Balancing act :
twenty-one strategic dilemmas
in cultural policy

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How little, a precious little, in life is fixed :
On the one hand this but on the other that ;
Justice must lie between and truth betwixt.

Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Sequel*, 1954

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Preface

Government action in the modern world

The age of the command economy has passed. Governments across the continent increasingly recognise the limits to their ability to make things happen. The complexity of contemporary society and the interdependency of local and national economies mean that Governments must influence rather than direct change. They must work with and through a vast range of public, private and independent sector partners. Nowhere is this more true than in the fluid, changeable world of culture, where the state's efforts in one direction will often produce unexpected, perhaps unwanted, results elsewhere. In the cultural sector, individual vision can have a huge and unforeseen impact, where substantial public resources can appear to produce no change at all.

The culture minister deals with a field which is inherently changeable and often seen as marginal to the government's central objectives. While health and education ministers have thousands of hospitals and schools, and millions of public employees under their control, the culture minister typically has few directly managed resources. The development and management of cultural policy is therefore one of the most complex areas of modern government, a kind of a balancing act, not so much between competing priorities as in other areas of policy, but between competing visions of the role of culture in society.

The value of marking the edges of policy

This note is intended to help with the thinking process which must underlie that balancing act. In doing so, it develops a metaphor of strategic dilemmas originally conceived by Franco Bianchini and Charles Landry as a way of crystallising the poles of a number of policy issues – for example, the extremes of no state intervention in the cultural sector and government control of cultural resources. [1] It is increasingly unlikely in contemporary Europe that there will be countries wishing to position their cultural policy at one or other of these extremes. But where they place themselves on the spectrum between the poles, the balancing point which suits local circumstances, will vary from one country to another. The value of identifying the extremes lies in being able to recognise one's own position in relation to them. Does policy lie exactly in the middle ? Or does it represent something closer to a 60-40 split, a 90-10 split, or a 30-70 split ? A tightrope walker is always conscious of the two ends of his balancing pole, continually making slight adjustments to preserve that elusive point of balance.

In creating a dichotomy between extremes, we do not expect cultural policy-makers to make a simple choice between two options, but to consider where local policy currently lies, or should lie, on the spectrum between them. To reinforce this sense of a spectrum, we have appended a little chart under each of the policy dilemmas, on which some readers may find it interesting to visualise or mark their own situation, whether ideal, or actual. It must be understood, of course, that these dilemmas are not self-contained, as they are presented here : they overlap continually, and decisions taken in one area will affect room for manoeuvre in others.

In most cases there are other ways of looking at the issue which will enable us to break out of the oppositional strait-jacket and establish new policies which combine as many of the strengths of existing alternatives, and as few of the weaknesses, as possible. The task of identifying and developing these third ways for cultural policy lies at the heart of the challenges now faced by policy-makers and planners in the cultural sector.

The paper begins with the underlying conceptual issues, presented here as " framework dilemmas ", since the course of cultural policy depends on how government positions itself in relation to these strategic choices. The questions they pose depend almost entirely on political, social and ethical values, and how they are addressed will fundamentally affect the shape and outcomes of cultural policy. The remaining sections focus more on the tactical decisions which arise when we begin to consider how to put policy into practice.

In passing, we should explain that we have deliberately avoided defining terms such as " art " or " culture ", words of which we make continual use. Their definition is itself open to interpretation or dispute, and is inseparable from the other dilemmas we present. We have judged it preferable to allow the reader to consider these questions along with the others we present. Nor do we make any pretence to objectivity in formulating or presenting these dilemmas. We have presented them in this booklet for debate based on our own experience and involvement in cultural policy making. Although we believe that the best answer will normally lie at some point on the spectrum between the dilemmas appropriate to local circumstances and interests, this does not

mean that a happy mean is always, or often, appropriate. Policy formulation involves clear, often difficult, choices, and we have not been afraid to note where good practice currently lies, or to show an inclination towards one or other pole. We hope that this occasional expression of our own view will assist the reader in clarifying his or her own opinion and in stimulating critical comments and offers of other dilemmas for discussion that could be incorporated in any future editions. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of Franco Bianchini and Colin Mercer to this process, and express our gratitude to the Council of Europe for giving us the opportunity to articulate our thinking in this paper.

François Matarasso & Charles Landry

Framework dilemmas

1. Culture as the arts or Culture as a way of life

Raymond Williams called culture "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language".[2] There have certainly been many attempts to define the term, though in themselves they need not concern us here. But it is a pre-requisite of cultural policy to define the parameters of the cultural domain itself. In some countries, culture is almost synonymous with the arts, and policy tends to focus on the visual and performing arts, literature, festivals and similar areas. In these circumstances culture ministries may tend to focus on infrastructure, especially theatres, galleries, museums, historic buildings and so on, and on recognised artists and arts companies. Their responses to more recent art forms such as film, rock music, digital art or comic book graphics may vary widely.

At the other end of the spectrum is the view of culture as everything which we do not have to do : culture as the distinctive way of life which distinguishes a German town from a French one, or a Swedish community from a Spanish one. In this conception, the arts are simply one of many manifestations of the unique cultural identity of a place and its people, and policy may concern itself with anything from folk dance to local food traditions, or from street life to fashion. Of course, countries with a narrow view of culture as art may also value their distinctive way of life very highly, while see-

ing it as different from culture itself, and not a matter for cultural policy. The area of broadcasting encapsulates much of this dilemma. It can be seen as central to arts policy, both as a medium in its own right and as a means of access to other art forms such as classical music or ballet. At the same time, both in its content and in its place in the everyday life of society, broadcasting can claim to be a primary force in the culture and way of life of a nation, a view which is reflected by policy in France, Israel and elsewhere where legislation has been introduce to limit external, especially American, influence.

