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'A Distant Mirror'

Canadian Perspectives on Cultural Policy, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

Cultural diversity, in all its forms, is posing a profound challenge to traditional formulations of cultural policy. In most countries the artistic and cultural landscape has not evolved to reflect the realities of a changed social landscape. This rift threatens to undermine the legitimacy of cultural institutions and the public policy that supports them. The shift from homogeneity to diversity as the new social norm requires a rethinking of the processes, mechanisms, and relationships necessary for democratic policy development in diverse societies.¹

The Canadian Context²

Cultural diversity has figured prominently in Canada's social and political history for several reasons. Canada's population growth and development has been and remains highly dependent on immigration; *on a per capita basis Canada receives more immigrants annually than any other country in the world.*

In 1954, nearly 95% of all immigrants came from Europe and the United States. Less than 5% came from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. By the mid-nineties, more than 60% of immigrants came from Asia alone – especially Hong Kong, India, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The 1996 census indicated that 11.2% of Canada's population are members of visible minority groups, i.e. non-Native Canadian people of non-white origins. Significantly, the proportion of adult visible minorities is projected to double by 2016. More telling still is the composition of the youngest cohort of Canadians – children and adolescents aged 0-14. Here more than half (53%) have ethnic origins other than British, French, Canadian or Native Canadian, compared to the national average of just over 10%. In major urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver this figure is as high as 70%. *This is Canada's future and it is a decidedly diverse one.*

By almost any international standard, Canada remains an enviable place to live. The country has repeatedly finished first in the United Nations' Human Development Index in its assessed overall quality of life. On the question of cultural diversity, the World Report on Culture and Development cites Canada as 'a model for other countries to follow' (UNESCO, 1995).

Yet diversity is seen in policy circles in Canada as one of a number of 'fault lines' challenging traditional patterns of social cohesion in Canadian society. Cultural diversity

1. Council of Europe (1998). *Terms of Reference: Transversal Study on Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*. This analysis emerges from Canada's entry into the 'first round' of countries participating in the Council of Europe's Transversal Study on Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity.

2. A detailed account of Canada's experience: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/Culture/Cultural_policies/Comparative_reviews/Reports/default.asp#TopOfPage.

intersects with economic and other types of polarization that threaten Canada's reputation for leadership on these issues and challenge Canadian's self-image as a caring, open and compassionate society.

While significant progress has been made, Canada is far from having 'resolved' cultural diversity issues

Moving from issues of cultural diversity more broadly to the more specific arena of *cultural policy responses* to diversity, Canada has for some time taken proactive measures to acknowledge and support greater diversity in cultural production and representation. While significant progress has been made, progress that must be acknowledged and celebrated, Canada is far from having 'resolved' these issues. Native Canadian peoples, women, visible minorities, disabled people and others continue to point out serious shortcomings of 'cultural democracy' in the Canadian context. Based on Canadian experience, a number of themes were identified that constitute barriers to further progress. They are examined in the next sections.

Disentangling and Clarifying Concepts

Since UNESCO's landmark *Out Creative Diversity* (1995) 'cultural diversity' has become arguably *the* driving theme in cultural policy internationally. It is assumed to be an unqualified public good and inseparable from policy agendas related to:

- achieving social cohesion
- simultaneously celebrating differentiated identities while forging a new sense of belonging in culturally diverse societies;
- responding to cultural democracy demands;
- enriching cultural production in the 'new' knowledge economy in which cultural and media industries play prominent roles;
- overcoming social exclusion; and
- achieving sustainable patterns of development.

Yet, if these assumptions are to stand for more than empty rhetoric they need to be critically examined both conceptually and empirically. This paper examines just one facet of this larger challenge, arguing that linkages between cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion are not self-evident or certain but messy, fraught with difficulties, conflicts and compromises.

Contradictory Diversity Demands

Canada's social and political history stands as an example of the tensions and complexities of reconciling diversity and cohesion. For many years Canada has faced the challenge of sustaining a country that acknowledges the legitimate historical claims of Canada's 'founding peoples', namely Native Canadian peoples, English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, while simultaneously advancing equity and inclusion in a more broadly defined pluralistic nation. The former demands conflict in direct ways with the latter.

