

## **Part 1: Intellectual and political landscape**

### **Instrumental policies: causes, consequences, museums and galleries**

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Instrumentalization has been seen to have taken place in the museums and galleries sector in Britain, and across the cultural sector as a whole. This article locates this instrumentalization in the context of changes in both the public management of goods and services within the British political system and the dominant ideologies that are used by political parties. The specific characteristics of the cultural policy sector are shown to have mediated these changes and, consequently, how instrumentalization has been introduced, and managed, within it. The ability of endogenous actors to manage the instrumentalization process demonstrates that it is neither inevitable nor unmanageable.

**Keywords:** instrumentalization; public management; museums and galleries; cultural policy

#### **Introduction**

Although the concerns of the current articles relate to instrumentality in the museums and galleries sector in Britain, it is the case that the development of instrumental policies has taken place across a much wider spread of policies than are contained in simply this sector. Indeed, the development of instrumentalism has had a clear impact across the entire cultural policy sector (Gray, 2007) and can also be found in other policy sectors altogether. Instrumental policy has taken multiple forms across this wide range of policy sectors and is far more fragmented in terms of organization, intention and location than the general term may imply. There have been multiple factors behind the spread of instrumental policies and, similarly, there have been multiple outcomes in the form of differing policies, emphases and outcomes in the creation, implementation and consequences of the instrumentalization process. The intention of this article is to locate instrumentalism within the context of changes in the structures and processes that are utilized for the public management of goods and services, and to identify the potential and actual results of an instrumentalization of public policies within the museums and galleries sector in particular and the cultural policy sector in general.

#### **Instrumentality and museums and galleries**

There are a range of indicators, both explicit and implicit, that can be used to demonstrate the significance of instrumental policy forms for the museums and galleries sector in Britain. The increasing expectations for clear statements of performance assessment, justifications for public funding, and evidence of policy effectiveness across the public sector have generated an emphasis on formal statements of organizational intent. In this respect the cultural sector is no

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different to the rest of the public sector, and a range of expectations for the contribution of these cultural services to a variety of policy objectives can be discerned.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), for example, has identified a range of arenas that museums are meant to contribute to, only a minority of which are directly concerned with the normally identified central elements of museum practice.<sup>1</sup> *Renaissance in the Regions* (Re:source, 2001, pp. 36–39) identifies these arenas as being a contribution to “collections for inspiration and creativity”; “excellence and high quality in delivering core services”; education and learning; access and inclusion; economic regeneration; and modernization and rationalization. More recently the “strategic priorities” of the MLA have been identified as being concerned with children and young people, communities, economy and delivery (Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS], 2006a). In each case the museums sector, in particular, is effectively being used as a tool for the attainment of the specific policy objectives of actors and concerns that have traditionally been seen to either lie outside of the museums sector itself, or to be, at best, a peripheral concern of the sector.

Equally, at the national level, the DCMS has argued that museums, galleries and archives have a wider range of functions than are concerned with the maintenance, display and management of accession to their collections: “their goal should be to act as vehicles for positive social change” (DCMS, 2000, p. 9). As a consequence they should be considered to have additional roles to play than those concerned simply with their roles of heritage preservation and display, with, in this case, their role being to contribute to a wider agenda of social and political change within society through active involvement in mechanisms of social inclusion. The extent to which this has been simply a matter of the imposition of the policy wishes of national politicians or, instead, a matter of contested political management of these wishes is another matter altogether – as is the question of whether it has actually worked as national actors intended (Newman & McLean, 2004; Tili, 2008).

At a different geographical level – that of local government – a similar picture can be seen. The Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry<sup>2</sup> for assessing the performance of local authorities in delivering goods and services has, in the case of cultural services, a clear statement of the need for these services to demonstrate their success in “meeting local, regional and national objectives” in terms of “healthier communities”, “safer and stronger communities”, “economic vitality”, “learning” and “quality of life for local people” (Audit Commission, 2005, pp. 8–12). At the very least this indicates the rather obvious point that cultural services are seen as having an impact across more than their own sectoral concerns. At the worst it could mean that these exogenous effects are the only ones that are seen as being of importance in assessing organizational effectiveness in the museums and galleries sector. This is equally the case with the range of funding bodies<sup>3</sup> (other than central and local government) that the sector may have dealings with. Each of these bodies requires funded organizations to demonstrate how the funding that they receive will contribute to the attainment of the goals and requirements of the funding agencies themselves with, again, a potential for the replacement of sectoral goals with those of other agencies.

