Sharpening the Lens: Recent Research on Cultural Policy, Cultural Diversity, and Social Cohesion

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Abstract: Many of the assumptions surrounding “culture, connectedness, and social cohesion” must be held up to sharper scrutiny, including the nostalgia for a return to simpler times, when cultural consensus and social cohesion seemed easier to achieve. The challenge is not one of “repairing fractured cohesion” or “renewing civil society,” but rather of envisioning a new civic realm where diversity is supported by more empirically grounded foundations for claims regarding the interconnections amongst these phenomena. Although we must acknowledge the enormous power of globalizing markets and communications systems, we also need to resist a simplistic equation of these factors with homogenizing cultural trends. Our current discourses related to culture, diversity, and social cohesion require a complete rethinking before we can proceed with policies to respond effectively.

Résumé: Il faudrait jeter un regard plus attentif à plusieurs des suppositions concernant « culture, connexion et cohésion sociale », y compris la nostalgie de temps plus simples, quand il semblait plus facile aux gens de s’accorder sur les questions de culture et de cohésion culturelle. Le défi n’est pas de « rétablir une cohésion fracturée » ou de « renouveler la société civile », mais plutôt d’envisager un nouveau domaine civique où la diversité se fonde sur des assises plus empiriques, y compris une plus grande reconnaissance des rapports entre culture, connexion et cohésion sociale. Quoique nous devions tenir compte du pouvoir énorme de marchés et de systèmes de communication mondiaux, nous devons éviter d’établir un parallèle simpliste entre ces influences et des tendances culturelles vers l’homogénéisation. Nous devons complètement repenser notre discours actuel sur culture, diversité et cohésion sociale avant de pouvoir formuler des politiques qui nous permettraient de réagir efficacement.

Introduction
In Canada as elsewhere, the aftershocks of globalization continue to reverberate. Two aspects pose particularly profound challenges to traditional formulations of citizenship, connectedness, and social cohesion: the transnational flow of peoples,
and globalizing communications systems and markets. These trends also raise serious questions about the role of culture and cultural policy in responding to the new global environment.

Beginning in 1997, Canada was one of seven countries that participated in a Council of Europe study on cultural policy and cultural diversity. The other countries were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.1

Phase 1 of the study involved drafting National Reports in each country, describing cultural policy responses to diversity, and raising critical policy and research needs. The research consisted primarily of a literature review and analysis of these issues. The author served as National Coordinator for Canada’s participation in this first phase of the study, with assistance provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Phase 2 of the study involved the commissioning of research papers and site visits to each participating country, as a further extension of issues raised by each National Report. In Canada, meetings took place in Montreal, Toronto, and Edmonton.2 Phase 2 ended with the preparation of a final report summarizing all study findings by Professor Tony Bennett of the Open University in the United Kingdom (Bennett, 2001).

The overall objective of the Council of Europe study was to understand and support the development of democratic cultural policy in the context of culturally diverse societies. It recognized that the changing international context is forcing a substantial rethinking of the principles, processes, and relationships needed for democratic cultural policy development. The study began with the assumption that greater clarity and precision is needed regarding both the rights and responsibilities of cultural citizenship in a global society, and the mechanisms required to ensure equity and fairness in cultural participation. 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 Council of Europe study did not attempt to address all dimensions of cultural diversity. Rather, it focused on two facets:

1. Forms of cultural diversity associated with the patterns of migration that have characterized the postwar period; and

2. More long-standing or historical forms of cultural difference that have resisted assimilation within dominant national cultures over extended periods, such as Aboriginal and French-speaking peoples in Canada.

The study acknowledged that many other forms of diversity exist—such as those defined by class, gender, sexual orientation, and ableism, among others. These forms of difference interact with one another in complex ways, thus rendering the strict isolation of any one variant impossible. But it is also necessary to acknowledge that the historical and political forces shaping different types or forms of cultural diversity are far from identical. Thus, in order to define a man-
ageable set of issues that the study could reasonably expect to address, the Council of Europe zeroed in on the two distinctions identified above.

**Some Canadian context**

Several facets of Canada’s history and experience make it an appropriate candidate for the Council of Europe study. For example, 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-1990s, 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, that is, non-Aboriginal 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 Aboriginal, 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.

