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Hyperinstrumentalism and cultural policy: means to an end or an end to meaning?

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the implications for cultural policy of the logic of the instrumental view of culture taken to its conclusion. Policy developments that establish sets of justifications and rationales that have nothing to do with the cultural content of the policy concerned, but which arise from a deliberate realignment of policy frameworks, establish a form of hyperinstrumentalism. With hyperinstrumentalism the focus on outcomes and the ends of policy means that cultural policy is only as important as the ends to which it is directed. As such, hyperinstrumentalisation demonstrates the consequences for the sector of conditions where claims about the value of culture are irrelevant to political actors. The paper questions whether sense can be made of this shift as a coherent and strategic political choice, rather than as a simple assault on culture. The case of Northern Ireland's Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is used to illustrate this. The authors question whether hyperinstrumentalism undermines the justification for an autonomous domain of cultural policy.

KEYWORDS

Cultural policy;
instrumentalism;
hyperinstrumentalism;
Northern Ireland

Introduction

The developing debate about the instrumentalisation of cultural policy (Belfiore, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Gray, 2007; Vestheim, 1994) has seen a shift from investigations of the underlying causes of the phenomenon to the specific policy implications of instrumentalisation in terms of policy formation, implementation and evaluation. Part of this changed focus has been the consequence of a desire to move beyond what has become an increasingly sterile debate concerning the perceived clash between the “instrumental” and “intrinsic” dimensions of cultural policy (Holden, 2004) to develop more productive understandings of the roles that cultural policy plays within societies (O'Brien, 2013). This does not mean that the concepts of cultural policy instrumentalism and instrumentalisation have become redundant, only that they require elaboration if they are to contribute anything meaningful to the analysis of cultural policy itself. Recent discussions of the uses of policy instrumentalisation in cultural policy have stressed the ways in which cultural policy-makers have shifted from being people to whom instrumentalism happens, to being active agents who manage instrumentalisation for their own ends (Gray, 2014; McCall, 2009; Nisbett, 2013). This often takes place through processes of “defensive

instrumentalism" (Belfiore, 2012) or "policy attachment" (Gray, 2002). This shift has made it clear that in many, if not all, cases, instrumentalisation is a contested process. Moreover, cultural policy actors are not as helpless in the face of exogenous policy demands as some of the original literature implied, and as most of the instrumental/intrinsic binary continues to assume.

However, it was always the case that crude instrumentalisation (in the sense of a simple imposition of the concerns of other policy sectors onto those of cultural policy) depended for its effect on the willingness of exogenous policy actors. These included national governments enforcing their preferences on cultural policy actors, particularly at the regional and local levels where central power holds less sway. As such, the greater the pressure to prioritise central policy expectations and requirements that were, or are, concerned with non-cultural sets of policy priorities, the more difficult it would be for outright resistance or more subtle forms of policy management to have effect. In this respect, the internal management of external policy demands takes place within limits – limits that are not determined by actors in the cultural policy sector at all. The consequence of this is that cultural policy, in practice, is in a relatively weak position in comparison with other policy sectors that have greater access to claims of policy necessity, centrality, legitimacy or priority than does the cultural sector itself (Gray & Wingfield, 2011). In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the cultural policy sector tends to be seen as an embattled arena of political action whose claims of policy centrality and importance are simply not accepted as relevant in their own right, but only in so far as they actively contribute to governments' other policy ambitions. Given the political weaknesses that the cultural policy sector has as a consequence of its status as a matter of "low politics" (Bulpitt, 1983, p. 3) it could even be argued that an active management of instrumentalising pressures, as part of a politics of policy survival that depends upon how the cultural sector actively contributes to non-cultural policy ambitions, might turn in to a politics of policy extinction if "culture" becomes simply a means to a non-cultural policy end. Indeed Belfiore (2002, p. 104) argued that "if the logic of the instrumental view of culture ... is taken to its extreme (but intrinsically consequential) conclusions, there would be no point in having a cultural policy at all".