The identification of which of these positions has been adopted in practice is a matter for empirical investigation, but it is clearly the case that the connection of museums and galleries to questions of wider public policy opens the possibility for an instrumentalization of this sector. In this respect Vestheim (1994, p. 65) has defined instrumental policy in the context of cultural policy as being “to use cultural ventures and cultural investments as a means or instrument to attain goals in other than cultural areas”. Given that all public policy is instrumental in the sense that it is meant to achieve *something*, what requires examination is the specific

nature of the instrumentality that is concerned in any given case (Gray, 2007, p. 205). In Vestheim's vision there is a diversion of primary intention away from the core specifics of a policy sector towards the interests and concerns of other policy sectors altogether.

In the case of the museums and galleries sector, if the core is seen to exist in the areas of curatorship, education, entertainment and the infra-structural management of resources (such as buildings, staff, marketing and income generation, for example),<sup>4</sup> then instrumentality would mean a shift away from these, either completely or in large measure, towards other policy intentions. This would mean that internal matters of policy emphasis concerned with the sector's core (a greater stress on entertainment at the expense of education (or vice versa), for example) would become replaced by a concern for externally derived objectives or policy priorities, such as social inclusion (Newman & McLean, 1998, 2006) or community regeneration (IDeA, 2004), or any of a number of other governmental objectives. Difficulties in clarifying precisely what the "core" features of a policy sector are – as is the case with the museums and galleries sector – may lead to different parts of the sector placing different emphases on what services and functions they provide and how they provide them so that there is not a single sector as such but, instead, a divided and diverse set of distinct organizations. In this case a generic label of "instrumentalization" would require contextualization around the individual museums and galleries that are concerned. As a consequence if it is accepted that the museums and galleries sector is not hermetically sealed off from the wider environment within which it operates, then the relationship between endogenous and exogenous motors of policy change and development become of some significance for explaining precisely what is taking place within the sector. A concentration on simply the exogenous pressures that are brought to bear on individual organizations, or the sector as a whole, is likely to under-estimate the importance of the endogenous factors that affect policy development and change in the light of instrumentalization.

It is clear that there has been a much greater emphasis in the museums and galleries sector upon exogenous policy concerns than was, perhaps, the case 30 or 40 years ago, but the extent to which an instrumentalization of the museums and galleries sector has taken place remains to be seen.<sup>5</sup> It could be argued, for example, that the difficulties of defining with any precision what the core functions of museums and galleries actually are (Beer, 1994), and what the balance between these could or should be (O'Neill, 2006), simply leaves it open for exogenous factors to have a much greater impact on policy development within this sector than is, perhaps, the case in other sectors which have much clearer policy cores. Such a view would suggest that the internal definitional problems of the museum and galleries sector leaves it in a position of weakness when confronted with external pressures and that external actors with clear policy goals will simply be able to impose these on the sector<sup>6</sup> so that what is occurring is not instrumentalization *per se* so much as, simply, a top-down driven change in policy emphasis.

Although there are some indications that internal weaknesses do leave the sector open to external effects it would appear that this is not simply a matter of external imposition of policy but is, instead, a much more politically open and complicated process with both internal and external factors having an effect upon policy direction. The development of new approaches to issues of access and inclusion within the sector involved both the original choices of internal actors (as, for example, in Glasgow and Tyne and Wear) as well as, at a *later* date, the priorities of external bodies. Examining the processes by which a shift in emphasis towards a greater instrumentalization (at the very least) of the museums and galleries sector has taken place will allow the identification of the combination of underlying factors that have affected this process, and the potential consequences of it for the sector in the future. To this extent, at least, the dispute is not a part of a clash between intrinsic and instrumental views of museums and galleries but

with how instrumentality and intrinsic-ness are made use of by political actors for their own reasons. Given that these political actors exist both within and external to the sector, the interaction between them, again, requires examination to understand why policy appears to have changed in the ways that it has.