For ethno-racial and visible minorities with diasporic links to other nations in the world, the privileging of history (time) and territory (space) as the foundation for claims of Native Canadian and English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians fails to reflect

the reality of Canada today. Even when formal commitments to a broadened definition of diversity and equity are established – as they have been through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Part 1 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982) and other legislative and policy instruments – people of colour and other minorities argue that these measures fail because they continue to operate within the dominant framework of English-speaking and French-speaking Canada. They also fail to acknowledge fundamental *power imbalances* in the society.

Conversely, representatives of these three ‘founding peoples’, particularly Native Canadian and French-speaking Canadians, maintain that historical and territorial claims cannot be ignored. Québec has steadfastly resisted the dilution of its status in the Canadian Confederation to ‘one ethnic group among others.’ In Québec, the challenge of reconciling its own nationalist project with the rights of minorities within the province remains a major difficulty.³ Outside Québec many Canadians have begun to question the continued hold of the English-French partnership as a defining characteristic of a country that is increasingly diverse and global in orientation. Compounding matters, many Canadians have been alienated by the Federal Government’s efforts to maintain official bilingualism and are growing weary of the ongoing conflict (expressed constitutionally) between English-speaking and French-speaking Canada.

Clearly Canada is far from having addressed these contradictory demands for diversity. Indeed, the country’s experience points to an understanding of diversity as an *ongoing negotiation of intersecting and often conflicting interests*. This perspective has significant implications for how ‘social cohesion’ is conceptualized and pursued as a policy goal – a matter to be taken up below.

Definitional Dilemmas

If greater clarity and rigour is necessary regarding matters of ‘cultural diversity’, so, too, is the case for culture and cultural policy. The ‘definitional dilemma’ in Canadian cultural policy – how we define ‘culture’ and ‘cultural development’ for purposes of cultural policy and planning – is longstanding and numbingly repetitive. At the most general level the trend has been to embrace a broader, anthropological (‘A-culture’) or ethnographic definition of culture as ‘ways of life’ that characterize a community or social group.⁴ In more pragmatic terms, however, cultural policy has remained dominated by an ‘arts and humanities’ (‘H-culture’) definition of culture – particular forms of creative expression encompassing both popular and high culture and the institutions and industries in which these works are produced and disseminated.

While it is important to recognize the close connections between the two conceptualizations of culture, conflating them has been a source of confusion in Canadian cultural policy. This failing is related to a tension in Canadian cultural policy manifest in conflicting policy visions of ‘the arts’ and ‘heritage.’ In the arts and cultural industries sphere of cultural policy the dominant conceptual scheme has remained largely the ‘H-culture’ school of artistic or creative expression. By contrast, the heritage field has increasingly embraced the larger ‘A-culture’ frame of reference. In the ‘arts and culture’ conceptual scheme, heritage forms a subset, and is discussed either as a disciplinary category – usually associated with museums, archives, libraries, built heritage, archaeology, folk life/folklore, etc. – or as the last step in the production chain of creation, production, dis-

3. For example, First Nations groups in Québec made it clear that if Québec were to declare sovereignty on linguistic and territorial grounds it would be faced by immediate declarations of sovereignty and land claims state from First Nations.

4. The 1999 Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage *A Sense of Place – A Sense of Being* adopted the four-word definition of culture as ‘ways of living together.’ Significantly, it also notes that after two years of consultation and analysis ‘we found we were no wiser in defining culture and cultural identity than we had been at the outset’ (1999, xiii).

tribution and conservation. *Either treatment profoundly marginalizes heritage issues.*

Canadian cultural policy has struggled to find a middle ground between defining 'culture' too broadly – as in 'ways of life' – or too narrowly – as in 'the arts.' Matarasso and Landry (1999) speak of the value of 'marking the edges' of cultural policy or planning. A middle ground might exist if the substantive focus of cultural policy can be seen as less 'culture' than 'cultural resources' – those symbols and symbolic processes through which we communicate and reproduce larger social realities.

If we are to explore in meaningful as opposed to tokenistic terms the relationship between cultural policies and increasingly diverse populations we need to set some parameters. Paradoxically, the limits of what cultural policies *can* realistically accomplish must be clearly identified if their actual potential to affect change is to be realized.