This paper investigates the extent to which this fear for cultural policy has the potential to become a reality. Might an increasing emphasis on non-cultural policy intentions lead to a loss of meaning for cultural policy in its own terms? If so, what are the implications for the policy sector as a whole? The question of whether the combined emphasis on the instrumental efficacy of cultural policy (from both cultural policy and non-cultural policy actors) has contributed to policy developments that establish sets of policy justifications and rationales that have nothing to do with the cultural content of the policy concerned, but which arise, instead, from a deliberate realignment of policy frameworks is central to this argument. This re-structuring of public policy, it will be argued, has the effect of establishing a form of hyperinstrumentalisation for cultural policy where outcomes replace inputs, outputs and intentions as the basis upon which policy rests. In this view *instrumentalisation* sees cultural policy as a means to a non-cultural end. But, it is still the case that it is the cultural content of the policy that provides it with meaning. *Hyperinstrumentalisation*, on the other hand, is only concerned with ends: the meaning of cultural policy lies solely in those ends. As such, within hyperinstrumentalism, considerations of cultural value are effectively irrelevant. To demonstrate this argument, the recent

case contained in the history of the Northern Irish Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) from 1999 to 2016 is used to explain how the shift from instrumentalism to hyper-instrumentalism has taken place.

The logic of instrumental cultural policy

All policy is instrumental in so far as it is concerned with using certain mechanisms to achieve certain ends. In the case of cultural policy, it has become something of a common complaint that the ends to which policy is being increasingly applied are not only non-cultural at best (Hesmondalgh, Oakley, Lee, & Nisbett, 2015), but positively anti-cultural at worst (Holden, 2004, 2006; Selwood, 2002). Whilst this is posited on the basis of the assumed intrinsic values of culture – and largely without explaining what these values might be – the core problem for cultural policy is not the loss of cultural value so much as the loss of financial subsidy that it may give rise to. If instrumental outputs are the basis upon which public funds are allocated to culture, and if it cannot be convincingly demonstrated that culture contributes to these outputs, then why continue to fund it? The fact that governments have used instrumental arguments to justify financial support for culture for many years (Gibson, 2008) does not mean that they necessarily have to continue to do so. The weaknesses of the evidence base for the positive contribution that culture may have for a variety of instrumental purposes has been long recognised (Shaw, 1999), and the problems in demonstrating unambiguous causal and attributional effects from cultural activities are endemic within the sector (Gray, 2009). In the case of Northern Ireland, for example, there is little “hard” evidence of a direct link between cultural engagement and improved social inclusion in areas of high deprivation (Hull, 2013). In circumstances such as these, the concern is that funding may be removed from “culture” and assigned to areas that demonstrate much more evident success in meeting the non-cultural policy requirements that governments have.

This fear for the future of cultural funding, as a result of the problems of actually demonstrating the non-cultural instrumental benefits of state-funded cultural activity, can be seen to be a direct consequence of the weakening of the long-established Keynesian argument that cultural funding should be based on cultural concerns, rather than connected to other policy interests that governments may have. The Keynesian notion that public expenditure can be used as a tool for the management of the economy as a whole concerned the use-value that could be derived from the provision of public goods and services, with these uses being directly related to their content (Gray, 2000). A shift in emphasis from direct use-value to more instrumentalised versions of policy worth coincided with changes in the language describing cultural expenditure and the increasing use of economic terminologies of “subsidy” (Belfiore, 2002) and “investment” (Garnham, 2005; Hewison, 1995). This linguistic shift then reinforced the perception that the point of active cultural policies rested on their investment return rather than the specifically cultural content of their *outputs*, with this return being appraised in terms of non-cultural *outcomes*. The extent to which this has occurred may be debatable. But, the increasing expectation that cultural investment will contribute to, for example, the production of creative cities (Florida, 2004) and urban regeneration (Grodach & Silver, 2013) has become a global phenomenon. Moreover, calls for cultural organisations to demonstrate their social impact through their contributions to health and social inclusion have

also become increasingly common. The extent to which these demands have led to actual shifts in funding patterns, or to changes in working practices within cultural organisations is, however, much less clear (Bunting, 2010; Gray, 2016). This suggests that the argument has become a matter of policy rhetoric rather than developing into one concerning policy practice (Belfiore, 2009).

