves), among the most well-known have been the Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford Foundations (Ibid, 289-330). The cultural milieu consists of a melting pot of different objectives that produces a continuous flow of ideas, innovation, and originality (Ibid, 324-325), but it has also been critiqued as a form of ‘cultural Darwinism’ (Mulcahy 2003).

**The Canadian approach**. Since the late 19th century, the Canadian federal government has adopted a large number of measures in the cultural sector, pursuing policies that simultaneously address regional interests, the promotion of national unity across a vast, sparsely populated and regionally diverse country, as well as the country's economic and cultural survival in the face of the United States. US domination in the cultural industries and media has been the focus of much state intervention, particularly since the first decades of the 20th century. But many federal cultural policies also emerged from domestic political, economic and cultural dynamics, including the rise of nationalism and sovereignty movements in Québec in the 1960s, and the heated constitutional debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Three main periods characterize federal cultural policy in Canada: pre-1950, during which federal government intervention (colonial government before 1867) focused primarily on the creation of national

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9 Federal/sub-national relations in the cultural sector have evolved over time, from federal grants and revenue-sharing in the 1960s and 1970s to non-grant strategies (suasion and regulatory requirements) to further national goals in the 1980s (Horowitz 1991).

10 Of these 4,000 agencies, 1,000 are municipal public organizations while the others are non-profit organizations (Mulcahy 1992; Seaman 2002). In large cities, however, two-thirds are government agencies or commissions, while the others are community organizations (Seaman 2002: 22).

11 Community foundations, through which the donations of numerous individuals fund community social, religious, or arts centres, are also active at the local level. In addition, United Arts Funds undertake ‘umbrella fundraising,’ in communities for specific activities (Martel 2006: 325-326).

institutions in the arts, communications and heritage to develop the cultural architecture of the ‘young nation’, whose frontiers were expanding west and north; a second period, beginning with the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey-Lévesque Commission), which paved the way for substantial federal initiatives like the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Library; and finally, the period since the 1980s, which has seen the rise of the cultural industries, the growing influence of globalization and trade liberalization and other important shifts in cultural policy (e.g., promotion of aboriginal cultures, cultural diversity and natural heritage).

The historic, political and geopolitical characteristics noted above account in large measure for the distinctive and multifaceted Canadian federal approach to culture. At its origins, it reflected primarily British practices (culture as a private affair and an end in itself with an arm’s length approach to funding and cultural programming) but with policy concerns that included national unity and cultural sovereignty, as in France. Since the 1950s, most federal initiatives have continued to embrace the idea that support for culture should be undertaken without political interference, thus positioning federal cultural agencies with autonomy from political power. At the same time, the federal government has aimed to centralize its cultural activities along the lines of the French approach, first through the Secretary of State in 1963, then the Ministry of Communications in 1969, to counter American cultural influence and Québécois nationalism and independence. As for the American approach, some of its characteristics can be discerned in the Canadian context, notably the use of tax deductions for charitable donations, the creation of public, private or semi-public foundations, and corporate and individual sponsorship. 

This hybridization of administrative structures continues to the present: there is a department of culture (the Department of Canadian Heritage), an arm’s length arts council (the Canada Council for the Arts), various other arm’s length agencies (e.g., the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), foundations addressing a number of cultural policy sub-sectors (e.g., the Heritage Canada Foundation) and intergovernmental coordinating committees (e.g., the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Culture and Heritage).

From a policy perspective, however, over time, the country has developed a distinctive approach, notably with its policy of two official languages (legislated in 1969), which recognized the two major founding peoples of Canada (French and British; recognition of Aboriginal peoples as one of the founding cultures was only to follow later), followed by a policy (1971), then a law (1988) on multiculturalism. Since this time, the federal government has promoted Canada as a multicultural nation and used this concept to promote nation building, positioning cultural pluralism at the heart of national unity.

In sum, the Canadian approach seems to try to take the best of different state approaches to cultural intervention. It favours combining a number of different organizational arrangements, measures and practices, with the federal state playing the role of ‘manager-arbiter’ in the cultural field, seeking to mediate relationships between the different actors and components of artistic and cultural life.