Social Cohesion and Social Justice

Social cohesion, and more specifically the 'threats' to social cohesion in Canada by a series of developments, is one of three priorities of the Policy Research Initiative of the Federal Government, an ambitious cross-government policy research strategy.⁵ The goal is to improve network research and public policy across all departments and fields of research in order to anticipate and respond to key challenges facing Canada in the 21st century. In the area of social cohesion the Policy Research Initiative identified two 'fault lines'⁶ currently believed to be undermining the social fabric linking Canadians, thereby undercutting social cohesion. The first had to do with increasing demographic and social diversity. The second was the effects of economic and other types of polarization.

The relationship between these two forms of cohesion is complex and must be disentangled. Some analysts have been critical of the choice of 'social cohesion' as the umbrella under which policy challenges linked to growing 'fault lines' in Canadian society are being examined. The rubric of social cohesion can act to undercut the sharper focus on exclusion and inequity formerly conveyed by 'social justice' (Jenson, 1998; Baeker, 1998). A recent Senate Standing Committee's *Final Report on Social Cohesion* (1999) in Canada expressed concern that declining levels of 'shared values and traditions' should not be allowed to overshadow continuing challenges associated with redistribution and social justice.

The second objection is that on the surface 'social cohesion' could be misinterpreted as a new code for 'national unity,' and as a plea – in the context of the pressures and challenges of globalization – for a return to a simpler, more homogeneous society in which cultural consensus could more easily be achieved.

In this regard, Fraser's (1995) analysis of distinctions between redistributive or *social justice* and the struggle for recognition or *cultural justice* is helpful. Redistributive justice has been the dominant focus of twentieth-century struggles for social justice. It focuses on socio-economic inequities, disparities in basic physical and material needs: – income, property, access to paid work, education, health care and leisure time – and, more starkly, in rates of morbidity and life expectancy.

This materialist view of inequity has broadened in recent years to encompass the struggle for recognition, what Fraser (somewhat grandly) terms 'the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century' (1995, 68). This struggle is rooted in social

5. The others: economic restructuring and adaptation to the knowledge economy, and environmental sustainability.

6. 'Faultlines' are considered to be measurable differences that risk creating tension and a sense of inequity with significant implications for public policy and governance (Social Cohesion Network, 1998).

patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include:

- cultural domination: being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own;
- non-recognition: being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretive practices of one's culture; and
- disrespect: being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions (1995, 71).

The remedy for cultural injustice, Fraser maintains, is some form of cultural or symbolic change. She does not advocate that we choose between social and cultural justice; rather, that we understand the distinction and the inherent tensions that exist between them. Fraser terms the tension between equity and diversity the 'redistributive-recognition' dilemma. This is rooted in the seemingly contradictory goals of abolishing difference and rendering people more equal in the case of redistributive justice and promoting group difference in the justice of recognition. Many groups in society are subject to both forms of injustice and require assistance in responding to both; this entails both claiming and denying their specificity. Gender and race are cited as examples of 'bivalent collectives' in which the two axes of injustice intersect and reinforce each other.

The Limits of Liberal Consensus

A core tenet of liberalism is the belief in the possibility of consensus—the belief that diverse perspectives and interests can ultimately be reconciled, and that conflict can be avoided in advancing equity and justice. The belief that 'genuine' intercultural dialogue and exchange can be a vehicle for mutual understanding and for advancing racial and cultural harmony is based on this belief.⁷ Canada's explicit commitment to both an ideology and a public policy of cultural diversity has been a benefit and has provided socially acceptable terms for discussing sensitive issues of ethnic diversity and racism that have been the source of open conflict in many countries. However, it can also be argued that official policy has done as much to disguise, as it has to advance an agenda of equity and social justice.

On issues of diversity and equity, Henry et al. (2000) explore why such a significant gap exists between Canada's *claims* that it is inclusive and pluralistic – with legislated and institutionalized commitments to equity – and the *reality* of the experience of many ethno-racial and cultural minorities that is both exclusionary and monocultural. The authors maintain that liberal democracies contain within them fundamental tensions between democratic ideology – the *language* of 'tolerance,' 'openness' and 'equity' – and systemic structures of discrimination. These tensions act to disguise, and thus paradoxically *reinforce*, rather than confront, inequity. Henry et al. theorize this phenomenon as 'democratic racism.'⁸

We cannot be naive about the role played by power and resources in perpetuating systemic discrimination and inequity within existing institutional systems. Barriers must be broken and systems changed to ensure that marginalized groups are involved at every level and stage in decision-making in these institutions. Karim (1998) argues that Canadian cultural and media institutions have made progress in expanding minority participation in some areas but lag behind other countries, such as the United States,

7. The liberal belief in 'managed consensus' has been a core assumption in the nineteenth century vision of the nation state and in the post-war welfare state, two pillars of modern cultural policy.