In practice, therefore, and from one place to another, the responsibilities of cultural ministries may embrace any or all of the following areas : visual and performing art, architecture, museums, libraries, sport, festivals, film, print and broadcast media, adult education, community and voluntary cultural activity, parks and gardens, traditional and immigrant cultures, digital media, fashion, commercial design, historic buildings and landscapes and much more. Where definitions of the cultural sector are broadest, further policy distinctions and priorities are inevitable, given the different responses demanded by these very different areas of activity. Whether the conception of culture is wide or narrow will therefore shape cultural policy itself.

• How wide ranging should cultural policy be ?

Wide focus										Narrow focus
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

2. Cultural democracy or Democratisation of culture

The post-war period has seen a steady increase in the engagement of European states with cultural issues, reflected in increasing public subsidy of cultural activity. This has reflected and nurtured a huge growth in the sector itself, in terms of the numbers of people working in it, its audiences, types of expression and forms, economic importance and public attention. Until the 1960s, this expansion of government involvement in the arts was largely driven, from both sides of the political spectrum, by a long-standing belief in the civilising value of the arts and a consequent desire to democratise access to it. Cultural policy driven by this belief has tended to prioritise access issues in terms of reduced admission prices, education programmes, free entry to museums, popularisation through state broadcasting and similar types of initiatives. It has been pursued with more or less commitment following the ebb and flow of political and cultural fashion.

But these values came under severe pressure during the late 1960s and in the subsequent period, as many argued that giving people access to a pre-determined set of cultural values, expressions and products was an inadequate response by democratic states. It was seen to reflect a " top-down " dispensation of elitist cultural values developed in the context of time and class, and which neglected or dismissed many forms of cultural expression and identity. It was argued that cultural policy should go beyond educating people into appreciation of approved culture and, recognising that the everyday expression of people is culture, should involve them in the fundamental debates about the nature

and value of cultural identity and expression. This approach, while more recent than that of the civilising value of culture, had precedents in some 19th century cultural movements, and inter-war initiatives in working communities. The principle of cultural democracy, which is concerned with increasing access to the means of cultural production, distribution and analysis alongside those of consumption, has subsequently vied for primacy with that of the democratisation of culture. Although, given the changing nature of society, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they have tended to polarise political debate around cultural policy in many European countries.

• What is the political conception of cultural policy ?

Cultural democracy						Democratisation of culture				
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

3. Culture as a self-justifying value or Culture as development

The dilemmas over culture and democracy have been complicated by the emergence of another conception of culture during the 1980s and 1990s – culture as development. In keeping with its civilising qualities, the tendency in most European countries has been to see culture as a self-justifying value connected simply to quality of life issues. A vibrant arts *milieu*, an attractive built environment, access to public museums and libraries, a high level of participation in sports and leisure activities – these have been seen as factors contributing to the overall quality of people's lives, especially in towns and cities where such resources naturally tend to be concentrated. Thus it has been normal practice to provide facilities for these activities when planning suburban or new town developments, perhaps especially in northern European countries, where such provision reflects a concern for the quality of the public realm generally.

But during the 1980s, policy-makers, artists and activists became increasingly interested in the impact of cultural investment. The value of cultural activity to social and economic vitality, and to sustainable communities, was recognised by landmark reports from Unesco (*Our creative diversity*, 1996) and the Council of Europe (*In from the margins*, 1997), building on research in individual countries including France and the United Kingdom. This has contributed to the emergence of the concept of culture as a tool of development. At its simplest, this has led to the use of cultural techniques to achieve non-cultural ends – for example, the use of theatrical performances and workshop activi-

ties to promote health awareness messages. But the more sophisticated analysis recognises the inescapable socio-economic impacts of all cultural activity and places a joint emphasis on the cultural and the developmental benefits of public investment in culture. This conception of culture places it at the heart of government policies addressing key issues such as civil society, social cohesion, community capacity building and so on.

This has led to concern in some quarters about the dangers of instrumentalisation – a fear that the inherent qualities of the arts, whatever they may be understood to be, will somehow be debased or twisted by a concern for other policy outcomes. This concern is legitimate and must be taken seriously, although it is difficult to envisage any other area of public life which could demand such independence of action. However, two further points need to be understood in this context. First, impacts and developmental consequences arise unavoidably from cultural activity : the question facing cultural policy-makers is whether or not to integrate them with other policy goals, and if so how to do so effectively. Secondly, culture is a very hardy plant, more than strong enough to take care of itself – we may seek to train it in certain directions, but we cannot control it or change its nature.

There is a further reason for considering the developmental role and the socio-economic impacts of culture : opening this debate may strengthen wider interest in and commitment towards culture across society by allowing people to engage in debates about its purpose and value. During much of the past century or more, there has been a broad political consensus around the intrinsic social value of the arts, and debates

have been more concerned with issues of implementation than deeper questions about their role in society. Today, as society faces complex socio-political problems, that position can no longer be depended upon by the supporters of culture. The weakening of the historic liberal consensus about the value of the arts was thrown into large relief by the 1991 campaign to defend the American National Endowment for the Arts from political attack by conservatives. The artist Steve Durland has described what happened when "artists ' took to the streets ' to defend their work, and were dismayed to find that nobody followed, not even supposedly traditional liberal allies. It was like nobody cared." [3]

The cultural sector cannot rely any more on a presumption of its worth : in future, that value will have to be monitored, tested and articulated in terms acceptable to those who are not its natural supporters in the face of urgent and competing demands on the public purse. This challenge was neatly expressed by the American curator Stephen Weil when he asked museums "are you really worth what you cost, or are you merely worthwhile ?" [4] Recognition of the developmental role and social contribution of culture is therefore both timely and important. It will not only enable the cultural sector to play a more central role in the lives of many millions of people ; it will also help the sector itself to express its value in the context of the major social, economic and political issues of the coming century.

• How developmental should cultural policy be ?

