

“Little Supplements of Life”: Urban Governance and Quality of Life

Colin Mercer
Nottingham Trent University, England

Abstract: This paper presents an approach to urban governance and quality of life that combines recent French theory with current English and Australian practice. The historical concepts of “culture” and “governance” developed by Foucault and Bourdieu (among others) are integrated into several case studies of contemporary cultural policies enacted in cities across the U.K. and in Australia. The present work thus seeks to combine theoretical concerns with practical applications, towards the investigation and understanding of a particularity held in common: quality of life indicators, as expressed in patterns of both social and cultural capital assessment, in both urban and community environments.

Résumé: Cet article présente une approche à la gouvernance urbaine et à la qualité de la vie qui allie des théories françaises récentes à des pratiques anglaises et australiennes courantes. Il unit les concepts historiques de « culture » et de « gouvernance » développés par Foucault et Bourdieu (entre autres) à plusieurs études de cas. Ces dernières portent sur des politiques culturelles contemporaines formulées dans des villes d’une part à l’autre de la Grande Bretagne et de l’Australie. Cette étude cherche ainsi à associer questions théoriques et applications pratiques, afin d’examiner et de comprendre une particularité qu’elles ont en commun: les indicateurs de qualité de vie, tels qu’exprimés dans l’évaluation de capital social et culturel, tant dans les milieux communautaires qu’urbains.

Introduction: Pastorates old and new

“Little supplements of life” (*petits suppléments de vie*) is an expression from Michel Foucault’s essay “*Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason*” (1986). In this essay, Foucault shows how a certain set of techniques for the government of individuals and populations is based on a transformation of the idea of “the pastorate” into a practice called “policing,” which occurred in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He then proceeds to offer a critique of those forms of collective control, known interchangeably as the State, the Republic, the City, or the Police.

Colin Mercer is Professor of Cultural Policy and Director, Cultural Policy and Planning Research Unit, at Nottingham Trent University, Broadway Media Centre, 14-18 Broad Street, Nottingham, England NG1 3AL. E-mail: colin.mercer@ntu.ac.uk

Canadian Journal of Communication, Vol 27 (2002) 315-330

©2002 Canadian Journal of Communication Corporation

“Quality of Life and Urban Governance” refers to the present writer’s experience in developing urban cultural strategies in both Australia and the U.K. over the past decade (see Mercer & Taylor, 1991). These current implementations of cultural policy reflect certain distinctive modes of governmentality which have persisted since the late eighteenth century, as identified by Foucault. Contemporary questions of urban governance can thus be illuminated by Foucauldian theories of the historical and methodological origins of Western cultural policy—allowing us to posit connections between the cultural field at large and the techniques of notation and calculation in particular, towards a fuller and more nuanced measuring and understanding of “quality of life” in Western society.

The governance of individuals (and communities) by “their own verity”

In his discussion of the development of modern modes of government—“the government of individuals by their own verity”—Foucault (1986) notes how the “pastorate of souls is a typically urban experience . . . [for reasons of] . . . a cultural nature—the pastorate is a complicated technique which demands a certain level of culture, not only on the part of the pastor but also among his flock” (p. 21).¹ The techniques of the pre-modern pastorate include those of individualization, self-examination, and the guidance of conscience largely through religious and other spiritual institutions and practices. The techniques of the modern pastorate, on the other hand, include community-ization, self-reliance, the assertion of identity, and the guidance of cultural integrity. But in between the pre-modern and the modern emerges the crucial, society-altering concept of *police*.