8. Blommaert and Kerschueren (1998) also examine how the discourse of diversity serves as an instrument for the reproduction of social problems, forms of inequality and majority power. They argue that the assumption that diversity must be 'managed' suggests a policy of containment and the hierarchical domination of one group by another in a society.

in advancing in others. Examples include participation in the cultural labour force, appointments to cultural boards, and support for minority ownership of media.

Social change rarely occurs through peaceful and harmonious consensus but is rather often precipitated by crisis, conflict and contestation. Constructive conflict must include the recognition of different needs and interests (individual and collective) as a starting point for negotiation and engagement (Tator et al. 1998).

Institutional and Sectoral Change

The true debate – it has only slowly come to be realized – is not in fact about inclusion or of different cultural traditions, but about the ability of old structures to change. Can the ‘contours’ – programming, employment, marketing and the way institutions are run – change in response? Can the mainstream arts centres and the management structures take on the implications of demographic change? Can they attract more audiences ...? Can they themselves appoint top managers that are not virtually all white (and male and middle-class)? (Khan, 2001).

Greater conceptual clarity and a reformulation of cultural policy discourses are needed if commitments to diversity are to mean anything. But new discourses must also be accompanied by commitments to institutional diversification and sectoral change and to defining concrete measures and indicators to assess progress. Without tangible progress on these fronts, continued state patronage will be increasingly difficult to justify in the face of criticism on both the left (lack of progress towards equity) and on the right (the futility of continued investment).

Changing Institutions

As in many countries, the cultural policy discourse in Canada was dominated by a ‘two-tier’ cultural system for many decades. On the one hand was the state-subsidized, predominantly Eurocentric ‘civilizing’ or ‘high’ arts and indigenous cultural industries

system, usually linked to lofty goals of national identity and cultural sovereignty. On the other, were more ‘popular,’ ‘community,’ ‘ethnic’ (or ‘heritage’) or ‘commercial’ forms. These forms of popular culture operated either in the marketplace or on an amateur basis; the expectation was that they be driven and sustained by demand. In contrast, cultural policy that addressed the subsidized system historically operated on a supply-side set of assumptions: ‘if we build it (or create it), they will come.’ The result was that the needs of a specific group of historically advantaged art forms and cultural institutions assumed control of the cultural policy agenda, over the interests of newer cultural groups and the needs of an increasingly diverse public. In defining

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strategies of institutional diversification a key issue is the balancing of efforts between reform in existing ‘mainstream’ institutions and support for alternative institutions serving specific diverse communities. Canada, relative to countries such as the United Kingdom, has seen relatively little of what are called policies of ‘cultural ownership’. These are strategies in which the facilities, the administration, the juries, the artists and curators belong to specific, usually ethno-racial communities.

The policy tensions here are real and solutions are not straightforward. Choosing the

first route – integration with ‘mainstream’ institutions and cultural policies – can carry with it charges of compromising the integrity of diversity and cultural appropriation. If separate or alternative institutions and policies are chosen, the accompanying risk may be the perception that these interests have been relegated to the margins or ‘ghettos.’

Cunningham and Sinclair (2000) provide useful middle ground in insisting that there must be support for new institutions and for cultural production serving specific communities, but that ‘mainstream’ cultural and media institutions must be held more accountable on basic requirements of equity.

One useful frame of reference for viewing change strategies in ‘mainstream’ institutions is to see efforts falling into three categories:

- change through ‘one-off’ programming – the most commonly employed approach in cultural institutions;
- change through building knowledge and relationships – a perspective that acknowledges cultural institutions generally have weak connections to communities they serve, and that meaningful relationships will only develop over time; and
- systemic change – a process for change guided by staff at all levels and playing out in all aspects of institutional reform – from mission and values definition, to programmes and functions, to hiring and training practices, etc.

The literature suggests that examples of the last are few and far between. More systemic change strategies would require looking at measures and indicators capable of assessing, for example:

- the degree of participation by minorities in administrative and decision-making processes – i.e. employment in the cultural labour force, positions in decision-making systems, participation on cultural boards and
- analysis of cultural participation/consumption by ethno-racial groups and audience reach in existing cultural and media institutions, in particular in the context of the percentage allocation of public funds received by these institutions.