Culture as a self-justifying value						Culture as development				
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

4. Art as a public good or Art as a conditional activity

Linked with the view of culture a self-justifying value is belief, expressed historically by many professionals in the cultural sector – artists, performers, administrators etc. – that art is a natural public good, like nature. As such, the fundamental questions have been presented as being how to safeguard it, how to enlarge it and how to encourage more people to appreciate it. The cultural profession has largely framed discussion about art in terms which could equally be applied to discussion of the natural environment, or national parks.

But if the natural world is seen to be a public good, it is because it is independent of human activity : art is decidedly not. It would be more accurate to see art as one of the systems which human beings have developed to do certain things, comparable to science or education. Like them, art has an inherent value arising only from the capacity it affords us to achieve certain things, in the same way that a lever has a value as a tool which is unaffected by the use to which it is put. But, as with science, the use to which we put that power may be good or ill. We acknowledge that the power of science may be used to cure disease or create weapons of mass destruction. We are not yet so ready to acknowledge that art may be used to celebrate and to inspire, or to exclude and indoctrinate. In the first thirty years of this century, for example, modernists such as T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound responded to the increasingly literacy of working people by trying to forge an art which would consciously exclude them and celebrate the " natural aristocracy " of the artist : these attitudes are evident in Eliot's later assertion

that " in our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards ".[5] The intellectual connections between fascism and some of the great art of the early part of this century ran deep, though it is to their credit that most artists distanced themselves from the political expression of their values as the nature of fascism became clearer. But this example should alert us all to the fact that art cannot be abstracted from the rest of human values and action.

Good science may be used for bad ends : good art may equally be used to promote anti-democratic values. Artists, and especially those in receipt of, or claiming, state funds and support, can no longer claim immunity from public inquiry : they have to be prepared to explain and defend their work in the wider context of democratic policy-making. If art or culture is recognised as having a developmental role, the contingent nature of its application becomes inescapable.

• How neutral is art conceived to be ?

Art as a public good						Art as a contingent social activity				
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

Implementation dilemmas

5. Consultation or Active participation

The process of establishing cultural policy raises its own dilemmas about appropriate methods of undertaking the task. In many countries, the policy-making process has been largely internal, concerning departmental civil servants and politicians. Elsewhere, most effectively perhaps in the Netherlands, there have been attempts of various kinds to consult the public about policy issues. The range of choices faced by a government in involving citizens in this type of discussion has been set out by Sherry Arnstein, rising from a very negative root of non-participation and manipulation to a democratic ideal of citizen control which may be more aspirational than achievable in many situations. [6] In fact, current practice in cultural affairs commonly lies somewhere between informing, consultation and active participation. Certainly, consultation has come to be seen as the norm in many European countries, although the understanding and interpretation of the term varies greatly.

However, the creation of policy through a real partnership between a cultural ministry, its constituency and the wider public offers major advantages. A policy which has been developed in partnership with the sector on which its implementation depends obviously has a better chance of being successful in practice, since it will reflect the experience and the concerns of people working in all sectors. It is also likely

to be more creative and imaginative, since it results from open-minded thinking and dialogue reflecting a wide range of views rather than just internal planning. The policy goals and standards of success which are developed through such a partnership will be closer to the shared aspirations of many people. Finally, the process itself is an important element of civil society, enabling and encouraging citizens to take responsibility in an area where most people have an opinion and are not afraid, in the right circumstances, to voice it.

• How should cultural policy be determined ?

Consultation									Active participation	
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

6. Direct control or Insulation from the political process

The European experience includes a broad spectrum of approaches to the issue of actually providing financial support for culture. At one end lie countries such as Italy or France which do not see a distinction between culture and any other area of social or economic activity. Culture is therefore the business of the Ministry of Culture and is fully integrated within the established systems for parliamentary accountability. The risks of this approach may include the danger of political interference in cultural affairs, or simply an excessive control by the state of the means of cultural production and distribution, and a consequent stifling of creativity.

Other countries, such as Ireland, Finland, and the United Kingdom have recognised the unique nature of cultural issues and seen a value in trying to preserve the detailed planning and decision-making from the risk of political interference.[7] In the United Kingdom this has led to the doctrine known as the " arm's length principle ", by which money voted by Parliament is granted to a number of quasi-independent bodies, such as the four national Arts Councils, who determine their own policies and spending choices. The Government of Quebec recently established an Arts Council for this reason. But there are dangers with this approach too, including the withdrawal of cultural decision-making from genuine public view or accountability and a potential neglect by government of a sector which it does not directly control. In the Netherlands, an effective half-way house has been developed, with considerable devolution of planning and decision-

making, but the approval of the national cultural plan by Parliament.

• How should cultural funding be distributed ?

Direct control						Insulation from the political process				
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

7. Public or Private

The cultural sector is large and highly heterogeneous. It is therefore not susceptible to simple, blanket responses which, if used, are as likely to smother as to shelter. The age of wholesale public provision has, in any case, largely passed, and mixed economies now function across the continent, with a variety of local emphases. The dilemma in this for cultural policy makers is to target public intervention appropriately in a sector where most consumption and much production operates in the private sector. In some countries, the answer to this question has been to prioritise intervention in areas of perceived " market failure ". This analysis assumes that there is a socially optimal level of cultural activity (whether for quality of life or developmental reasons, or a combination of both) which markets may not fulfil in every area. [8] Thus the public sector may see a need to support minority art forms, though the definition is itself contentious : if opera is a minority form in Britain, despite the commercial and artistic success of the Glyndebourne Opera House, is it also in Italy ? Market failure may also be the rationale behind initiatives to support the participation of those who are excluded from access to market goods, by poverty, disability, geography or other causes beyond their control. Thus a theatre in rural area might require a greater level of subsidy than one in a city, simply because the local market could not sustain it without assistance.

If the role of government is to create a context in which markets work fairly and efficiently, and to intervene where they do not, the focus for policy must be to understand where a market is defective and to assess what action should be

taken. So, in underdeveloped publishing markets such as Bulgaria there is a tendency to concentrate on best-sellers rather than less popular work. Cultural policy may therefore address the deficiency in order to safeguard minority cultural interests and guarantee a degree of pluralism. That choice need not be permanent, however, since public intervention may change the conditions and develop a self-sustaining market for minority products or services.