### **State change and public policy**

The development of instrumental policies in the cultural sector would appear, in the first instance, to be a consequential effect of broader changes that have been taking place within the machinery of state since the mid-1970s (Gray, 2007; Vestheim, 1994). These changes have had an effect upon what the state does, how it does it, and the justifications and reasons that have been put forward to explain them. It may be tempting to view these changes as marking a form of political-administrative “year zero” with sweeping reforms affecting all parts of the machinery of state in like fashion, but they are quite clearly part of a continuous process of state re-structuring that has been an ever-present part of all systems of public administration.<sup>7</sup> Equally as clearly, the re-organizations and re-structurings of state organizations since the 1970s have yet to reach a state of completion – similar processes of state change in terms of both structures and processes continue to take place today. Regardless of this, an examination of these changes is required to understand how and why an instrumentalization of public policy could be seen to be a development from them.

In terms of British cultural policy the reforms of state structures and administration have been summed up as representing either a form of privatization (Alexander & Rueschemeyer, 2005, pp. 71–74; Wu, 2002) or commodification (Gray, 2000). Whereas the former deals with either the disposal of state assets to private actors or the increasing intervention of private actors in the management and administration of public assets (Young, 1986, pp. 238–244), the latter refers to broader changes involving a shift from use-value to exchange-value as a consequence of ideological changes within the state. In both cases, however, there is recognition that these forms of change require a shift in how organizations will work in the process of delivering goods and services before they can become effective.

At a general level the changes that have taken place in the machinery of state began as part of the reforms that took place under the label of the “New Public Management” (NPM), before changing tack into a somewhat different (“modernizing”) model of public management in more recent years. The core ideas underlying NPM were:

- decentralization of managerial control;
- entrepreneurial management: “letting managers manage”;
- concentration on results (outputs and outcomes) rather than inputs and processes;
- the promotion of competition in the provision of public services;
- the promotion of performance measurement;
- management through contract rather than hierarchy (Osborne & McLaughlin, 2002, p. 9; Pollitt, 2003a, pp. 27–28).

The process of introducing these into the public sector led to the introduction of a host of new organizational forms and administrative and managerial techniques, ranging from the development of new general governance arrangements (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Wilson, 2005), to the introduction of specific practices and managerial forms such as Public Service and Local Area Agreements.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which these changes have actually led to equally as wide-ranging

changes in formal and informal working practices is, however, another matter. The *potential* for there to be significant effects on these in public sector organizations is evident (in the case of cultural policy see the arguments in, for example, Belfiore, 2004; Protherough & Pick, 2002), but the reality has been somewhat less clear-cut. The NPM was introduced to have significant effects upon how the public sector was organized and functioned – and there is evidence that there have been some anticipated improvements in public sector operations and service delivery – but many of the hoped-for improvements have either not been delivered at all or have only ambiguously succeeded (Joyce, 2007; Ovretveit, 2005; Pollitt, 2002).

If at the level of general results the NPM reform programme has had some intended effects – even if not as many as its proponents may have wished to see – there have also been many *unintended* consequences (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, especially chap. 7). These have, at the very least, diluted the intentions of NPM and, in some cases, have led to a retreat from the underlying principles of NPM reform and the development of new organizational forms and practices to ameliorate some of the problems that reform brought in its wake. In the British case, for example, the organizational fragmentation of central government that was created by the establishment of Executive Agencies (or, more formally, the expansion in numbers of Non-Departmental Public Bodies) following the publication of the Ibbs Report (1988), led to problems of accountability, managerial responsibility and the relationship of elected politicians and appointed organizational managers – with the prime example being that of the clash between the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the then head of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis. One of the results of this was the introduction of new mechanisms to “join-up” public policy and develop effective co-ordination between fragmented organizations. This, in turn, has had some, but limited, success in achieving the intention of the process but has also, in turn, generated many more unintended consequences (Ling, 2002; Pollitt, 2003b; for “joining-up” in the cultural sector see Gray, 2004).