The Canadian National Report seeks to strike a balance by critiquing Canadian policy approaches and assumptions on matters of both cultural diversity and cultural policy, while at the same time acknowledging the country’s many strengths and achievements. 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 Canadian policy circles as one of a number of “fault lines” exposing cracks in the Canadian façade of social cohesion. Cultural diversity intersects with economic and other types of polarization, thus jeopardizing Canada’s reputation for leadership on these issues and challenging its image as a caring, open, and compassionate society.

In the domain of cultural policy responses to diversity, Canada has historically taken proactive measures to acknowledge and support greater diversity in cultural production and representation. The Report offers an overview of the evolution of these policies and of the value assumptions that underlie them. It notes that while progress has unquestionably been made, Canada is still far from having “resolved” these issues. Aboriginal peoples, women, visible minorities, and the disabled have all called on Canada to correct several serious shortcomings of “cultural democracy” as it is currently being practiced.
Based on Canadian experience, three themes are identified as deserving particular attention towards the advancement of a cultural policy agenda related to cultural diversity:

1. The need to critically unpack the policy discourse related to cultural policy and cultural diversity—to move past “recycled generalizations”—in order to establish more conceptually rigorous and empirically grounded policies;

2. The need to sharpen the focus on concrete matters of institutional diversification, including the measures and indicators needed to assess change; and

3. The need to direct greater attention to “capacity building” at the local level to respond to these challenges.

Disentangling diversity, social cohesion (connectedness), and culture

In Canada, “cultural diversity” has recently emerged as a strong theme in federal cultural policy discourses. Both UNESCO and the Council of Europe recognize diversity as central to more democratic cultural policies and cultural policy formulation: UNESCO through its report on *Our Creative Diversity* (1995), and the Council of Europe through a similar study called *In From the Margins* (1996).

In general, these reports assume that diversity and other positively valued social, cultural, and political agendas are both mutually achievable and mutually enabling as objectives. Diversity is believed to be:

- a means of achieving social cohesion—simultaneously celebrating differentiated identities while forging a new sense of belonging in culturally diverse societies;
- an element of cultural democracy agendas;
- a means of enriching cultural resources and cultural capital in the cultural industries and knowledge economy;
- a means of overcoming social exclusion; and
- an aid and a catalyst to sustainable cultural development and economic prosperity (Bennett, 2001).

Recent Canadian work has sought to create a clearer conceptual map of the different dimensions of social cohesion (Bernard, 2001; Jenson, 1998), including the connections between social cohesion and cultural policy (Jeannotte, 1999). Important work by Gagnon & Pagé (1999) provides a framework for reconceptualizing citizenship in liberal democracies, where cultural policy plays a central role. This paper will examine three issues raised by Gagnon & Pagé in order to demonstrate the extent to which supposedly self-evident truths like “culture, connectedness, and social cohesion” are actually fraught with difficulties, conflicts, and compromises.

Acknowledging tensions and defining boundaries

The conceptual quagmires surrounding the terms “cultural diversity” and “culture” are enormous, as the past two decades’ worth of literature on this subject has confirmed. Bennett (2001) seeks to address some of these dilemmas by grounding
some exceedingly abstract discussions in a historical context, thereby delineating the evolution of both policy and policy assumption(s) in each policy field.\textsuperscript{5}

Canada’s social and political history bears witness to the many difficulties and complexities of reconciling diversity and cohesion. For many years, Canada has faced the challenge of acknowledging and sustaining the legitimate historical claims of Aboriginal peoples and English- and French-speaking Canadians, while simultaneously seeking to advance equity and inclusion in a more broadly defined pluralistic nation. These historical claims conflict in direct ways with other forms of diversity.

For ethno-racial and visible minorities with diasporic links to other nations, the privileging of the historical (time) and territorial (space) claims of Aboriginal and English- 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 and other legislative and policy instruments—people affiliated with various minorities argue that these measures fail because they continue to operate within the dominant framework of English- and French-speaking Canada, and thus do not acknowledge the fundamental issue of power imbalances.