Elsewhere the division between private and public involvement in the cultural sector has been based more on historical tradition and values than on policy. Some cultural activities, typically libraries and museums, are seen to be a natural part of public provision, while others, such as fashion or popular music, are left to market forces. The absence of public support does not necessarily imply marginalisation : it would be a brave person who ventured an opinion as to whether the public library service or *haute couture* was a more important aspect of French culture. It is also true that there need not be a rigid division between the sectors which receive public support and those which do not : the commercial film industry would struggle without actors trained in subsidised theatre, while research shows that many heavy library users also buy more books than the rest of the population.

This blurred edge between public and private approaches is also evident in other areas. For example, it is now common for European arts organisations to attract resources in the form of business sponsorship in addition to, and even when they do not receive, public funding from the state. The relationship with a commercial rather than a public sector patron may be less different than is often supposed : both, after all,

have expectations of a return for their investment, and what may be at issue is only the nature of that return. Indeed, public sector funding agencies might learn something from business sponsors in terms of the clarity of their expectations and the way in which negotiations can be conducted.

Finally, it must be recognised that there are different ways in which the state can support culture without direct intervention or provision. The most obvious is the tax regime which is used by a number of countries to offset the rigours of the market on certain aspects of cultural production and distribution. Other forms of support include the provision of advice, information and support services to private sector activities, and the state's involvement in training and education. Indeed, in educating its citizens the state lays the foundations of knowledge and self-determination without which markets cannot function.

• What is the right balance between public intervention in the cultural sector and private sector activity ?

Public service										Market forces
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

8. Prestige or Community

Culture has always been bound up with power, status and image. It is natural for governments to exploit cultural resources to reflect their character both internally and in the wider world. Indeed there is a growing recognition that, in a globalised economy, cultural heritage and contemporary arts activity can be a powerful tool of place marketing, helping to attract tourists, customers and inward investment. The creation of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao has drawn huge international attention to the city, and was undertaken as much for that reason as for any intrinsic cultural merit it may possess. In using cultural investment to re-position itself and improve its international image, Bilbao was following well-established precedents in Barcelona, Frankfurt, Paris and elsewhere.

There will always be an important role for such *grands projets*, but there will also be the danger, whether at national or regional level, that they are pursued at the expense of less glamorous initiatives. One consequence of over-emphasis on prestigious cultural investment, evident in a number of European cities, is a growth of disaffection and cynicism among poorer sections of the local population. A stunning new opera house or gallery which focuses on an international audience may inadvertently signal to those who live nearby that they are not welcome. Given that such initiatives are often sited in depressed areas in order to trigger urban regeneration, the contrast between new facilities and local living conditions may be acute. The developers of London's new Museum of Modern Art at Bankside have been sensitive to this kind of problem and invested substantially in projects to involve local communities.

In fact the core of cultural development is everyday and local, the quiet bustle which involves millions of people in attending performances and galleries or in active pursuit of their own cultural interests in education and voluntary situations. Collectively, this adds up to much more than the internationally-renowned museum, though because it is dispersed it is much less recognised. It is also often undervalued, because it is of interest to the resident population rather than international tourists, critics and visitors. A sound cultural policy will span these extremes, and not promote one to the disadvantage of the other. None the less, it is true that society can thrive on local, practical cultural development, even at the expense of prestige projects : whether the reverse is true is more questionable.

This dilemma extends beyond the realm of urban regeneration and capital investment to the mainstream of cultural policy because it represents debates about the value of " high " and " popular " culture in their most acute forms. Today, in most European countries, there is a greater recognition of the value of all aspects of culture, whether publicly-funded, commercial or voluntary, though the pace of change can be slow : there are still some who question whether photography can be art 150 years after its invention. The battle lines between advocates of different cultural activity may be sharply drawn, but it would be more accurate and helpful to see the cultural sector as a continuum within which the constituent parts offer mutual support in practical and aesthetic terms, for example in the way Kenneth MacMillan's ballet *Mayerling* draws on film narrative technique. Cultural policy cannot attend to just one part of this spec-

trum of activity, as the West European experience of culture-led regeneration clearly underlines.

• Where should the state prioritise its cultural resources ?

Prestige investment						Community investment				
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

9. National or International

Culture is inseparable from identity, and often encapsulates the expression of national, regional or ethnic identity. For this reason it is unsurprising that cultural policy often makes a priority of national culture, and especially of traditional styles. Internally, this may be reflected in support for national institutions – theatres, operas, museums, galleries etc. – and an emphasis on national artists or forms of expression ; for example, the distinct architectural traditions of Sweden are inseparable from the country's historical identity and values and rightly cherished. Externally, many countries seek to promote awareness of their cultural heritage through organisations such as the Goethe Institute, the British Council or the Alliance Française.

But this understandable pride in national achievement needs to be tempered by an appreciation of and receptivity to other cultures. An involvement in international culture and exchange is an essential element of a rich and confident national cultural life, as may be seen in the experience of former communist countries which were widely denied access to such influences. Pluralism is vital and is reflected in cultural issues : international contacts are an important counterbalance to the less positive aspects of cultural nationalism. Cultural policy must also remain open to the other cultures which now make up the national environment. Today, Europe is multicultural. Some of its most vibrant forms of cultural expression are associated with immigrant communities from Africa, Asia, or the Americas, or with constituencies such as disabled people whose creativity and contribution to national culture have only recently been rec-

ognised. An effective cultural policy will celebrate both established national cultures while remaining open to newer forms and engaging in international exchange.

• How much should cultural policy concern itself with national or international culture ?