The manner in which this rhetorical exercise takes place is based on the underlying philosophical position of epiphenomenalism: in this case, the claim that instrumental outcomes are a purely secondary effect arising from the intrinsic value of cultural outputs. While the intrinsic/instrumental dichotomy has many weaknesses in terms of effective meaning, it nevertheless provides a powerful rhetorical device that continues to play a key role in the defensive arguments that are often associated with, for example, arts and “cultural” advocacy (as in Jowell, 2004). Indeed, instrumental agendas frequently encourage a feeling of empowerment through enhanced political visibility for the sector (Wilson, 2015). The value of these arguments rests on the proposition that the relationship at stake is one where cultural value is prior to instrumental value. This is rarely questioned and taken largely as an article of faith by proponents (as in Ellis, 2004; Lowry, 2005; Tusa, 2014). By emphasising the priority of cultural value over instrumental value, the intention is to ensure that the potential for a reversal of this position (that is, that instrumental value is given priority over cultural value) is at least reduced, if not entirely denied (Roeseng, 2008). This position is effective in maintaining the status of “culture” as something of greater meaning, significance and value than other areas of policy, but it is not necessarily the case that it will always be treated as such.

The epiphenomenal position that forms the basis for privileging culture over all other concerns has been derived from inside the cultural sector, but it is not necessarily the case that actors from other policy sectors share it. Even at the level of the analysis of cultural policy, it is quite clear that the assumptions of cultural priority are not always present in terms of understanding how cultural policy functions (Gray, 2010). This can be seen by comparing the conflicting economic analyses of art and culture developed by Throsby (2001), working from the assumption that cultural value adds something over and above economic value. By the same token, Towse (2011) sees the arts as simply another arena for the application of economic analysis that has nothing intrinsically special about it in terms of value, even if the specific features and functions of culture as a production sector may need to be borne in mind when applying economics to it (Towse, 2010, p. 6). If policy makers do not share the dominant epiphenomenal position adopted by the defenders of arts and culture where these take priority of place, what policy consequences will arise? What are the implications for the organisation and functioning of the cultural policy sector in such circumstances? It is these consequences and implications that provide the context within which the changing status of Northern Ireland’s DCAL is examined.

Cultural policy change in Northern Ireland

The complex, and often bitter, politics of Northern Ireland had already seen the creation (in 1920¹) and collapse (in 1972) of devolved government before its resurrection in 1998 with the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Even this development was not entirely smooth with periods of suspension taking place before the current period,

since 2007, of continuous independent operation. DCAL itself was created in 1999 to assume responsibility for a wide range of services, even though there were many fewer of these than are dealt with by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Like the DCMS, however, DCAL was responsible for funding a wide range of Non-Departmental Public Bodies – arm’s-length bodies such as Northern Ireland Screen, the Northern Ireland Museums Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland. It also co-sponsored two cross-border agencies in conjunction with the government of Ireland. Equally, as with the DCMS, DCAL had survived unchanged since its original foundation. Proposed reforms of the public sector in Northern Ireland left their central government departments out of the discussion from fears for the stability of the overall political system, rather than anything else. This was despite the overall system of government being seen as anachronistic, as well as inefficient, cumbersome and fragmented (Knox & Carmichael, 2006, pp. 944–945).