From police to policy

Police includes everything, but from an extremely particular point of view. People and things are envisioned as to their relationships: people’s coexistence on a territory; their relationships as to property; what they produce; what is exchanged on the market. It also concerns itself with how they live, the diseases and accidents to which they are exposed. What the police surveys is a live, active, productive person The police’s true object is the person. (Foucault, 1986, pp. 28-29)

In relation to the City, the police surveys everything “providing the city with adornment, form and splendour . . . its strength, its vigour.” But at the same time the *police* is concerned with “working and trading relations between people, as well as aid and mutual help”; *police* must “ensure ‘communication’ among people in the broad sense of the word” (p. 29). This is where “little supplements” come in:

As a form of rational intervention exercising political power over people, the role of the police is to give them a little supplement of life and, in so doing, to confer on the State a little more strength. This is done through the control of ‘communication’, that is, the common activities of individuals (work, production, exchange, commodities). (p. 29)

Subsequent elaborations of a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century concept of *police*—by Delamare in France, or Huhenthal, Willebrand, and von Justi in Germany—placed a greater emphasis on “life”: quality of life, preservation and maintenance of life, conveniences of life, or pleasures of life. Such an emphasis produced a kind of social grid connecting such activities or interests as religion and morals, health, food, safety, justice, trades, crafts, entertainments, and pleasures. This grid aimed at developing “those elements constitutive of individuals’ lives in such a way that their development also fosters the strength of the State” (Foucault, 1986, p. 26).

The political rationality of the city

The City of Brisbane Act, Section 36(2) defines the power of the Council to make ordinances for “promoting and maintaining the peace, comfort, education, health, morals, welfare, safety, convenience, food supply, housing, trade, commerce and manufactures of the City and its inhabitants, and for the planning, development and embellishment of the City.”

Making connections between Foucault’s concept of *police* and the more prosaic requirements of Australian local government enabled cultural policy-makers to focus and follow through on the essentials of their mission: to strategically deploy human, cultural, and physical resources for “a group of beings living in a given area” (Foucault, 1986, p. 27) in a city such as Brisbane.

From government to governance

Foucault’s “critique of Political Reason” assists us in recognizing the extent to which the government and the state (or the City, or Police) are both “totalizing” and “individualizing.” This is a useful insight for developing an informed approach to the disposition of cultural resources and services, since it prevents any undue favours being bestowed on those cultural forms deemed to have an *a priori* “progressive” potential. *Quality of life thus provides the fundamental rationale of evaluation for urban (and other) forms of cultural policy.* It enables a matrix of strategic connections between such policy issues as health, safety, commerce, the environment, and general community well-being. It best illustrates the principle that “governance is not mere government—it is the framework of rules, institutions and practices that sets limits on the behaviour of individuals, organisations and companies” (United Nations Development Program, 2000, p. 34).

The city as actor, not stage

The city is thus much more than an empty geographical space in which things just happen. It constitutes a charged field of cultural conduct formation and management: a field of governance. It frames the deployment of certain social forces towards the achievement and refinement of *Kunstpolizeiwissenschaft*—the art/science of administration of culture. That is to say, the City represents one of the most important fields for the “rationalization” or, quite simply, the organization and management of culture and social relations since the late eighteenth century. The city was where social statistics were first developed, where medical topogra-

phies became a tool in the analysis and management of populations, where the first forms of empirical and investigative sociology were developed, where the idea of a network of relations of dependency between the individual organism and the environment was first formulated, and where the modern concepts of both *social* and *class* were first defined and consolidated. The city inspired the pens of such writers as Charles Dickens, Honoré Balzac, Eugène Sue, and Edgar Allan Poe. It was the city that likewise gave rise to the sociological theories of Tonnies, Weber, Simmel, and The Chicago School, just as it was the city that enabled the first manifestations of modernism, as announced by Charles Baudelaire, Henry James, James Joyce, Walter Benjamin, or the Futurists, Surrealists, and Dadaists. Today, the fact of the city's centrality to all cultural endeavour remains the same: it is the city and the "city-region," not the mercantilist mythology of the "trading nation," which is the fundamental economic unit of calculation (Jacobs, 1986).