National										International
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

Social development dilemmas

10. Communities or Community

Culture is inseparable from identity : indeed, in many respects, culture might be defined as the outward expression of identity. In a multicultural Europe, the relationship between minority and majority communities presents some of the most profound social and political challenges. Countries such as the United Kingdom are relatively comfortable with the idea that society is composed of a series of overlapping and jostling communities which express peoples' complex identities. These may extend far beyond the obvious domain of ethnic identity to encompass questions of gender, class, disability, sexuality, geography, age, employment status and so on. In these societies cultural policy has tended to recognise, if not always to encourage, the expression of distinct cultural identities – for example, in a gay rugby team, or a disabled people's dance company. Even where they are consciously oppositional to majority identities, such initiatives are seen as indicators of a rich culture which is confident enough to encompass the other, and of democratic pluralism whose quality is properly judged by the rights of minorities, not majorities.

There are other countries – France or Sweden spring to mind – where democratic rights are seen to be expressed in the lack of distinction between citizens who are equally members of one, indivisible community. According to this

concept, the celebration of alternative identities, and particularly those rooted in other national or regional cultures, may be considered as expressing a refusal to integrate and become part of a democratic whole. Such countries may therefore find it difficult to envisage or accept the notion of communities within the fabric of the community itself. The extent to which cultural policy encourages or discourages the expression of different cultural identity may therefore vary widely. Both positions are defensible – the dangers for culture and for civil society arise when some otherwise legal forms of creative expression are discriminated against through the back door of cultural policy.

• How should cultural policy respond to the expression of minority identity ?

Communities										Community
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

11. Cultural diversity or Monoculture

There is a general perception, which is not wholly false, that some European countries have much more ethnically diverse populations than others. Post-war immigration has led to the development of substantial ethnic and cultural minority communities in many European cities. With the passage of time, the demography even of quite remote rural regions has changed. But this is only the most obvious and recent change in the make up of European nations. War, migration, agricultural and industrial development, population dispersal and the shifting of borders have left the continent with a rich and diverse pattern of settlement. As a result, even countries such as Slovakia or Bulgaria include substantial ethnic minorities without having experienced major recent immigration. Recent years have also seen a growing recognition of other minorities not characterised by ethnicity, as the distinct voices of women, disabled people, gays and other groups have come to be heard.

Debates around the needs, rights and obligations of majority and minority communities have always been acute, and often sharply divisive. They have also frequently been articulated in cultural terms, while cultural activity itself has often become the unwilling conscript in one political agenda or another. In France, recent National Front influence in regional government has led to new struggles over what is, and what is not, traditional French culture and therefore what may be worthy of municipal support or censure. The notion of ethnic or cultural " purity " has been perhaps the most destructive political idea of the century, yet retains its adherents in every country, despite a complete absence of

intellectual or moral coherence : what, after all, would be a pure Belgian, and how could we identify the Austrian and Italian components in Mozart ? But, while the state has a responsibility to foster debate about the meanings of culture, and a fundamental duty to oppose its application to oppressive or antidemocratic goals, it cannot set itself up as an arbiter of cultural value. As the physicist Richard Feynman argued "No government has the right to decide on the truth of scientific principles, nor to [...] determine the aesthetic value of artistic creations, nor limit the forms of literary or artistic expression." [9]

The political and social rights of minorities is an issue beyond the scope of this paper, although we consider them to be indistinguishable from those of anyone else : human rights are indivisible. But in purely cultural terms, it is essential that policy should protect and nurture minority interests and forms of expression. Ethnic minorities have a distinct cultural life which offers as much to the vitality of national arts and culture as any other area of cultural activity. Indeed many of the most dynamic aspects of contemporary European culture arise from the links between forms of expression only now being recognised by the West, and their more established counterparts. The creative skills, innovation and practice of minority communities are major production resources to the cultural sector, though its openness to this contribution remains highly questionable. Minority communities also represent a substantial market for all types of culture, whether public or commercial, traditional or contemporary.

Finally, if culture can be a *locus* of conflict, it can equally promote understanding, tolerance and dialogue, and contribute

to the fabric of civil society. Organisation of local cultural activity and celebration of tradition and identity are powerful mechanisms for local capacity building and community development. They are also important ways of counteracting the political demonisation of social groups which depends in the first instance on denying them control of their public image and a voice in democratic and cultural forums. [10] It must be the first goal of national cultural policy to promote the value of cultural diversity, safeguarding the rights and interests of minorities without disaffecting established communities of interest.

• To what extent should cultural policy actively promote cultural diversity ?

Monoculture										Cultural diversity
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

12. Heritage or Contemporary

Cultural policy must inevitably be very concerned with the past. After all, a country's cultural resources reach back over hundreds if not thousands of years, and contemporary cultural activity is very much shaped by what has preceded it. The heritage of country houses and industrial sites, of museum collections and the work of historic artists, even of the natural environment and its management, continue to define the mental landscape of populations and artists. They exert deep influence on what is done today, since it is always done in relation to what has gone before. But there is always the danger of failing to recognise the actuality in which heritage resources have developed, and that their nature remains contingent and debatable. What does a country house built for an aristocrat but subsequently used by state institutions really mean in the historical context ? What does industrial heritage, such as the Pythagoras Factory in Norrtalje (Sweden), say about the enduring struggles over working conditions and their contemporary political reality ? Cultural policy must avoid excessive sterilisation of the past, packaging it into easily digestible components for tourists, and allow heritage resources to live and speak in a contemporary context.

Since the management and exploitation of the cultural resources of the past is generally easier than nurturing today's changeable artistic and cultural environment, the latter is easily neglected. Moreover the need to protect historic buildings, environments, communities or folk traditions will often appear more urgent than supporting contemporary, innovative or controversial work. But unless attention and resources

are directed towards the encouragement and support of experimental, avant-garde and critical cultural activities, the ever-present danger of a rift between the state's cultural policy and actual cultural development can only grow. The policy challenge is to ensure that the whole cultural chain is thriving because the consequences of neglecting one link will be felt across the whole. Culture is living, changing and developing, and the role of cultural policy is to ensure that it remains so.

• How much should cultural policy prioritise heritage resources or contemporary experimentation ?