The lack of effective organizational co-ordination in the pursuit of central governmental policy objectives as a result of these changes has also seen the generation of a variety of new tools to allow the centre to introduce or impose overall policy cohesion. Central government has always made use of a wide range of tools to manage the policy process – particularly with regard to non-central government institutions (such as local authorities, quangos and the National Health Service, let alone the plethora of new governance arrangements, such as Local Strategic Partnerships, that are now in place). A combination of circulars, confirmatory and appellate powers, adjudication, inspection, default powers and audit, the control of local officers, local bills, grants and borrowing, and the use of policy planning systems, alongside general legislative and financial controls have been frequently used in the past in attempts to ensure that central wishes are abided by (Gray, 1994, pp. 80–90). More recently these have been joined by the use of NPM-inspired performance measurement tools such as Comprehensive Performance Assessments (themselves to be replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessments in 2009), Best Value Indicators, Key Lines of Enquiry for Service Inspection, and Local Area, Funding and Public Service Agreements, all of which provide explicit criteria against which service provision can be assessed.<sup>9</sup> New organizational forms such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Cultural Consortia, and other forms of partnership, network and contract arrangements have also been introduced for managing the delivery of public services.<sup>10</sup>

The precise manner in which this wide range of devices are actually employed by governmental actors – at all levels – will be affected by the goals that different actors have, their relative control of these mechanisms and organizational forms, and the uses to which they wish to put them. The underlying intention is that forms of management, control and assessment will allow for an effective (and potentially efficient) exercise of authority over organizations, individuals and

actions. As much of this exercise of power and authority is concerned with ensuring that the top-down intentions of central political actors are lived up to, the relationship between these central actors and those beyond the remit of central government becomes important for understanding precisely how these devices have an effect on the choices and activities of policy actors, and on how far central actors are actually able to exercise effective control over policy sectors.

This becomes particularly important in the context of the new raft of performance measurement techniques that have been introduced into the political system. Although these derive initially from the introduction of ideas from the NPM they have been given support by both the attempt to move towards “evidence-based policy” (Parsons, 2000; Sanderson, 2002), and through the development of organizational mechanisms that are designed to ensure a coherency in the pursuit of public policy objectives in the context of increasingly complex patterns of inter-organizational governance (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Kjaer, 2004, chap. 2). The former of these, based on a particularly positivist methodology, depends upon there being appropriate measures in place to capture the complexities of both the causes and consequences of public policy. The latter requires a transferable set of assessment techniques across a range of dissimilar (if not sometimes directly contradictory) organizations and organizational objectives.

### **Sector specificity**

There are clear consequences that arise from the attempt to impose a top-down model of public policy management for the cultural sector. These arise as a consequence of the particularly specific nature of the policy sector itself and have a direct impact upon the development of instrumental policy forms within the sector. The cultural policy sector is associated with certain structural and behavioural characteristics that serve to place it in a politically weak position when compared with other policy sectors.

First, there is the issue of how governments deal with matters of cultural policy in a general sense. The range of approaches that states can adopt to matters of cultural policy can be placed on a continuum from direct responsibility and control of cultural affairs, usually in either an “engineer” (as in China) or “architect” (as in France) fashion, to working through arm’s-length quangos or other intermediate agencies and institutions (such as the MLA or Arts Council England in the United Kingdom, or the Australia Council for the Arts), or through even more remote mechanisms such as tax incentive schemes (as in the United States) (see Craik, 2007, Appendix C; Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989). Most governments are prepared to take some sort of responsibility for cultural policy, but the tendency is for them to adopt relatively indirect forms of involvement in most cases. The advantages for governments in taking such a role are that they can have some effect on the sector by producing general policies but, at the same time, they can avoid being held directly responsible or accountable for the specific policy choices that are then made on their behalf, and they can avoid accusations of censorship or undue political influence over these choices.