The development of the administrative system in Northern Ireland has been quite clearly affected by the ideologies and political choices made by the elected and appointed representatives on whom the system relies. Since devolution, the political discourse on arts policy has been contingent on local socio-economic factors and party politics (Chaney, 2015). The difficulty is that since 2007, the framework of government may have delivered stability in governmental arrangements but it has not provided “effective governance that made a positive difference to people’s lives” (Cochrane, 2013, p. 242). The multiple divisions inside Northern Ireland have been seen to lead to a willingness to make things function when agreements between competing groups could be reached, but that these agreements tended to be on matters of general policy rather than relating to specific, detailed and unambiguous policies (Cochrane, 2013, pp. 247–250). While the existence of ambiguous policies is by no means unheard of in the field of cultural policy (Gray, 2015), the specific circumstances of Northern Ireland have contributed to a position where such vagueness has become entrenched throughout the policy framework that DCAL was working within. This has led to the replacement of specifically “cultural” policy goals and intentions by a set of broader aims that pay scant regard to anything other than their own fulfilment. This, in turn, has been greatly affected by the reluctance of both the British government and Northern Irish Executive to introduce many of the reforms into the Northern Irish context that had been implanted into the British administrative system since the early 1970s (Knox & Carmichael, 2006). This has meant that something as potentially politically toxic in a divided society as matters of “culture” was being organised and managed within an administrative system with some real limitations in terms of its room for manoeuvre, and which had not been subject to real revision and development since the early 1970s.

To investigate the consequences of these political and administrative weaknesses for the overall current cultural policy of the Northern Ireland Executive, and the strategy that underpins it, we have taken the *Programme for Government 2011–15*, as a starting-point. This details the Key Priorities of the Executive for that period (Northern Ireland Executive, 2011). These priorities were to be found in the promotion of equality and the ending of poverty and social exclusion, which functioned as top-level general policy commitments that all five parties in the Northern Ireland Executive could agree with. Such broad-brush policy aims, however, require considerable translation at departmental level before they lead to specific courses of action that are implementable in practice. The way in which DCAL undertook this process demonstrates the manner in which the

previously dominant epiphenomenal position was adopted by supporters of culture and the arts. It assumes that their centrality imminently leads to the production of other (non-cultural and arts) policy benefits, and has been transformed in such a way that the potential need for a separate cultural policy, located within a separate “cultural” Department, has been effectively nullified.

The key document that illustrates this change is the DCAL *Business Plan 2013–14* (DCAL, 2013). In this, the reversal of intention from the cultural component of policy towards the broader goals and commitments of the Executive is made explicit:

... promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion are now being placed first and foremost when framing policy and allocating resources. While it is accepted that there are clear benefits from culture, arts and sports in and of themselves, it is essential that we ensure that public investment promotes equality and tackles poverty and social exclusion. (DCAL, 2013, p. 13)

By itself, this could be seen as a simple switch in the policy outcomes that DCAL is looking to produce through its choices about the outputs it will use to attain them. However, the Business Plan goes beyond this to argue that instead of the Department producing culture, art and leisure policies and then considering how these could be “tailored” to meet non-culture, arts and leisure policy objectives, the focus should be more simply on determining “what policy needs to be developed and what services need to be delivered to positively promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion” (DCAL, 2013, p. 8). In other words, the policies of the Department should become those where outcomes determine outputs, rather than those where outputs contribute to outcomes. In this respect the key switch in the focus of policy is away from a simple instrumentalisation of culture, arts and leisure towards a re-making of the whole point of their existence. The cultural, arts and leisure component of policy outputs becomes irrelevant in the face of more central political demands that they should, instead, be understood simply as equality, anti-poverty and anti-social exclusion policies in the first place. As was noted by a senior civil servant from DCAL at the Ministerial briefing for the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, at which the Business Plan was presented, the plan had “shifted the Department’s whole focus” (Hansard, 2013, p. 2).

Alongside this shift in the focus of policy statements and intentions, various supporting mechanisms are intended to be introduced to limit the capability of DCAL to dilute the focus on equality and poverty during the process of policy implementation. This is intended to be achieved through the introduction of “hard targets demonstrating significant resources are being directly and effectively dedicated” to the new policy aims of the Department (DCAL, 2013, p. 13). While “targets” of many different sorts had become an engrained part of the British political systems of England, Scotland and Wales from the 1980s onwards – and continue in force to the current date, even if under different labels to those that had previously been applied – the Northern Irish system had not used them with anything like as much enthusiasm. The intention to build them in to the reporting mechanisms to inform policy, therefore, marked a new direction for cultural policy. As such, it had no connection to culture, arts and leisure, but to other policy intentions altogether. In such circumstances arguing for particular policy choices on the grounds that they would produce positive cultural, arts and leisure outcomes becomes a policy irrelevancy since these are no longer worth considering given that the relevant targets have nothing to do with them.