Heritage										Contemporary
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

13. Visitors or Residents

Throughout the continent, cultural tourism has been important for economic and social reasons, and it continues to grow. In some particularly popular places, like Venice or the English Lake District, policy is concerned more with managing or even limiting the number of existing visitors than attracting more. These are not yet problems in most of Central and Eastern Europe, though rapid development of tourism in cities such as Prague or Tallinn has had impacts not just on local economies, but on local culture and society. Given the value of tourism, there is always the temptation to manage local culture in order to meet the needs of tourists – or, more commonly, what their needs are perceived to be. This has often been perceived by local residents to be done at their expense and against their interests, with negative results for the relationship between inhabitants and visitors and for longer-term sustainability. The resulting problems have contributed to the emergence of the concept of responsible tourism.

It has been said that cultural tourism is the art of participating in another culture, and it is certainly the case that many, perhaps most tourists, are attracted by the authentic feel of life in the places which they visit. [11] "They want to go where the locals go, eat where the locals eat and be entertained by attractions that are part of the character, heritage and culture of the place they are visiting." [12] Sensitive cultural policy will find ways of offering services to tourists at standards they expect by developing facilities in partnership with local needs and interests. Projects which increase the quality of life for citizens and tourists should be part of ordinary local

development strategies, as in several North European cities where environmental improvements have benefited everyone and laid the foundations of new tourism appeal. Interventions such as anti-litter drives, sign-posting, better policing, public transport and lighting, car park safety and so on enhance attractiveness for both residents and visitors.

In this sense cultural policy cannot be disentangled from the rest of public policy. Since many cultural institutions underachieve because the areas surrounding them are degraded, frightening or unpleasant, investment in the environment can be an indirect investment in the viability of a cultural venue. The advice of the American National Trust for Historic Preservation is worth remembering : "As you take this step, look to the future as well as the present. When you prepare for visitors, be sure that the choices you make also improve your community for the long term. Plan to win the war, not just the battle." [13]

• Who should be the focus of cultural policy ?

Visitors										Residents
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

14. External image or Internal reality

Culture is a major component in the way a country presents itself to the rest of the world. It is vital not just to tourism, but also in attracting inward investment and promoting local products and services. The need to communicate a particular image may therefore be very strong, but may also conflict with the image which local inhabitants have of their lives, especially if it requires suppressing the reality of poverty, social unrest, dereliction and similar problems. The gap between these pictures can be dangerous and may feed cynicism and disaffection among local people on whom development will depend and whose co-operation with the process is essential. In Europe, where there has been a mass media for many years, people have developed increasingly sophisticated responses to the ways in which reality is presented. They are often suspicious of " good news stories " which are unlikely to present a complete story. It may be that the future of place marketing lies in a more rounded and honest presentation which can bridge the expectations of external and internal realities, and that addressing complexity will be the more interesting and successful strategy in future.

• How much should culture be presented for internal or external consumption ?

External image   Internal reality

5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

Economic development dilemmas

15. Subsidy or Investment

Whether cultural funds are distributed by the state or by an autonomous government agency may be less important than the reason for funding, and the contract on which it is based. It is often the case that funds are distributed as a general subsidy, unrelated to delivery of stated services or specific performance standards. This can unwittingly foster a culture of dependency, where unfocused and uncosted activity is supported by ever-larger amounts of public funding. An element of competition can introduce powerful and effective performance incentives, though its nature will vary between sectors. In the more commercial areas of cultural production, it is possible to use public funding directly as a form of investment, offering loans at favourable rates and terms, as did the greater London Enterprise Board between 1984 and 1986, or even taking share options in creative businesses. The UK National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts was established in 1998 to promote investment in creative marketable ideas along such lines, with income derived from successful initiatives to be reinvested in future initiatives.

In the not-for-profit sector, there is also considerable scope for moving from a subsidy approach to an investment one. Challenge funding has become more common in recent years, so that grant aid will be provided only where there is

matching funding from other sources, and proof of business planning and economic sustainability. Alternatively, the state can set out its cultural objectives, and invite tenders from cultural entrepreneurs and arts organisations. Services would not only be made more cost-effective but, depending on the criteria of the tender, more imaginative. Such incentives can help to ensure that resources deliver the greatest possible value. The challenge for cultural policy makers is to express their objectives in clear measurable terms, and develop viable performance indicators for the sector. This fundamental need is only beginning to be addressed, and much work remains to be done before there are credible evaluation frameworks and indicators. [14]

• On what basis should public funding of culture be provided ?

Subsidy										Investment
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

16. Consumption or Production

As the economic importance of the cultural sector has grown during the past forty years, so have a number of artificial and unhelpful distinctions within it. Some of these reflect cultural values, for example the distinction between classical and popular music, but others arise partly from the economic relationships between different types of activity. In many Western European cities and regions there was a shift in cultural policy towards consumption, partly in response to economic recession and the need for diversification. Cultural strategists began to prioritise the development of cultural attractions as magnets for tourism, retailing and associated services. In this respect, the example of Glasgow is well known partly because it involved a particularly decisive re-positioning of the city's image from a heavy industrial base to a " festival city ". But too great an emphasis on the consumption side of the equation may leave both the cultural sector and the local economy vulnerable to larger economic trends over which neither can have much influence.

More recently, cultural planners have recognised the need to stimulate the productive aspects of cultural life – including a wide range of activities from fashion, music, media and publishing to digital technology services, design and crafts, and which collectively have come to be referred to as the creative industries. Support for development in this sector is seen as providing more sustainable, and better quality jobs than the often seasonal, low-paid jobs associated with tourism and retailing. Today, at least four million people are employed in the cultural industries in the European Union ; this sector

contributed an estimated £9.6 thousand million to Britain's export in 1996. [15] Cultural planners can make important contributions by addressing the distribution and marketing mechanisms which are common weaknesses to both creative organisations and small businesses generally. Future success will come to those cities, regions or states which can nurture both production and consumption aspects, ensuring that they are mutually supportive and that local producers develop goods and services to meet the needs of a wide range of consumers from tourists to business. In some areas, such as digital technology services, this will require a truly global perspective : thanks to time differences, digital editing companies in Europe or India are able to work on Hollywood projects overnight with substantial time savings. Developing appropriate responses to these changes may require cultural planning agencies to extend the skills and experience of their staff very substantially.