In the case of the museums and galleries part of the cultural policy sector, for example, although central government has provided a general legislative framework dating back to the British Museum Act of 1753, the Museums Act of 1845, the Museums and Gymnasiums Act of 1891, and the Public Libraries Act of 1892, there is little in the way of direct, hands-on, control by central government of the detailed day-to-day functioning of these institutions. Indeed, as is the case with a great deal of cultural provision in the United Kingdom, the provision of a large number of museums and galleries in Britain (40% of all registered museums) is through



the use of discretionary powers by local authorities (Lawley, 2003, pp. 75–76) rather than through mandatory, statutory, powers controlled by central government. This leaves effective policy choice in the hands of local, not national, actors and limits the forms of control that can be exercised by the centre in this field. Even with the “national museums” the role of the centre appears to consist of establishing the direction of general policy (through the use of mechanisms such as Funding Agreements), rather than with a direct, executive, concern with how the targets that are established for these museums are to be met. The consequences of this lack of ability to directly control the day-to-day managerial detail of service delivery are that it is likely that there will be diversity in approaches adopted within the museums and galleries sector, and a lack of policy co-ordination across differing geographical levels. The result of this is that not only that there will be the creation of unco-ordinated policies between organizations but also the possibility, if not the probability, that contradictory policies may be created where the interests, expectations and intentions of policy actors at different levels and in different organizations not only fail to meet but actively oppose each other (see Kiwan, 2007, where cultural policies in France that are designed to recognize cultural diversity at the local level run counter to other cultural policies that are designed to recognize cultural unity at the national level).

A secondary consequence of this is that attempts to create a more co-ordinated approach to sectoral policies (through strategies of “joining-up”, for example) are problematic – to say the least – as a result of the existence of multiple organizations, plans, types of policy and foci of policy in this field (Gray, 2004). This multiplicity of policy action can lead to a position where governments are reduced to making major policy demands that are operationally vacuous or are simply impossible to control and manage effectively (Gray, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 2004, pp. 152–154). This can, perhaps, be most clearly seen in the priorities that the DCMS has established for the museums sector where the word “will” becomes a mantra rather than a clear set of organizationally and operationally achievable objectives, and seem to rely on exhortation to a group of independent organizations rather than on hands-on, top-down, managerial control (DCMS, 2006b, pp. 27–28).

Although this is partly a consequence of NPM intentions to move away from hierarchical forms of management, it is also partly related to a secondary structural feature of the cultural policy sector: the lack of political support that it has, not only at the national, but also at the local level (Gray, 2002), particularly in comparison with many other policy sectors. Governmental rhetoric from Ministers within the DCMS stresses the importance of the cultural sector in its own right, rather than as simply an instrumental mechanism (see Jowell, 2004; Smith, 1998), but it is commonly the case that further levels of political support beyond the rhetorical are relatively limited. This political weakness of the cultural sector is not restricted to Britain and has the clear effect of limiting the extent to which culture can garner the administrative and political support that it needs to make an impact when compared with more politically “relevant” policy sectors (Gray, in press).<sup>11</sup> The overall result of this is that the cultural sector as a whole, and parts of the sector individually, are vulnerable to pressure from other policy sectors that have a perceived greater political importance or credibility. This differentiation between sectors of “high” and “low” politics (Bulpitt, 1983) in terms of how political actors view them has real consequences for the cultural sector – not least of which has been the recent drift towards an instrumentalization of policy within it, where areas of “high” political significance (such as education or community cohesion) become the focus towards which cultural policy is often turned.

Other sectorally specific features of the cultural policy arena can be identified as consisting of organizational fragmentation; variation in the geographical scale at which it operates; a tendency towards reactive, rather than proactive, policy activity within the sector; and the absence of a

clearly defined area of action (Gray, 2006). Each of these can contribute, in specific cases, towards policy instrumentalization but could be regarded as being of less importance in this respect than the low political priority that governments tend to give to issues of cultural policy and the low political significance that the sector as a whole has – notwithstanding the major political arguments that have taken place in the museums and galleries sector in the past, as, for example, the debates in Britain about admissions charges.