But institutional diversification cannot be limited to change in the ‘mainstream’. A second set of benchmarks and indicators are needed that are capable of capturing ‘non-traditional’ cultural participation occurring outside existing institutions and categories of cultural activity. A strong theme here must be the need to move to a better understanding of the *actual* cultural activities and cultural participation of Canadians – as distinct from those cultural activities legitimized by existing cultural policy frameworks.

Murray (1999) refers to these as ‘the symbolic experience of ordinary Canadians.’ Work by Bennett (1999) and others on methodologies for identifying and building a better picture of cultural practices and experiences in the ‘everyday life’ of communities holds tremendous promise in this regard.⁹

Larger Sectoral Change Strategies

In Canada, more attention has been directed to the *establishment* of policy and legislative commitments to diversity than to a more rigorous focus on *policy implementation and evaluation*. This problem is not unique to this policy area but represents a broader challenge in public policy. The literature on policy implementation suggests that

9. The National Everyday Cultures Program in the United Kingdom was launched in 2000 to advance work in this area, with financing provided by the Department of Media, Culture and Sport.

a need exists to continue to clarify core concepts and planning frameworks – i.e. both the conceptual frameworks and the measures or indicators needed to assess progress – while *simultaneously* moving ahead to take action and evaluate results. Forand, Hardy and Smith (1999) argue that the great failing of environmental strategies aimed at ‘sustainable development’ is that the most energy and focus is directed towards the planning phase of the policy and management cycle, including attention to conceptual mapping, much less towards the implementation and operation stage, and the least of all towards the monitoring and corrective action stage.

One requirement of greater attention to policy implementation and evaluation is better measures and indicators to assess success. Few if any countries in the world would appear to be collecting statistics or indicators on a sufficiently rigorous and long-term basis so as to provide meaningful tools for policy evaluation.¹⁰

The following are among acknowledged shortcomings of cultural statistics as they relate to cultural diversity:

- much of the focus has been on the supply or production/expenditure side of the sector – although with insufficient ethno-linguistic and other breakdowns of diversity; for example we still have little data on the ethno-racial composition of the cultural labour force or of boards of cultural institutions and agencies;
- far less attention has been paid to the participation or the consumption side of cultural production, and more specifically to consumption/participation in non-dominant communities; and,
- data collection remains largely contained within the traditionally defined ‘arts, heritage and cultural industries’ conceptualization of cultural activity, rather than with a broader range and definition of cultural practices in a diverse society.

While stronger empirical data and meaningful measures and indicators are needed to support any change process in responding to diversity, they are not a panacea. In Canada confidence in the capacity of government – particularly senior levels of government – to ‘engineer’ change and resolve complex problems from the top has plummeted over the past decade. In fields such as health and education researchers and policy analysts have begun to examine alternative strategies for change in complex human systems. An emerging literature on complexity theory or science as it relates to a range of policy areas can offer significant insights into the cultural realm.

Complexity science acknowledged that change is rarely linear, rational and predictable, but fragmented, adaptive and organic. Recognizing this postulates that a radically different set of assumptions and principles are needed from those prescribed by positivist assumptions that led us to believe we could ‘engineer’ social change. Fullan (1996) has examined barriers to systemic change in the education sector. Drawing on insights from complexity theory he argues that while more rigorous performance standards and expectations are essential they are not, in themselves, sufficient.

Fullan defines capacity building to affect change in education being fundamentally a challenge of *extending networks of influence and communication*. He identifies two underlying strategies. The first is what is broadly referred to as ‘networking and relationship building’. This is the more action-oriented, immediate set of strategies, and he

10. One of the goals of the Council of Europe study is to establish a more rigorous empirical foundation for assessing progress in cultural policy and cultural diversity. A research papers produced for the CoE study on performance measures and indicators was prepared by Dr. Arnold Love an internationally respected figure in the field of performance measures and evaluation. Love, Arnold (2001). *Assessing the Implementation of Cultural Diversity Policies*. In Bennett, Tony (2001). *Differing Diversities: Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*. Council of Europe.

describes a range of approaches used in the education field. The second, longer-term strategy is what he calls ‘reculturing and restructuring.’ These strategies involve developing new values, beliefs and norms to guide the fundamental activity of the system.