"Life" and the city

Given this history, how is it possible to form a viable metropolitan cultural policy? First, we must soberly recognize the fact that because we are operating *within* the domain of governance, we are necessarily policing the urban population by "managing their conduct." No matter how we may prefer to phrase it otherwise (through appeals to such abstractions as community access, participation, equity, self-reliance), our actions remain fundamentally *police*-like, by offering those "little supplements of life" (like quality of life, lifestyle, life chances, city living, living and vital communities, or liveability) that will only strengthen the larger tissue of governance.

Cultural policy may have every right to facilitate those forms of activity, but an aesthetic idea of culture as an oppositional or alternative domain of personal and community liberation is specific only to those involved; it is not the *modus operandi* or general principle of existence behind cultural policy as such. Instead, cultural policy must be concerned with *all things, all people, and all resources*—not just those claiming to act in the name of Culture.

Fitting culture in: The quality of life question

Quality of life provides measures of statistical calculation that can be used to address issues such as relocation of industries and infrastructure. In some surveys it carries the same weight, for example, as utility costs. As a concept that combines both the "human" and the "infrastructural" interests of social organization into a single measure, quality of life balances the "relations of communication between people" against "the adornment, form, and splendour" of the City/State. *Police* in this context becomes synonymous with "cultural policy," since both purportedly "see to everything pertaining to people's happiness" (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). Samples of such "happiness" include the pursuit of life satisfactions, and personal growth and mastery; the preservation of health, psychological well-being, and economic stability; and an overall consideration of the quality of the environment (Seed & Lloyd, 1997).

Formations of identity

Another criterion of cultural policy hinges on the understanding of "identity": civic identity, community identity, ethnic identity, gender identity. This effectively addresses another reality that is part of the logic of governmentality: that of citizenship. For example, the Brisbane Department of Recreation and Health has within its jurisdiction all of those cultural forms and institutions which, since the French Revolution, have been central to the formation of citizens and populations: libraries, museums, galleries, leisure and community recreation activities, music, entertainment centres, festivals, public art, cemeteries, and "miscellaneous cultural activities" (which range from the Croatian Folklore Group to St. Stephen's Cathedral).

The goal of the cultural activities program offered by the Brisbane Department of Recreation & Health was: "to foster the developing unique identity and character of Brisbane, by encouraging community awareness and active participation in cultural activities." Let us compare this to the goal of the French National Assembly of 1792, as formulated by the Abbé Grégoire, which held that "public monuments must remind the people of its courage, its triumphs, its rights, its dignity; they must speak a language which is intelligible to everybody and which can be the vehicle for patriotism and virtue which must penetrate the citizen through all his senses" (in Vidler, 1985, p. 135).

The connection may seem tenuous, but substitute a few phrases—community for people, unique identity for courage/rights/triumphs/dignity, and the civic for the national—and we immediately perceive a persistent logic of culture-in-government and government-in-culture. It remains essentially the same logic of persuasion by management of existing urban resources.

Now let us consider the following statement describing civic "potential for development":

It is the town centre which gives most places their own unique and individual identity, often based on civic planning and public funding: the town hall, the library, a 19th century theatre, a town square, an ornamental garden, a municipal gallery, or in many places a church or market place . . . [I]f you take away people's sense of their own regional and cultural identity . . . as inhabitants of . . . towns each with its own unique past and heritage and simply replace it with their identity as consumers . . . then this will have social repercussions of major and possibly frightening dimensions. (Bianchini, Fisher, & Worpole, 1988, p. 11)

Another way of expressing this same anxiety can be found in a more socio-aesthetic description:

We need an environment which is not simply well organised, but poetic and symbolic as well. It should speak of the individuals and their complex society, of their aspirations and their historical traditions, of the natural setting, and of the complicated functions of the city world. (Kevin Lynch, in Perloff, 1979, p. 99)