Conversely, representatives of these three “founding peoples,” particularly Aboriginal and French-speaking Canadians, maintain that historical and territorial claims cannot be ignored. Quebec has steadfastly resisted the diminution of its status within the Canadian Confederation to “one ethnic group among others.” In Quebec, the challenge of reconciling its own nationalist project with the rights of minorities within the province remains a major difficulty.\textsuperscript{6} Outside Quebec, 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. Furthermore, some Canadians have become increasingly alienated by the federal government’s efforts to maintain official bilingualism, and increasingly wearied by the ongoing constitutional conflict between English- and French-speaking Canada.

Clearly, Canada is far from having “resolved” these contradictory diversity demands. Canadian experience points to an understanding of diversity as an ongoing negotiation of intersecting and often conflicting interests.

If greater clarity and differentiation are needed in cultural diversity, they are also necessary to any discussion of 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 long-standing and-numbingly repetitive. At the most general level, the Canadian 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. In more pragmatic terms, however, cultural policy has remained dominated by an “arts and humanities” (“H-culture”) definition: particular forms of creative expression from both popular and high culture, as well as the institutions and industries in which these works are created and disseminated.
While it is important to recognize the close connections between both “A-” and “H-” conceptualizations of culture, conflating them has only led to confusions in Canadian cultural policy. This failing is related to an inherent tension between competing policy visions of “the arts” versus “heritage.” In the arts vision of cultural policy, the dominant conceptual scheme has followed the “H-culture” school of expression. By contrast, the heritage vision has increasingly embraced an “A-culture” outlook. According to the “arts and culture” framing of policy issues, heritage forms a subset that is relegated either to a disciplinary category—usually associated with museums, archives, libraries, built heritage, archaeology, folk life/folklore, and so forth—or to the last step in the production sequence—beginning with creation, production, and distribution before ending in 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 & 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 less as “culture” than as “cultural resources”—those symbols and symbolic processes through which we communicate and reproduce larger social realities.

If we are to understand and explore the exchanges that occur between the real world of cultural policies and our increasingly diverse populations, then we need to set some working parameters. The limits of what cultural policies can realistically accomplish in the first place must be clearly identified if their potential or capacity is to be realized at all.

**Cultural policy, social cohesion, and social justice**

Threats to social cohesion were identified by the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) of the federal government as one of the key challenges facing Canada in the twenty-first century. Following the confirmation of social cohesion as a priority, a Social Cohesion Network was established. The Network identified two “fault lines” currently undermining the social fabric linking Canadians: the first had to do with increasing demographic and social diversity, while the second considered the effects of economic and other types of polarization.

Some analysts have found “social cohesion” to be too vague a designation to adequately account for the growing “fault lines” within Canadian society, since social cohesion does not convey the same awareness of exclusion or inequity expressed by an earlier policy concern like “social justice” (Baeker, 1998; Jenson, 1998). The Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology’s *Final Report on Social Cohesion* (1999) in Canada concluded that declining levels of “shared values and traditions” should not be allowed to overshadow ongoing challenges associated with redistribution and social justice.

We can find a helpful articulation of one aspect of the differences between social cohesion and social justice in Fraser’s (1995) analysis of distinctions between redistributive or *social justice*, and the struggle for recognition or *cultural justice*. Redistributive justice has dominated most twentieth-century strug-
gles for social justice. It focuses on socioeconomic inequities, disparities in basic physical and material needs (such as income, property, access to paid work, education, health care, and leisure time), and—more starkly—the resulting rates of morbidity or life expectancy. This materialist view of justice subsequently expanded to include the more intangible element of “recognition,” what Fraser (somewhat grandly) terms “the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century” (p. 68). This struggle is rooted in social 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. (Fraser, 1995, p. 71)

Fraser suggests that the remedy for all three forms of cultural injustice can be found in the pursuit of cultural or symbolic change. She does not ask us to choose between social and cultural justice, so much as to consider the distinctions and tensions that exist between them. Fraser calls the principal tension between equity and diversity the “redistributive–recognition” dilemma. Many groups in society are subject to both social and cultural forms of injustice, and require assistance in responding to each—but the practical result is a simultaneous claiming and denying of these groups’ specificity. Gender and race are examples of “bivalent collectives” in which these two axes of injustice intersect and reinforce each other.

In order to advance cultural justice, Fraser distinguishes between strategies of **affirmation** and **transformation**. Affirmative strategies aim at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing their underlying and generative structures or frameworks. Transformative strategies, on the other hand, aim at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying framework.