Responding, Adapting and Capitalizing on Change: The Arts in France, the UK, the US and Canada

The French, British, and, for many years now, the Canadian cultural policy approaches, have become increasingly hybridized in their policy and administrative practices. Indeed, most western governments have pursued relatively similar policy objectives and experienced similar tendencies in cultural policy since the middle of the 20th century: the democratization of culture followed by the emergence of cultural democracy (1950-1980), the professionalization of the cultural sector and the growth of cultural

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13 The federal arts council, the Canada Council for the Arts, is also a hybrid-style organization, embracing the British arm’s length principle, but with funding from both parliamentary appropriations and a private endowment (making it similar in some ways to American foundations).
industries and new information and communications technologies (since the 1980s), and, more recently, the growing role and influence of the private sector, local governments, and international and supranational organizations in the design and delivery of cultural policy (since the 1990s). Nonetheless, each country still retains vestiges of its origins in both policy and administrative terms. This is particular the case for the United States, whose approach to the cultural sector has remained relatively stable over time.

In a period of rapid and transformative change in the arts and culture context - shifting and emerging artistic practices and audience tastes; blurring lines between creator, producer and consumer; weakening silos between artistic disciplines; growing ethnocultural diversity; government austerity and economic uncertainty, etc. - it is worthwhile considering the relative strengths and limitations of various cultural policy approaches when it comes to responding, adapting and capitalizing on change. On this front, three observations seem most germane.

First, decentralized approaches to decision-making are often associated with stronger, more responsive and locally-appropriate decisions - this idea underpins the principle of subsidiarity, be it in the European Union or in federations. Through this lens, the decentralization of the British, Canadian and especially the American cultural policy approaches, may better equip them to adapt to rapid change than more centralized approaches, which may be administratively weighty and slower to change. The involvement of a multiplicity of public, private and societal actors pursuing a wide diversity of cultural aims and objectives might better position the arts and culture sector to experiment, innovate and learn from various methods, successes and failures.

On the other hand, if there are few or no mechanisms in place to ensure such cross-fertilization occurs, some of this potential of decentralized approaches may remain unrealized. This leads to a second observation: more centralized (institutionalized) approaches may possess the advantage of stronger capacities for planning, anticipating and responding to change, be it in the short, medium or long-terms. To the extent that more centralized approaches are better able to coordinate activities, information flow, consultation, etc., they may, paradoxically, be more strongly positioned to manoeuvre strategically in periods of rapid change. This is contingent, of course, on the capacity for coordination and action in centralized approaches - if they have built up large bureaucracies over time and suffer from slower response times, this too, may represent a potential that goes unrealized.

It should be noted that the points above are dependent to some degree on the financing model of the approach in question. In a period of economic uncertainty and fiscal austerity, mainly public-supported approaches and mainly private-supported approaches are both vulnerable to large funding cuts or major reorientations in existing funding. While this vulnerability may play out differently if cuts originate from the public or private sectors, in both instances, arts and cultural organizations are faced with difficult choices. In the case of public funding, the choice is often to turn to private funding, with which some organizations have had limited experience. In the case of private funding, the options may be even more limited. In either case, funding cuts may mean difficult trade-offs or reorientations of organizational mandates or activities.

Third, from a policy perspective, the current context is likely to represent a major challenge to policy approaches linking state and culture (i.e., pursuing national unity, sovereignty, etc., via arts and culture policy). These approaches are liable to find it increasingly difficult to pursue these objectives in an artistic milieu where borders of all types - political, disciplinary, industrial, etc. - are eroding.

In sum, what the above discussion points to is the need for a more comprehensive and systematic exploration of cultural policy approaches. This is particularly the case for hybrid arrangements, which characterize most countries' cultural interventions in contemporary times. Cultural policy researchers and practitioners need a much better understanding of how different policy and administrative arrangements are responding to change, and to what effect. From a practical perspective, existing mechanisms for cross-organizational, cross-country and cross-sectoral learning need to be strengthened and new channels created.
Practitioners need to know what works, why and under what circumstances.
References