Central to the latter is a radical overhaul of professional training and ongoing professional development strategies. This reflects the fundamental – but elusive – point that institutions do not change until the people in them change. Human resource strategies must address the needs of young professionals entering the field through entry-level training or education programmes. Here the essential preparation is not so much the acquisition of technical skills as the cultivation of self-awareness with regard to oneself and one’s place in the world. Future leaders in cultural institutions must come to see ‘the baggage’ each brings with them in terms of values and belief systems, and learn to criticize these assumptions. This reflective self-awareness is essential to functioning in an environment where these assumptions will not be universally shared.

Human resource strategies must also address the need for ongoing professional learning opportunities. These are not traditional ‘training’ programmes or workshops, but professional learning networks capable of sustaining continuous reflection and discussion. Again examples exist of these learning ‘systems’ in the education field that can serve as a source of insight for the cultural sector.

Finally, Fullan writes eloquently about the role of emotion and hope in the change process, and of the need for strategies that link ‘head and heart.’ The changes that must occur to advance inclusion in cultural institutions require sustained and often painful reflection by individuals and organizations. Books on change offer, he says, a consistent message: ‘Have good ideas, but listen with empathy; create time and mechanisms for personal and group reflection; allow intuition and emotion a respected role; work on improving relationships; (most of all) realise that hope, especially in the face of frustration is the last healthy virtue.’

Immigrants enter Canadian society at the level of localities. It is here that the range of settlement and adjustment programmes is delivered

Rebalancing Local and National

In Canada the Federal government’s responsibility for immigration, combined with the strong role it has played historically in social and human rights, has meant that national perspectives have tended to drive the discourse on cultural policy and cultural diversity. Despite this focus, many of the impacts of these policies are felt at the provincial level, through the provinces’ responsibility for education, health care, housing, and welfare services. Even more absent from the policy discourse are municipalities, where ‘the rubber hits the road’ on cultural diversity. Immigrants enter Canadian society at the level of localities. It is here that the range of settlement and adjustment programmes (such as English as a Second Language) is delivered, and where essential social services are made available.

The concentration of immigrants in urban centres creates specific kinds of challenges and social dynamics that cannot be generalized to the country as a whole. The term ‘EthniCity’ has been coined to describe such cities. EthniCities are large urban areas of the developed world containing high levels of ethno-racial and cultural diversity in their populations, diversity that is of recent origin as well as that rooted in long established groups of ‘distinctive cultures and origins.’

The capacity of municipalities to respond to these and other challenges in Canadian life in the twenty-first century is undermined by the fact that local government has little constitutional authority or legitimacy in Canada. Municipalities exist, but the provinces grant their political powers. A frequent complaint heard from municipalities in Canada over the past decade is that deficit-driven senior levels of government have been ‘downloading’ responsibilities – the federal government to the provinces, and in turn the provinces to municipalities – without the transfer of funds, or new taxation powers necessary to assume these new responsibilities. If nation states *are* declining in significance relative to both local and global levels of governance, the limited policy and fiscal capacity of Canadian municipalities constitutes a major barrier to social change.¹¹

The strong role of the Federal government in cultural policy in the post-war period has achieved a great deal. However, Ottawa’s strong role can also be seen to have undermined strategies and capacities at the local and regional level. Canada, like many countries, is searching for new approaches to addressing social problems and new models of governance that acknowledge and capitalize on potential contributions from both civil society and market forces. Despite the formal limitations of municipalities, it is at the local level that some of the most innovative experiments in alternative policy and planning systems are taking place.¹²

The fields of urban planning and community development have for some time explored community-based planning and decision-making (governance) models based on broadened engagement in local decision-making. This work has revealed both strategies for increasing citizen engagement *and* the many serious and systemic barriers that stand in the way of such broadened participation in decision-making. These approaches place a strong emphasis on social learning models of planning and decision-making, models that acknowledge that the challenge is not simply one of ‘increased citizen participation’ but one that involves finding a means of deepening public understanding of problems in order to inform democratic decision-making.