### **Explaining instrumentalization**

The endogenous features that are specific to the cultural sector, and the exogenous features derived from state and managerial changes, have combined to create a position where the pressures towards an instrumentalization of cultural policies have become stronger than in the past. There has always been an element of multi-functionalism within cultural policies – where the same policy can have multiple effects across a range of concerns – but the developments that have taken place in recent years have made the nature of the linkages between different policy concerns more explicit and apparent than they were in the more remote past.

The commodification of public policies since the mid-1970s has had a number of consequences: a change in focus in terms of who would be identified as the beneficiaries of public policies (from the social collectivity to the individual consumer); a greater selectiveness in terms of the intended audiences or recipients of policies; a greater direction from national actors in terms of the intended impact of policies; and a greater level of information about the costs and methods of financing policies being made available. The policy process itself has become more fragmented and economically – rather than politically – rational,<sup>12</sup> and a more limited set of criteria for assessing policy choices are, arguably, being used (Gray, 2000, pp. 25–29). When allied with the focus within NPM on performance measurement it is to be expected that there would be a greater attention paid to the precise mechanics of creating and implementing public policies across sectors. The identification of clearly stated policy objectives by governments allows for a more precise set of tools to manage the attainment of these objectives to be developed – at least at a general, systemic, level.

For cultural policy areas the inherent political weaknesses of the sector make it particularly vulnerable to exogenous political pressures. A result of this could be that if these pressures become great enough there may be “a massive intervention by previously uninvolved political actors and governmental institutions . . . as the issue is redefined, or as new dimensions of the debate become more salient, new actors feel qualified to exert their authority” (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 159). The clear implication of this is that there could be a re-direction of the policy sector as a whole, or component parts of it, if external political actors are motivated enough to choose to intervene within it. In this respect an explanation of some of the pressures towards an instrumentalization of cultural (and museums and galleries) policy can therefore be found in the increasing attempt by external political actors to make use of cultural resources for wider policy aims than those to be found within the sector itself. Indeed, these pressures towards an instrumentalization of policy may become even greater if the external policy actors and intentions already overlap with elements that already exist within the sector. Thus, the use of Generic Learning Outcomes to assess the impact of museums and galleries on education and learning ties together not only museums and galleries with the life-long learning initiatives of central government, but also emphasizes this element of the work of museums and galleries over their other functions. The use of these Outcomes also provides a means by which performance measures can be utilized to assess the success of museums and galleries in fulfilling central



governmental policy objectives. In this case it is something of an open question as to whether what is taking place is a full-blown instrumentalization of museums and galleries policy or whether it is simply a centrally inspired re-direction of policy within the sector towards one component part of the overall work of the sector rather than towards others.

In other areas, such as the use of museums and galleries as tools for social inclusion or economic regeneration a clearer image of instrumentalization is evident. As these forms of policy activity have not been traditionally seen as being core components of the work of the cultural sector<sup>13</sup> a move towards treating them as if they were does fit in with Vestheim's (1994) view of what an instrumental cultural policy looks like. This movement towards extra-sectoral policy concerns places cultural policy in a precarious position, particularly if the anticipated benefits from using "culture" in such ways can only be demonstrated in a weak fashion – if they can be unambiguously shown at all (Gray, in press).

Such exogenous pressures on the cultural sector are not, however, the only ones that exist: endogenous pressures can also serve apparently instrumentalizing purposes. The process by which this can take place is through policy "attachment", where actors within the cultural sector associate their own activities with those that are to be found in other policy sectors altogether (Gray, 2002). The reasons for pursuing such a strategy are normally where these other sectors have more resources (particularly financial ones) available to them than are to be found in the cultural sector (as with, for example, social inclusion or urban regeneration), or where the other policy sectors have greater political significance associated with them (as, for example, with education or health). In either case the process of attachment allows the cultural sector to gain access to either scarce resources or political credibility that would otherwise be unavailable to it. The consequence of pursuing such a strategy is that the cultural sector has to demonstrate that it is capable of delivering policy benefits for the sector that it has attached itself to, and not necessarily to the benefit of its' own core activities: the policy focus shifts away from the explicitly cultural dimension towards the concerns of the arena that it has attached itself to.<sup>14</sup> Other policy sectors may, in turn, wish to incorporate cultural elements into their own arenas of activity if it is anticipated that these elements will contribute to their own sectoral needs and requirements.<sup>15</sup> In this respect this is not attachment but instrumental reasoning, where culture is being used, effectively, for non-cultural ends.