**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 conviction that “genuine” dialogue and exchange between races and cultures can lead to mutual understanding and harmony is based on this tenet. Canada’s explicit commitment to both an ideology and a public policy of cultural diversity has often proven beneficial, since it 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 must also be said that official policy has disguised as much as it has advanced an agenda of equity and social justice.

On issues of diversity and equity, Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees (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 experience of many ethno-racial and cultural minorities of a society that is both exclusionary and monocultural. They 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, Tator, Mattis, & Rees dub this phenomenon “democratic racism.”

We cannot afford to be naive about the power dynamics 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 stage of the decision-making process. Karim (1998) argues that Canadian cultural and media institutions have made progress in expanding minority participation in some areas, but lag behind countries such as the United States in advancing others (e.g., participation in the cultural labour force; appointments to cultural boards; and support for minority ownership of media).

Tator, Henry, & Mattis (1998) argue that social change rarely occurs as the result of peaceful and harmonious consensus alone; most transformations are more lastingly effected (if not outright precipitated) by crisis, conflict, and contestation. Such constructive conflict must include the recognition of different needs and interests (both individual and collective) as the point of departure for all negotiation and engagement.

**Institutional and sectoral change: From policy inputs to diversity outcomes**

Greater conceptual clarity and new discourses to guide cultural policy are needed if commitments to diversity are to amount to more than just rhetoric. But new discourses must also be accompanied by commitments to institutional diversification and sectoral change, as well as definitions of meaningful and useful measures and indicators in order to assess progress. Without tangible progress on these fronts, continued state patronage will be increasingly difficult to either justify or secure in the face of critiques from the left (lack of progress towards equity) and from the right (the futility of continued investment).

**Institutional diversification**

The true debate—it has only slowly come to be realised—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, n.p.)

As in many countries, the cultural policy discourse in Canada has been dominated by a “two-tier” cultural system for many decades. On the one hand were the state-subsidized, predominantly Eurocentric “civilizing” or “high” arts and indigenous cultural industries systems; on the other hand were the more “popular,”
“community,” “ethnic”/“heritage,” or “commercial”-driven forms of cultural production. The latter operated either in the marketplace or on an amateur basis, with the expectation that they be sustained solely by demand. The former, by contrast, assumed a far loftier role dependent on publically supported notions of national identity and cultural sovereignty (“if we build it (or create it), they will come”). The result was that a specific group of historically advantaged art forms and cultural institutions tended to dictate the cultural policy agenda, over and above the interests and needs of newer cultural groups and an increasingly diverse public.

In Canada, we have seen the implementation of relatively few of the policies known as “cultural ownership” in the United Kingdom. These are policies in which the key participants—such as administrators, members of juries, and individual artists and curators—each hold affiliations to specific, usually ethno-racial communities quite distinct from one another.

But practical tensions here are real, offering no straightforward solutions. 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. Then again, opting for the second alternative—inclusion of marginalized positions and voices—can just as easily backfire in perceptions of tokenism or minorities being relegated to the “ghettos.”

Cunningham & Sinclair (2000) suggest a useful avenue out of this impasse: support for new institutions and new cultural productions serving specific communities can be pursued, but only if “mainstream” cultural and media institutions are held more accountable on basic requirements of equity at the same time. For example, these requirements might include strengthened representation in staffing and boards or governance structures, and increased allocation of programming or production budgets.

Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees (2000) provide another helpful means of assessing change in “mainstream” institutions around the issues of diversity. They describe a continuum from monoculturalism and assimilation—institutions with exclusionary practices—moving towards ad hoc multiculturalism—institutions characterized by symbolic, passive, and tokenistic approaches—culminating in anti-discriminatory, anti-racism, and equity—institutions which represent genuinely inclusive models. For each category of institution, they identify a particular set of characteristics and discourses as tools for overall assessment.

**Sectoral change strategies**

In Canada, more attention has been directed to the establishment of policy and legislative commitments to diversity, instead of a more rigorous focus on policy implementation and evaluation. The literature on policy implementation suggests that we need to clarify core concepts and planning frameworks for assessing progress, while simultaneously testing these theories in practice and evaluating their results. Forand, Hardy, & Smith (1999) argue that the great failing of environmental strategies aimed at “sustainable development” is that too much energy and focus is devoted to the planning and conceptual phases of the policy and man-
agement cycle, while not enough attention is paid to the actual implementation and operation stages, let alone the later monitoring and corrective action phases.