The cultural field has not, to date, drawn sufficiently on this substantial body of literature and professional experience.¹³

From Cultural Policy to Cultural Planning

Canada has fallen behind many jurisdictions as regards directing greater attention to the local level in cultural development and shifting the focus from cultural policy to cultural *planning*. The change in language is important in Canada for two reasons: first, the language of ‘planning’ is the more familiar language of local government; second, the legacy of national cultural *policy* remains a powerful force. If a new page must be turned in our thinking about cultural development in Canada, new language may help.

The idea of cultural planning emerged in the early 1990s in the United States, Australia and Europe out of dissatisfaction with previous cultural policy-led urban regeneration and economic development strategies. Cultural policy-led approaches were seen to adopt too narrow a definition of ‘urban regeneration,’ with a focus on economic and physical dimensions and a failure to integrate these adequately with cultural, symbolic, social, and political aspects of cultural development. Significant to the themes of cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion, Bianchini and Parkinson (1993) in their analysis of cultural planning approaches in ten cities in Western Europe conclude

11. Vincent Moscow of Carleton University argues that national governments must confront the decline of national authority and the likelihood that identity and solidarity in a knowledge-based society will be based more on local or global concerns than on national ones.

12. In the past year a new paradigm of public policy grounded in partnerships across the three levels of government – a kind of ‘new federalism’ – has begun to emerge with the federal government acknowledging in particular the significance of cities and municipalities to addressing critical challenges facing Canada in the twenty-first century.

13. The current author’s doctoral dissertation was one attempt to examine some of these connections. Baeker, Greg (1999). *Museums and Community Cultural Planning: An Action Research Case Study*. Doctoral Dissertation, School of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Waterloo.

that local governments had demonstrated considerably more innovation on questions of diversity than had their national counterparts.¹⁴

Cultural planning has many appealing characteristics. Unlike traditional cultural policies that continue to be dominated by 'aesthetic' definitions of culture, drawn largely from (mostly) European high culture traditions, cultural planning embraces a broadened definition of *cultural resources*. Cultural resources have been defined in different ways in different jurisdictions, but all move beyond a focus on specific disciplines or art forms to a broader understanding of local cultural resources and activities. Bianchini and Santacatterina's (1997) mapping of cultural resources is one example of this broader perspective:

- the arts, media and heritage;
- the cultures of youth, minorities, and other communities of interest;
- local traditions, including archaeology, local dialects and rituals;
- local and external perceptions of a place, as expressed in jokes, songs, literature, myths, tourist guides, media coverage and conventional wisdom;
- topography, and the qualities of the natural and built environment, including public spaces;
- the diversity and quality of leisure, cultural, drinking, eating and entertainment facilities; and
- the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services.

Cultural planning does not reject 'the arts' or aesthetic definitions of culture, but rather sees these forms of expression as one dimension – an indispensable dimension – in a larger planning and policy domain; the old paradigm is not rejected but enveloped in a larger framework of understanding and action.

The second advantage of cultural planning is its *territorial* focus rather than the sectoral focus that has dominated most cultural policy discourses. Again, cultural planning does not advocate abandoning a sectoral approach, but juxtaposes sectoral concerns with more integrated and holistic strategies of urban development.

The turn toward cultural planning in Canada dovetails with trends in the field of urban planning. A critical distinction must be made here between planning as a function of municipal government, and planning as a body of theory and practice related to community-based models of planning and decision-making. The former remains driven and dominated in many Canadian municipalities by traditional concerns related to land use, economic development and the delivery of essential public services.

However, thinking and developments related to the latter have much to offer local cultural development strategies. Here there is a strong focus on deepening insight and mobilizing shared commitments to action in addressing community problems (Friedmann, 1987). Emerging postmodern theories of planning combine a focus on communication and on a critical analysis of planning values and assumptions, with direct attention to an examination of those local institutions that shape urban planning and urban development (Mandelbaum, Mazza and Burchell, 1996).

Planners are also directing greater attention to cities as cultural, as well as physical, entities (Sandercock, 1998; Baeker, 1999; Zukin, 1995). These perspectives view cultural activities and cultural practices in communities as an important and largely untapped

14. But they did not underestimate the challenges that remained. '(The book) examines wider themes concerning cultural policy and the future of cities as public realms and political communities. ... (this is) linked with the debate on the future of citizenship and local democracy in western Europe. Two key problems in this area are the increasing social, spatial and cultural segregation of low-income groups in West European cities and the need to make ethnic and racial minorities an integral part of the civic network. The evidence is that the latter will be hard to accomplish. Can cultural policy makers encourage immigrant communities and other disadvantaged social groups to demonstrate the relevance of their ideas, aspirations, skills and resources to the city's overall development?' (1993, 199).

means of opening up alternative visions of cities and of the civic realm, specifically as they relate to the challenges of governing in increasingly diverse urban centres.