Other internal factors that can affect this process include internal re-configurations of policy sectors or policy components such that new room for manoeuvre can be generated for policy actors. Such activity has been identified as taking place within the museums sector as a whole (Harrison, 2005; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000), with a subsequent re-appraisal of what museums and galleries exist for, and how they can be made to operate in these new conditions. This would indicate that there is a process of internal choice taking place within the museums and galleries sector that alters the balance between differing functional activities (particularly between education, entertainment and curatorship). This process of choice can serve to make the sector more, or less, open to instrumentalizing tendencies, depending upon how the new balance is managed and what ends or objectives it is directed towards (McPherson, 2006, for example, sees changing notions of curatorship as both feeding into the development of a new market-focused museum sector and as being directly affected by the market focus that museums are operating within).

The development of instrumental tendencies within the museums and galleries sector (as with cultural policy in general) is not simply a matter of deliberate, top-down, central government action. The role of endogenous factors, including internal sectoral changes, working from the bottom up is of some significance in explaining this phenomenon – particularly as central

government does not have the power to directly control, in a managerial sense, what takes place within the sector. The use of a large number of distinct governmental tools can push actors within policy sectors towards emphasizing certain activities within their work, but that does not mean that these will necessarily produce the results that the centre either intended or desired (see, for example, Sullivan, Knops, Barnes, & Newman, 2004, on the case of public participation initiatives), or that this new emphasis will be undertaken in the manner that the centre intended (see, for example, Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, on unintended consequences). The importance of unintended consequences in the processes of organizational and policy change indicates that a simple mechanistic explanation of instrumentalization that is predicated on the assumption of an all-powerful central government is unlikely to hold true for all examples of such changes. Although the centre can manipulate much of the context within which policy making in the cultural policy sphere takes place, the specific detail of what will happen, and the choices that will be made by the multiple actors involved, also need to be taken into account.

The results of an instrumentalization of policy are, likewise, dependent upon how the policy implementation stage is managed. If instrumentalization has been consciously adopted through attachment strategies then there is a possibility that the entire focus of the policy sector can become skewed away from the core concerns of the sector itself (Gray, 2002). In such a case the necessity to meet the instrumental aims of policy becomes even greater than would be the case if these core concerns were still in place. A failure to meet these aims may lead to an even greater loss of political support – and funding – and this may then reinforce sectoral weaknesses and make it even harder to generate support (and particularly political support) in the future. The motivations and intentions of those using such attachment strategies, and the context within which it occurs, would need to be examined to understand the potential for this to be the result.

Whether instrumentalization arises from exogenous sources, such as sponsoring or funding bodies, however, or from endogenous sources, such as policy attachment or internal change within the museums and galleries sector, the opportunities to manage the evaluation process of performance management are important. The sorts of measures that are adopted, how they are then measured, and how they are employed by both data gatherers and external bodies have important implications both for the assessment of policy success or failure and for the inter-organizational relationships that tie the system together (Selwood, 2002). The management of this process of evaluation therefore provides opportunities for the management of the instrumentalization process itself. Indeed, it may even serve as a form of organizational displacement activity where attention to the process of evaluation and performance measurement and management replaces that on the actual provision of goods and services to the public, with the consequent creation of the modern-day equivalent of Merton's (1940) bureaucratic dysfunctionality. Whether this occurs or not, involvement in this stage of the policy process has become increasingly important in recent years and needs to be investigated further.