One way of improving our present methods of policy implementation and evaluation is by enhancing our performance measures and indicators. Bennett (1998) has shown that no country in the world currently collects data with any of the rigour required for accurately tracking the progress being made in cultural policy and cultural diversity. One of the goals of the Council of Europe study has been to establish a more rigorous empirical foundation for enabling assessments in just these areas.13

Some generally acknowledged shortcomings of statistics related to cultural diversity are listed below:

- Much of the focus has been on the supply- or production/expenditure-side of the sector, although with insufficient ethno-linguistic analyses of diversity (among others); thus, for example, we still have little or no understanding of the ethno-racial composition of the cultural labour force;
- Far less attention has been paid to the participation or the consumption-side of cultural production, especially the consumption/participation of non-dominant communities; and
- Data collection remains largely contained within the “arts, heritage, and cultural industries” as traditionally defined, instead of being concerned with a broader range and definition of cultural practices in a more diverse society.

**Networks of influence and communication**

While stronger empirical data is crucial for effecting any larger changes in performance or assessment, it is not a panacea. Public confidence in the capacity of governments to “engineer” changes has plummeted over the past decade. In fields such as health and education, analysts have begun to examine alternative strategies for realizing change. Here, creating meaningful change is associated with extending *networks of influence and communication*.

Fullan (1996) has examined barriers to systemic change in the education sector, and concluded that while more rigorous performance standards and expectations are essential, they are not, by themselves, sufficient. In order for change to become truly lasting or effective, Fullan claims that schools must pay more attention to *relationship building*, both internally and externally: “Efforts must focus simultaneously on building internal relationships and organizational capacity, and strengthening external networks and relationships. Internal networks and learning communities ha[ve] to be dynamically plugged into two-way relationships with external networks” (p. 23).

Fullan also insists on the importance of acknowledging such “soft” factors as emotion and hope in the change process. The profound change that must occur in order to confront exclusion in cultural institutions requires sustained and painful reflection: “There is a consistent message [in books on change]: 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) realize that hope, especially in the face of frustration, is the last healthy virtue” (Fullan, 1997, p. 48).

**Rebalancing local and national**

**“Flexible federalism?”**  
The federal government’s responsibility for immigration, combined with the strong role it has played historically in social and human rights, has resulted in federally driven policies regarding cultural diversity in Canada. However, the impact of these nation-wide policies is often felt at the provincial level, through each province’s responsibility for education, health care, housing, and welfare services. Even more absent from the policy discourse are individual municipalities. And it is precisely here that the range of settlement and adjustment programs (such as English as a Second Language) are delivered to immigrants, along with other essential social services.

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 both recent and long-standing in terms of “distinctive cultures and origins.”

The capacity of municipalities to respond to such pressures is limited because local governments enjoy few constitutional rights of independent authority or legitimacy in Canada. Municipalities exist, but it is up to the provinces to grant them political powers. And problems have only proliferated in Canada in urban centres over the past decade because deficit-driven senior levels of government have been “downloading” responsibilities—from the federal government down to the provinces, and from the provinces down to the municipalities—without the requisite transfer of funds or new taxation powers for enabling these new responsibilities. If nation states are declining in significance relative to both local and global levels of governance, then the limited policy and fiscal capacity of Canadian municipalities constitutes a major barrier to social change.14

The strong role of the federal government in determining cultural policy throughout the postwar period has certainly achieved a great deal. However, Ottawa’s strong role has also undeniably undermined strategies and capacities at the local and regional level. The European Union has recognized the importance of strengthening local decision-making authority and capacity in all areas, including cultural development: “Applied to cultural policy [this means] that only those decisions or initiatives which must be considered at a national level should be the responsibility of a ministry of culture, with the rest being devolved to regional and local administration” (Matarasso & Landry, 1999, p. 13).

Canada’s particular history and its specific constitutional realities cannot be ignored or displaced by “models” that may have been useful in other jurisdictions.
Yet Canada, like most countries, is searching for new approaches to problem-solving and new models of governance, the better to 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.