Nor does this thinking ignore the growing significance of transnational diasporic networks supporting attachment and belonging in non-geographic communities. However, it recognizes that, whatever our diverse identities, a central challenge of the 21st century is live, work and make decisions together in increasingly diverse urban centres.

Conclusion

A central challenge in addressing the interconnections between cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion is that of moving from the perception of diversity as ‘fault line’ or ‘deficit’, acting to undermine social cohesion, to a perspective that acknowledges the need for new formulations of cohesion consistent with the requirements of equity and cultural justice in diverse societies.

Part of this recasting requires that we see social cohesion not as the absence of conflict but rather as the *capacity to manage conflict*. In this context there is a need for greater attention to ‘nurturing those institutions which contribute to, rather than undermine, practices of recognition of difference’ (Jensen, 1998, 16). It is institutional structures, not amorphous entities of ‘community’ or ‘nation’ that provide the capacity to confront and to *work through* – not avoid – the inevitable value conflicts that result from increased diversity.¹⁵

A core question for cultural policy makers and practitioners in the cultural sector is whether and how cultural institutions might take up this challenge, becoming what Orr (1992) has referred to as ‘civil learning institutions’, local institutions capable of engaging citizens in the complex, contentious and ongoing challenges of diversity.

Can such new purposes provide a needed source of renewal and legitimacy for cultural institutions?

(Editor: Susan van Elmpt-Bodnar)

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15. Research points to the possibility that varying degrees of social cohesion in different countries are strongly influenced by how institutional structures alternately polarize or successfully mediate fundamental normative conflicts and value disputes. One of the world’s leading sociologists, Peter Berger, notes ‘in terms of social order and the peaceful resolution of normative conflicts, there are both “good” and “bad” macro-institutions, both “good” and “bad” civil society institutions’ (cited in SCN, 1998, 23).

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Summary

'A distant mirror': Canadian perspectives on cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion

Canada is internationally respected for its response to the challenges of a culturally diverse population. This paper summarizes recent Canadian research on one element of this challenge that has attracted considerable attention in cultural research circles in recent years, connections between cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion.

On the question of cultural diversity, the World Report on Culture and Development cites Canada as ‘a model for other countries to follow’ (UNESCO, 1995). Yet diversity is seen in policy circles in Canada as one of a number of ‘fault lines’ challenging traditional patterns of social cohesion in Canadian society. This paper examines just one facet of this larger challenge, arguing that linkages between cultural policy, cultural diversity and social cohesion are not self-evident or certain but messy, fraught with difficulties, conflicts and compromises.

The picture it paints is a mixed one, criticizing Canadian policy approaches and assumptions, while at the same time acknowledging the country’s many strengths and achievements.

In this regard, for example, Fraser’s (1995) analysis of distinctions between redistributive or *social justice* and the struggle for recognition or *cultural justice* is helpful. It focuses on socio-economic inequities, disparities in basic physical and material needs: – income, property, access to paid work, education, health care and leisure time – and, more starkly, in rates of morbidity and life expectancy. Fraser does not advocate that we choose between social and cultural justice; rather, that we understand the distinction and the inherent tensions that exist between them.

Canada’s explicit commitment to both an ideology and a public policy of cultural diversity has been a benefit and has provided socially acceptable terms for discussing sensitive issues of ethnic diversity and racism that have been the source of open conflict in many countries. However, it can also be argued that official policy has done as much to disguise, as it has to advance an agenda of equity and social justice.

The discourse on culture, diversity and social cohesion is complex, coded and contested in ways that must be critically unpacked. There is therefore a need for more empirically grounded examination of these issues, including a hard look at institutional change and accountability in the cultural sector on matters related to cultural diversity. Greater conceptual clarity and a reformulation of cultural policy discourses are needed if commitments to diversity are to mean anything. But new discourses must also be accompanied by commitments to institutional diversification and sectoral change and to defining concrete measures and indicators to assess progress.

A core question for cultural policy makers and practitioners in the cultural sector is whether and how cultural institutions might take up this challenge.