• How can the state best nurture the production and consumption of culture ?

Production										Consumption
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

Management dilemmas

17. Centralisation or Decentralisation

A tendency towards state centralism is much older than the present century, and to some extent a continuous adjustment between centre, regions and localities is a natural part of the political process. In cultural policy terms, there are certainly countries which promote a rich level of provision through an essentially centralised and hierarchical structure. The provision of resources, buildings and staff from a ministry of culture may be less common today than in the past, but it still reflects normal practice in countries such as France. In Germany, concerns over state interference in cultural policy led to all cultural matters being delegated to the *Länder* in the post-war constitution : the government of Gerhart Schröder is the first to appoint the equivalent of a Minister for Culture, albeit with very limited resources. In the United States decentralisation operates as much because of a *laissez-faire* approach to culture as because of the federal political structure. Within this spectrum lies most European cultural policy practice, though one may question the extent to which the balance between centralisation and local control is the result of planning rather than accident or pragmatism.

The British approach is a case study of redefinition of balance between centre and regions, showing repeated adjustment since 1945, when the Arts Council was established as an

" arm's length " support structure. In the 1950s, the Arts Council closed its regional offices, leading to the spontaneous creation of Regional Arts Associations in the 1960s and 1970s, and their eventual absorption into the Arts Council's structure in the early 1990s. At the same time a series of initiatives to devolve decision-making from the capital to the regions has been only partly successful. What is lacking here, as elsewhere, is an overarching principle capable of guiding decisions on an everyday basis. The Maastricht Treaty was significant, among other things, in affirming the principle of subsidiarity in the European Union, which states that decision-making should take place as close to the citizen as possible. This can certainly be applied to cultural policy, so that only those decisions or initiatives which must be considered at a national level should be the responsibility of a ministry of culture, with the rest being devolved to regional and local administration.

The advantages of the centralising model seem to be a guarantee of control, perhaps of standards, and a consistency of approach ; it may also reflect a greater governmental commitment to culture. There are some types of issue where central control is obviously more efficient : the development of library codes, for example, would fall into this category, although the public would be better served by locally-determined book purchasing. The advantages of decentralisation are a closer correlation between provision and local needs, greater opportunity for cultural diversity and an empowerment of local action and participation in cultural activity. The right balance between the two can safeguard the strategic

position and the standards of the cultural sector, while promoting local commitment, enthusiasm and self-reliance.

• Where should decisions about implementation of cultural policy lie ?

Central level									Decentralised level
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

18. Direct provision or Contracting-out

Having determined which areas of the cultural sector require public intervention, the nature of that intervention can be addressed. The question of whether services should be provided directly by the state or whether they should be bought in from other suppliers lies at the heart of recent public policy debates in many European countries. It affects much larger areas of provision than cultural services, including health, education, housing and social services among others. It may be that the pace of current change means that everything really is slipping out of the grasp of the state. In fields as different as environmental management and social policy, there is a growing recognition that the role of government and its agencies is to manage and channel forces which it no longer pretends to be able to control, though there is not yet much international evidence of the impact of this thinking on cultural policy. Cultural policy has historically been better at thinking administratively than about how underlying principles should guide its work.

The cultural sector has generally been a mixed economy, with provision being directly provided by the state in some fields, by commercial sources in others, and by voluntary or not-for-profit agencies elsewhere. There are countries where direct provision is a dominant means of supporting culture, with facilities, managers and even artists being directly employed as civil servants. Elsewhere, this may apply only to particular areas of the cultural sector, such as libraries, while others, such as film production and distribution, are left almost entirely to private businesses. But it must be recognised that the culture of public institutions is not normally

entrepreneurial ; they are, perhaps rightly, averse to taking risks. Their strengths lie in strategic planning and they tend to be most effective as enablers, facilitators and encouragers.

The degree of dependency for cultural provision on not-for-profit and commercial operators which is prevalent in the United States does not have obvious parallels in Europe, although individual sectors in some countries function very similarly. The key change in European countries has been a gradual move towards contracting independents to provide specific services, either on a profit-making or a not-for-profit basis. Thus, public parks, sports facilities and museums in some cities have been vested in charitable trusts rather than local authority control, allowing them to raise resources in new ways, and focus on their distinct mission independent of other municipal concerns. The relationship between cultural departments and arts organisations is frequently quasi-contractual, and there are moves in some countries to make this clearer. Sometimes services or functions can move effectively from direct provision to a contracted service – for instance where public intervention is needed to establish the viability of an initiative, but is not required for its longer-term management. The advantages of direct provision are similar to those of centralisation – control and consistency. But contracting out services can create energy, foster new ideas and approaches, make people more responsive to the needs of customers and audiences, and offer flexibility. It is often more efficient and effective, even where it does not reduce actual costs.

• How should cultural services be delivered ?

Direct provision										Contracting-out
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

19. The Arts or the Artist

There is a view, which not surprisingly tends to be common within the cultural sector, that artists are different and, more specifically, that they have a special role in society which justifies special treatment. It is not uncommon for governments to offer privileges to artists – tax exemptions in Ireland, for example, special conditions in unemployment in France, annual grants in Finland, or the Artists' Unions which still exist in many former communist countries. This raises fundamental questions of equity : does anyone deserve privileges because of their chosen profession, and if artists, why not doctors, teachers or engineers ? Other workers are encouraged to retrain when there is a scarcity of work in their field : why not artists ? Of more immediate concern are the practical questions it raises, including the key issue of whether supporting artists is in itself the best way to support the arts.