In this respect, more traditional policy options and strategies for policy development and change in the field of cultural policy lose their importance. The whole focus of policy shifts away from the meaning and point of cultural policy as a specific field of action, with its own specific outputs and outcomes, towards it being a component part of a different policy field altogether. Thus, the deliberate use of attachment strategies to generate various forms of support for cultural policy outputs is predicated on demonstrating how culture can contribute towards the policy goals and intentions of other policy sectors, regardless of whether it actually succeeds in this or not (Gray, 2002). If these goals and intentions are transplanted, wholesale, into the cultural sector, however, then generating support for the sector becomes much more clearly associated with their actual fulfilment and rather less with claims of how culture can have a role to play in this process. As the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure said at the publication of the DCAL *Business Plan* (Northern Ireland Executive, 2013, p. 1): “DCAL is not merely about culture, arts and leisure in isolation. Rather it is a department for the economy and a department of equality”. In this context, the new focus for the Department was intended to ensure “the transformation of our delivery models” (Northern Ireland Executive, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, as the plan itself notes in language resonant of Belfiore (2002), the new approach represents “a logical and inevitable evolution of the Department’s approach” (DCAL, 2013, p. 7). If this is the new policy reality that DCAL was expected to be a part of, then how policy was to be understood and made would also require a change.

The re-arrangement of the policy environment within which DCAL was operating was not the final stage of a more general re-structuring of the arrangements governing how cultural policy was organised in Northern Ireland. In 2014, the Northern Ireland Executive finally undertook the reorganisation of departments and was, in the eyes of many politicians, officials and academics, long overdue. Nine new departments began operating in May 2016, with a large-scale transfer of functional activities from the old to the new. In the case of DCAL, the majority of its functions were re-located to a new Department for Communities – a revamped and enlarged version of the previous Department for Social Development – with the remaining functions being relocated elsewhere. This plan was drawn up by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and received unanimous agreement from the political parties represented in the Stormont Assembly. The intention of the changes to deliver more effective service delivery, and thus overcome many of the shortcomings associated with the unreformed system noted above, again reinforces the fact that cultural policy in Northern Ireland will be subject to a refocusing of intention. It marks a shift away from long-standing commitments and objectives towards a brave new policy world with a range of creatures within it that had not previously been seen as being as centrally policy-relevant.

Rearranging policy frameworks: an explanation

The simplest explanation for the changes that have taken place in the Northern Irish cultural policy system is that they represent the triumph of democratic politics: elected politicians making choices that have real meaning for the content, direction and intentions of public policies. Certainly, the role of Ministers in this case, determining the meaning of policy, the distribution of functions between departments, and the objectives of public policy, demonstrates the ways in which representative democracy can directly affect

cultural policy (Gray, 2012). However, there is more to it than that. The underlying shifts in the long-established arguments justifying how cultural policy should be managed, and what role it is understood to play within societies, both need to be made sense of if the choices and actions of elected representatives are to be explained. Certainly, the move away from the particular epiphenomenal framework that justified the prioritisation of cultural policy in the past, and the replacement of the Keynesian value framework by newer justifications for state expenditure needs to be considered carefully. Both are key to understanding the changes that have taken place in Northern Irish cultural policy in recent years, and their impact on policy intentions, need to be analysed to demonstrate how they have underpinned the choices that elected representatives have made. The policy consequences arising from this (a shift away from simple versions of policy instrumentalisation towards the hyperinstrumentalisation of cultural policy currently taking place) can then be made sense of as a coherent strategic political choice, rather than as a simple assault on culture. In this context the proposed changes in the organisation of cultural policy in Northern Ireland are not being driven by demands for improved efficiency in the use of the resources allocated to cultural policy, or demands for increased effectiveness in the reaching of the goals of cultural policy, but are, instead, dependent upon a complete reappraisal of the objects of cultural policy in the first place. The hyperinstrumentalisation of cultural policy changes the focus of policy appraisal away from questions of inputs, outputs and intentions and places it firmly on policy outcomes. This undercuts the traditional grounds upon which cultural policy is expected to function and denies the validity of culture as an independent policy sector in its own right.