The fields of urban planning and community development can guide our thinking here, since their experience with self-organizing systems and community self-government reflects a workable strategy for broadening engagement from the grassroots up. These approaches rely on social learning models of planning and decision-making, models which foster “increased citizen participation” through a deepening of public understanding of social problems.

### From cultural policy to cultural planning

In the early 1990s, cultural planning as a concept emerged in the United States, Australia, and Europe as a response to unsatisfying cultural policy-led approaches to problems of urban regeneration and economic development. Cultural policy-led approaches were seen as too narrow in their strictly economic and physical focus, since they failed to take into account other aspects of cultural development (such as the symbolic, social, and political).

Cultural planning has many appealing characteristics. Unlike traditional cultural policies that continue to be dominated by “aesthetic” definitions of culture, drawn largely from European high culture traditions, cultural planning takes the broader definition of cultural resources as its basis. Cultural resources have been defined in different ways in different jurisdictions, but all of them move beyond a focus on specific disciplines or art forms to a broader understanding of local cultural resources and activities. Bianchini & Santacatterina’s (1997) understanding of cultural resources illustrates this wider perspective, which includes:

- 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 parts of a whole dimension indispensable to the planning and policy process.

Another advantage of cultural planning is its territorial focus. Unlike the sectoral approach favoured by most other schools of cultural policy, cultural planning
balances sectoral concerns with more integrated and holistic strategies of urban development. Nor does cultural planning ignore the growing significance of transnational diasporic networks supporting attachment and belonging in non-geographic communities. But it recognizes that, however diverse our identities, it is incumbent upon all of us to learn how to live and make decisions together in the increasingly diverse urban centres of the future.

Approaches to local cultural development across Canada vary tremendously. There is very little consistency in the description of what constitutes “cultural activity” exactly, and the lack of coherent municipal cultural statistics presents a serious barrier to reform (Baeker, 1999; de la Durantaye, 1999). Cultural planning may offer more sophisticated solutions, but many municipalities are still far from embracing the more holistic and integrated perspectives being offered.

If we are going to implement a stronger cultural planning agenda in Canada, we need to face the reality of existing limitations on local government, as well as the need for more effective co-ordination among all three levels of government. And indeed, Canadian urban planners are increasingly becoming sensitized to questions of culture and diversity, thus paving the way to greater dialogue with the cultural sector (Wallace & Moore Milroy, 1999).

Future research needs

Mapping rights and responsibilities of cultural citizenship

Bennett (2001) argues that there is little likelihood of making progress on issues of cultural policy and cultural diversity without putting the question of new formulations of citizenship at the core of the debate. Cultural rights must form an important part of this agenda. The concept of cultural rights has been examined extensively in Europe through agencies such as the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Council for Cultural Cooperation, 1997; Fisher, Groombridge, Hausermann, & Mitchell, 1993) and UNESCO (1995). However, aside from early and important work by Cohnstaedt (1990), cultural rights have not received comparable or sustained attention in Canada.

We as Canadians need to map out our normative and legal regimes of cultural rights, as expressed in our laws, as well as more informal statements of consensus (or dispute) over the interpretation of these “rights” to culture—extending from Aboriginal, local, or municipal concerns to provincial, national, and global ones. We further need to consider how such interpretations of cultural rights relate to explicit cultural policy goals.

More rigorous mapping of the conceptual terrain of cultural policy and cultural diversity is also critical to the development of indicators capable of assessing more democratic cultural policy in diverse societies. We need an alternative set of assumptions related to issues such as participation and access, hybridized identities, and social cohesion.
Assessing institutional and sectoral change

A more empirical foundation for assessing progress offers two categories of indicators. The first relates to more effective measures of assessing change in existing cultural infrastructure. For example:

- The degree of participation by minorities in administrative and decision-making processes, such as employment in the cultural labour force, positions in decision-making systems, and participation on cultural boards.
- More extensive analysis of cultural participation/consumption by ethno-racial groups and “audience reach” in existing cultural and media institutions, particularly as it pertains to the allocation of public funds received by these institutions.

A modest initial inquiry might focus on a limited number of national cultural institutions to examine how these institutions perform relative to these indicators.