While the employment and living conditions of artists are a legitimate concern of cultural policy, this is a crude measure of cultural vitality because it depends not on performance but on status. In other words, the artist is entitled to special treatment, with its attendant costs, because of what he or she is, not what they have achieved. They may have produced no work of any merit for years, or ever, but that makes no difference if they have recognition as an artist. And historically, whether we are looking at the Academies of the last or the present century, it is rarely the artists, writers, composers or performers whom the state recognises who are eventually seen to be the most important.

The alternative approach is to support the arts, in terms of infrastructure, education and access, to encourage participa-

tion and engagement, to nurture the role of the arts in everyday life. This is much more difficult, because the task is fluid, complex and involves millions of people rather than a few thousand. This support would, of course, indirectly benefit artists and cultural workers – but on the basis of their performance and contribution, not their status. This shift of emphasis would be more significant in some countries than others. Artists' Unions have been mentioned : their favoured position in some countries, for instance in controlling assets given to them by the state, gives them a lasting and unfair advantage over newer civil society organisations in the arts.

• How much should cultural policy promote artists or the arts ?

Artists										The Arts
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

20. Infrastructure or Activity

In the allocation of resources, and the planning of programmes, it is often easier to think in terms of infrastructure than activity. Infrastructure is a visible asset which can appear on a balance sheet ; it can be opened by a local politician, who can point to it and say "See what I have delivered". As a static object, it is reliable and controllable, and it will always stand as silent testimony to culture. Cultural infrastructure is essential : without museums, libraries, theatres, sports stadia cultural activity would be severely curtailed. But facilities bring the serious danger that their presence and management demands leads cultural planners into thinking that they *are* the city's culture, rather than a means of supporting it. It is not uncommon for public library or museum services to become so concerned with the management of their resources that they lose sight of the reason they exist – namely the education, cultural enjoyment and delight of people. Some curators have been known to look askance at the disturbance caused by visiting schoolchildren.

Cultural infrastructure is also expensive and, once it is established its costs tends to grow. Since it is always easier to cut back on activity programmes than buildings, infrastructure is also unequally protected in times of financial austerity. These kinds of problems have been increasingly recognised, and some imaginative alternatives developed : in Munich, for example, the neighbourhood cultural programme is facilitated through mobile and temporary facilities.

It is much easier to manage cultural infrastructure, which stays put and does not answer back. Managing cultural activity, depending as it does on a vast number of contradic-

tory, individualistic and questioning people, is a much more of a challenge. But it is what cultural policy is really about. Culture will continue whether or not there is an infrastructure to support it : the real disaster is to have infrastructure without activity – dark theatres, or galleries closed because of staff shortages. It may argued that programmes of events and activities are inherently ephemeral, and that investment in concert halls or arts centres provides permanence and better value. But a programme of cultural animation can become as permanent as it need be, while still being able to adapt to changing times and interests. An annual street festival is a flexible form of socio-cultural infrastructure.

The vibrancy of culture is provided by activities, products and performances, and it derives its meaning and power through constant renewal. Although cultural facilities will always be required, some of the most powerful cultural statements and actions continue to take place outside them, from the installations of Christo to the colonisation of derelict buildings by up and coming artists and cultural entrepreneurs. One possibility is to manage cultural facilities and support for cultural activities separately, so that the relatively straightforward provision of buildings is undertaken by one department or authority, and the more complex developmental role by another. What is certain, is that in the debate between containers and their contents, it is essential that cultural planners find the right balance, especially given the ability of infrastructure projects to absorb such large amounts of finance.

• How should cultural resources be distributed between facilities and activity ?

Infrastructure										Activity
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

21. Artists or Managers

Management is not always popular among cultural professionals or public sector employees ; there is a hardening division between those who see the MBA (Master of Business Administration) culture as a vital injection of professionalism, and those who see it as fashionable irritant. It is always possible to contrast what is produced by a doctor or a teacher, with what is produced by a health or education service manager, to the apparent disadvantage of the latter. Doctors heal, teachers teach : managers manage, and it does not seem a very productive activity. This view is common in the arts and cultural services, especially when managers often seem to be better paid than the actors or musicians on whose work they depend. A cultural policy which prioritises support for artists at the expense of management would, at first sight, seem very attractive.

But, of course, without the work of managers much of what artists do would not be possible, or would be much less effective. The invisible activities of forward planning, fundraising, people management, research and marketing greatly add value to the work of artists. It doesn't really matter how good your performance is if you don't have the marketing skills to bring people in to see it, or how fine your book is if you do not know how to distribute it. The economic and social capital of cultural resources cannot be exploited without good management. The skill level of the cultural workforce will stagnate or decline without investment in vocational and professional training. The role of management is vital in making the most efficient and effective use of the available resources, though it is equally true that it can

grow beyond what is needed, and easily becomes disproportionately expensive.

• How much attention needs to be given to effective management of artistic activity ?

Artists										Managers
5	4	3	2	1	-	1	2	3	4	5

Notes

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5 T. S. Eliot, "Christianity and culture", in John Carey (1992), *The intellectuals and the masses*, Faber, London.

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[14] Recent work by Comedia in the United Kingdom has begun to address this issue, e.g. François Matarasso & John Chell (1998), *Vital signs, mapping community arts in Belfast*, Comedia, Stroud.

[15] British Council (1997), *Submission of information on creative industries export to the creative industries task force*, in collaboration with Gorham & Partners Ltd.

The Research and Development Unit of the Cultural Policy and Action Division has launched a new series of publications – the Policy Notes. These are synoptic and/or comparative reports on topical issues in the fields of cultural policy.

Publications :

• "VAT and book policy : impacts and issues"
• "Culture, creativity and the young : developing public policy"
• "Culture – a way forward" (Culture and neighbourhoods : an action-research project in urban Europe)
• "The governance of culture – approaches to integrated cultural planning and policies" (forthcoming)
• "Culture and civil society : new partnerships with the third sector" (forthcoming)

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