The normal view of instrumentalisation is that it is a top-down policy phenomenon imposed upon policy sectors by political actors who have policy intentions other than those of the policy sector being affected. The independence of actors within the affected policy sector is not at issue here. Instead, it is concerned with the ways in which the sector can actively contribute to the non-sectoral demands that non-sectoral policy actors make (Vestheim, 1994), with choices over the courses of action to be taken being left with the actors within the sector. Normally, these non-sectoral demands are assumed to be a secondary consideration for cultural policy actors, but with hyperinstrumentalisation they assume significance in themselves. This reverses the normal epiphenomenal equation that the cultural policy sector is accustomed to. Instead of non-sectoral benefits and outcomes arising from the outputs and intentions of cultural policy activity, these benefits and outcomes are expected to determine what the outputs and intentions of cultural policy will be in the first place. Resource allocation is no longer determined on how it will affect the attainment of outcomes through the utilisation of resources in respect inputs and outputs. Rather, it is determined by the outcomes that policy is intended to reach. In effect there is a pre-determination of policy requirements by the outcomes that are desired from action rather than the more usual expectation that outcomes will be determined by policy requirements. While this may be thought to represent a touching faith in the ability of policy-makers to determine the results of policy implementation, it is more thorough-going than this. Implementation itself is expected to be determined by the outcomes that are desired. Consequently, struggles over the results of policy implementation are obviated by a commitment to outcomes that leaves little scope for independent action. In the Northern Irish case this can be seen in the increased emphasis placed on "hard" targets to monitor outcome attainment. In practice, this means that, "(F)or officials

and ALBs [arms' length bodies], that is a sea change in how we look at things" which "filters down to the Department's priorities to meet our Programme for Government commitments and then down to the ALBs' business plans" (Hansard, 2013, p. 2). Ultimately the Business Plan noted that the strategic plans of ALBs such as Arts Council of Northern Ireland "must now seamlessly align with the DCAL Mission Statement" (DCAL, 2013, p. 13). This change of emphasis means that the requirements of successful cultural policy implementation are no longer relevant having been replaced by the demand for successful non-cultural policy implementation instead.

The DCAL *Business Plan* does not go quite so far as to totally deny the relevance of traditional cultural policy objectives, but it is certainly clear that these objectives are not ends in themselves but are merely the means towards other ends: "harnessing the transformative power of culture, arts and leisure to deliver step changes and a lasting social and economic transformation in the context of a sustainable economic agenda" (DCAL, 2013, p. 7). In circumstances such as these, the older justifications for cultural policy (such as that it is good in and of itself, and that having a cultural policy will, almost automatically, generate desired non-cultural outcomes) are no longer politically relevant. They can be seen as simply the attempt by core actors within the cultural policy system to manipulate the allocation of finance, prestige and value in their own favour. In effect, arguments based on the "intrinsic" value of culture, such as its "transformative power", are denied validity by non-cultural actors, and the claimed epiphenomenal status of culture as the source of multiple forms of benefit for society is simply ignored in favour of (equally as) ideological claims and justifications concerning the objectives of policy. This is not to say that the case study presented provides the basis upon which to make claims about the future development of cultural policy in other national contexts. Indeed, further empirical research will be needed to assess the effects of hyperinstrumentalisation on the Northern Irish cultural sector. Yet whilst Northern Ireland is no doubt a quite particular historical and socio-political environment, the shift to hyperinstrumentalism is primarily a political one which could easily and rapidly cross geographical boundaries.