The second category concerns indicators capable of capturing “non-traditional” cultural participation on the outside of existing institutions and definitions of cultural activity. The emphasis here is on recognizing the actual cultural activities and participation of Canadians, as distinct from those cultural activities merely legitimized by current cultural policy frameworks. Murray (1999) calls this cultural stuff of life “the symbolic experience of ordinary Canadians” (p. 11). Bennett’s (1999) work has already helped to provide a better statistical picture of “everyday culture” in Australia, which could in turn assist similar investigations in Canada.

Stronger links with local planning and community development

Cultural policymakers can draw valuable insights from the experience of their peers in the fields of urban planning and community development. For example, they can learn to address community problems by mobilizing shared commitments to action (Friedmann, 1987). Emerging postmodern theories of planning combine a focus on communication with a critical analysis of planning values and assumptions, paying particular attention to those local institutions in charge of urban planning and development (Mandelbaum, Mazza, & Burchell, 1996). Planners are also increasingly considering cities as both cultural and physical entities (Baeker, 1999; Sandercocck, 1998; Zukin, 1995). All of these perspectives view cultural activities within communities as an important and largely untapped means of understanding the whole civic realm afresh, specifically as these activities relate to the challenges of governing in increasingly diverse urban centres.

Conclusion

A central challenge in the creation of democratic cultural policy in diverse societies requires us to abandon our old perception of diversity as a “fault line” or “deficit” that is acting to undermine social cohesion and connectedness. Instead, we must adopt a new perspective that acknowledges the need for new formulations of social 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*. We thus need to pay greater attention to “nurturing those institutions which contribute to, rather than undermine, practices of recognition of difference” (Jensen, 1998, p. 16). It is institutional structures, not amorphous entities of “community” or “nation,” that endow us with the means to confront and *work through* (rather than avoid) the inevitable value conflicts that result from increased diversity. 16

A core question for cultural policy and cultural policy research may be how cultural institutions might respond to the challenge of becoming “civil learning institutions” (Orr, 1992) capable of engaging citizens in complex and often contentious issues of diversity at the community level. Can such new purposes spark a source of renewal and legitimacy in cultural institutions?

Notes
1. Since this paper was first prepared, a second round of countries have subsequently entered the study.
2. A report summarizing the discussions at these meetings is available through the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage.
3. The national reports from the seven participating countries are available on the Council of Europe Web site: URL: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Culture/Cultural_policies/Comparative_reviews/Reports/TopOfPage. The final report (Bennett, 2001) is available from Council of Europe Publishing.
4. The authors identify a set of complex relationships between four components of citizenship: national identity; social, cultural, and supranational belonging; an effective system of rights; and political and civic participation.
5. Murray (1999) calls for greater attention to “social histories” of cultural policy that reveal these shifting perspectives and assumptions.
6. For example, First Nations groups in Quebec made it clear that if Quebec were to declare sovereignty on linguistic and territorial grounds, it would be faced by immediate declarations of sovereignty and land claims from First Nations.
7. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage report, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Being: The Evolving Role of the Federal Government in Support of Culture in Canada*, adopted the four-word definition of culture as “ways of living together.” But after two years of consultation and analysis, the writers of the report (humbly) admitted that “we found we were no wiser in defining culture and cultural identity than we had been at the outset” (1999, p. xiii).
8. “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).
9. Another objection stems from the tendency to mistake “social cohesion” for “national unity,” or for a plea—under the pressures and challenges of globalization—for a return to a simpler, more homogeneous society in which cultural consensus is believed to be more easily achievable.
10. The liberal belief in “managed consensus” has been a core assumption in the nineteenth-century vision of the nation state and in the postwar welfare state—two pillars of modern cultural policy.
11. Blommaert & 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 diversity “management” smacks of a policy of containment, or the hierarchical domination of one group by another in a society.

13. One of the research position papers produced for the Council of Europe study was on performance measures and indicators in the cultural domain. It was prepared by Dr. Arnold Love, a Canadian scholar and respected international authority in the field of performance measures and evaluation.

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

15. 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.

16. Research points to the possibility that varying degrees of social cohesion in different countries are strongly influenced by how much institutional structures tend to either polarize or resolve fundamental normative conflicts and value disputes. One of the world’s leading sociologists, Peter Berger, notes that “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 Social Cohesion Network, 1998, p. 23).

References