## **Conclusions**

Although an instrumentalization of cultural policies in general, and museums and galleries policies in particular, can be traced back to changes in governmental ideology and the subsequent reforms of public management that arose from this, it should also be stressed that political actors within these policy spheres have also had an effect upon the process in turn. Instrumentalization, whatever the general feeling to the contrary may be, is unlikely to be a conscious governmental strategy, appearing, instead, to be either an unintended consequential effect of other reforms, or

the result of a co-incidence of endogenous and exogenous factors and changes that make it appear to be a viable policy response for policy actors in conditions of uncertainty. In either case, the process of instrumentalizing public policies gives rise to a need to manage what is taking place – and how it is to be assessed and evaluated – and is subject to conflict between actors within differing organizations (Gray, 2000). Developing appropriate mechanisms for managing both the process of change and the assessment of the new tendencies in cultural policies is a continuous activity for participants in the field, and is unlikely to be unambiguously resolved, in the short term at least, in a fashion that will prove satisfactory for all, or even for any, of the participants who are involved in the process.

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### **Notes**

1. What these central elements are is by no means certain. As the discussion will show, the ambiguity that arises from this has clear consequences for the development of instrumental forms of policy within the museums and galleries sector.
2. The Audit Commission (Audit Commission, 2008) “is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services”. The Key Lines of Enquiry are intended to show “how local priorities are met and their fit with the broader national agenda” (Audit Commission, 2005).
3. Such as Heritage Lottery Funding, the European Union and the variety of regional and local development and regeneration agencies that exist.
4. Whether this is the entirety of the core functions of the sector is clearly a matter of debate. A range of other functions, such as, amongst others, acquisition, populism, and social and economic development, could easily be added to this list. The Museums Association (2008) defines museums as “institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society”, enabling “people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment”. This extends the functional range even further.
5. A detailed policy history of the museums and galleries sector over this period is beyond the scope of the current article but the experience of other cultural sectors, such as the arts (Gray, 2000), amply demonstrates the impact of exogenous factors within them. The startling development of articles within the professional press, as well as the academic literature, over this time concerning the impact of instrumentalization within the museums and galleries sector is indicative of this increased emphasis.
6. This difficulty is common in cultural policy as it is dealing with an essentially contested concept (Gray, in press). Whether the definitional dispute in the museums and galleries sector is absolutely incapable of resolution, or whether it is simply a matter of political dispute within the sector itself, is a matter for debate.
7. The long-term, continuous, nature of these state changes can be seen in the cultural sector in the case of the arts (Gray, 2000), and various histories of the museums sector (for example the Foucault-influenced versions in T. Bennett, 1995; Gibson, 2001) also identify the ways in which there is no single moment at which change takes place but, instead, a succession of developments over time.
8. Public Service Agreements are agreed between central government and delivery agencies as to what the latter are expected to provide and how success (and failure) are to be assessed. Local Area Agreements are agreed between central government and local “partners” – effectively all public sector organizations working within an area – to provide the same things.
9. Comprehensive Performance Assessments evaluated how effectively local authorities were providing services to their areas. Comprehensive Area Assessments develops this to include a range of public

- sector organizations beyond simply local authorities. Best Value Indicators are quantitative assessments of service delivery performance. Funding Agreements are established between central government departments and various quangos and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to clarify how the latter will contribute to the “strategic objectives” of the former in return for public money.
10. These organizational reforms are also subject to later change: the Regional Cultural Consortia are due to have their Non-Departmental Public Body status and DCMS financial support removed from them. Such organizational reform is endemic to the public sector.
  11. Whether the current Cultural Pathfinders project in England (Local Government Association/ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2005) will start to reverse this position remains to be seen.
  12. Meaning that the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of policy become economic ones (such as value for money) rather than political ones (such as reducing social inequalities).
  13. O. Bennett (1995, pp. 205–207) sees the economic importance of the cultural sector as being an underlying theme in providing support for state intervention into the cultural sector in Britain, but this is not the same as seeing culture as a mechanism for economic regeneration.
  14. It is informative in this context to note that the Best Value Indicators for culture were concerned with the number of visitors to libraries and museums and galleries and had nothing to do with the cultural experience that these visitors had whilst visiting.
  15. As, for example, including cultural infrastructure in regeneration strategies on the basis that this will make locations more attractive as investment sites for businesses (or individual house purchasers) (see Evans & Shaw, 2004).

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