The politicisation of cultural policy that this shift implies – cultural policy is no longer something important in its own right and can be treated in the same way as all other policy sectors – suggests a need to change the organisational, financial and managerial approaches utilised within the sector alongside the ideological changes that underpin this shift. To this extent, recent developments in Northern Ireland have become a variant of the commodification of the cultural sector in Britain that started in the 1970s (Gray, 2000), with the variation arising from policy demands and requirements rather than economic ones. The abolition of DCAL can then be understood as part of this process, with this abolition allowing the establishment of new approaches to policy for the cultural sector. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the differences between the older approach

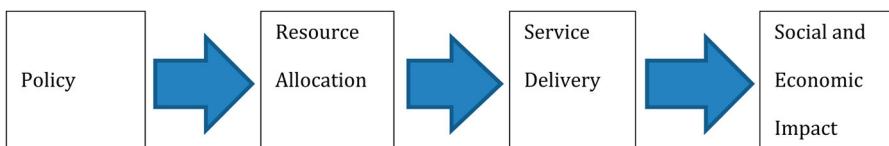


Figure 1. Current cultural policy model in Northern Ireland.

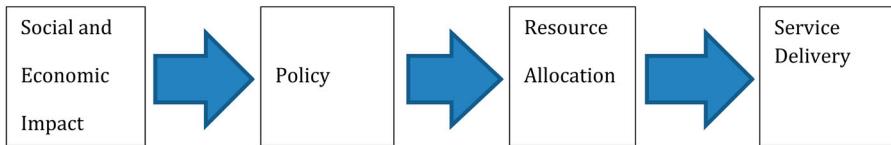


Figure 2. Proposed cultural policy model in Northern Ireland.

based around epiphenomenal and value-producing ideas of cultural policy and the newer, hyperinstrumental, version. The emphasis on policy outcomes within hyperinstrumentalism means that the older arguments around the necessity for an arm's-length relationship between the state and cultural policy are no longer appropriate: if culture is no longer an end in itself, but is simply a means to an end then direction of the sector by political actors takes priority. The argument that culture and the arts need protection from ideologically committed political actors simply becomes irrelevant in this context. Thus, an arm's-length relationship between the two falls by the wayside. The abolition, then, of DCAL is not the only part of the story to be told – the change of understandings, justifications and practices that are associated with this re-structuring of the system for managing cultural policy is significant in its own right. The consequences arising from these changes lead to a situation where there is no need for a specific cultural policy, functioning within its own sphere of action, and with its own control of inputs, outputs and resource allocation. The instrumentalisation of culture in these circumstances is no longer an issue having been replaced by hyperinstrumentalisation instead.

Conclusions

The gradual shifting of the justifications for independent cultural and arts policies over the last 40 years has led to a position where the need for such independence is subject to serious debate. With hyperinstrumentalism the focus on outcomes and the ends of policy means that cultural policy in itself is only as important as the ends to which it is directed. If these ends are not those of traditional cultural and arts policies, the justifications for retaining a separate arena within which these policies can be made, implemented and evaluated become moot, to put it mildly. The replacement of a taken-for-granted ritual rationality (Royseng, 2008) that depends upon the acceptance of unsupported, or simply poorly supported, claims and assertions by defenders of the epiphenomenal claims about the economic and social benefits that culture creates, with a set of equally ideologically loaded policy preferences, will doubtless be seen as an attack on the autonomy of the arts and culture. Whilst the recent work of Crossick and Kaszynska (2016) seeks to ground new debates around cultural value in the ostensibly epiphenomenal field of individual experience, the political weaknesses of the cultural sector which gave rise to the wider cultural value debate are well established (Gray, 2009; Gray & Wingfield, 2011). Hyperinstrumentalisation demonstrates the consequences for the sector in conditions where claims about the value of culture are irrelevant to political actors. As such, the establishment of better arguments to justify the continued existence of an autonomous sphere of cultural policy practice are needed if the sector is to be able to stake a claim to independence.

Note

1. Although it started to function in 1921 the Stormont Assembly was created by Act of Parliament in 1920.

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