When the pre-modern techniques of the pastorate were supplanted by the “ethnographic imperative” at the beginning of the nineteenth century, other cultural technologies (of identity, belonging, sense of place and time, and self- and community guidance) had to be found to replace them. These emerged out of popular education; institutions and programs of cultural training in leisure and recreation activities; research and commentaries on the manners and customs of urban populations and urban spaces; and the promotion of “civic hygiene” (the formation of a healthy and happy citizenry). Hence the jurisdiction of the Brisbane Department of Recreation and Health, which embraces not only the “depths” of such things as weed, rat, and dog control, but the “heights” of fine art achievement as well. That earlier idea of *police* comes into play here again, since the key consideration in common centres on *patrolling* public access to these “taken-for-granted” resources—by either limiting or enhancing that access in accordance with an individual citizen’s civic status, gender, or ethnicity.

Community and the new pastorate: Ethopolitics

But the individual is no longer the cornerstone of identity for cultural policy-makers. Now, a steadily emerging new logic of government recognizes “the community” as the primary source of conscience-formation, self-examination, and self-definition. Community forms the centre and limits of the new pastorate. Its “conduct forming” role is critical to the preservation of the status quo.

Given this growing trend that favours community first, Nikolas Rose (2001) describes a “new ethopolitics of community which is developing along four axes of government [or governance] that reconfigure the relationship between state, society and individual that once lay at the heart of the social politics of welfare” (p. 14). These axes provide a basis for the measurement of quality of life “indicators” such as lifestyle, conduct, and community. The four principal axes examine each social player in the cultural policy equation either

- as *objects* (e.g., the “emergence of community as an object of government”);
- as *subjects* (e.g., “new specifications of political subjects are involved in the framing of moral responsibility in terms of identities, values and belongingness in the new politics of conduct”);
- as *new explanatory regimes* (such as “human capital and social capital”); or
- as *techniques and technologies* (“for the reactivation of civil society, for the management of risk and security, and the regulation of pathological conduct”) (Rose, 2001, p. 14).

This means that both the stakes and the stakeholders—community, identity, “belonging,” human and social capital, civil society, the regulation and management of conduct—have now become “mainstream.” Consequently, many more doors are now opening that will enable the positioning of cultural policy within mainstream public policy agendas.

Let us consider one example of government that privileges this "ethopolitical" idea of community. The 1987 Australian *Report of the Office of Local Government* describes itself as "a natural and effective vehicle for community development initiatives and for human service programmes which adopt a community development approach" (Commonwealth of Australia, Office of Local Government, 1987, p. xii). Furthermore, it is "close to the people" (as the Task Force of the Joint Officer's Committee of the Local Government Ministers would have it). Its functions are carefully elaborated in "pastoral" or non-coercive terms, such as a Facilitator; a Catalyst and Initiator; a Point of Liaison and Advocacy; a Researcher and Planner; a Co-ordinator of services; a Project Manager; an Information and Promotional agency; and a Networker (Commonwealth of Australia, Office of Local Government, 1989).

According to this logic of "human services" and "community development," it is the concept of community itself which plays the central role. There is not much value, then, in opposing the idea of community to that of government if it is already profoundly implicated as a governmental mode of operation. The idea of community is fundamentally complicit and politically ambivalent precisely because it has consistently been part of the logic of governance, rather than a resource that can be simply mobilized against government. In other words, there are real problems in cultural policy formulation whenever we privilege an "authentic-expressive" concept of culture, since it assumes a division between a "dominant culture" and a "popular" or community-based culture. Unfortunately, such an assumption proves to be (more often than not) untenable and impracticable when put to the test.

The sense of the game

Let us now turn to the thoughts of another theorist for a closer "behind-the-scenes" look at current practices of cultural resource distribution and management. Pierre Bourdieu bases his theory on the ethnological concept of *le sens pratique* (meaning simultaneously "practical sense," "practical meaning," and "practical orientation"), which is concerned not with *rules* (of kinship, the family, social structure, culture, etc.) but with their "social usages" (see Bourdieu, 1987, p. 76). He discerns

[a] real principle of strategies, that is to say, practical orientation (*sens pratique*) or, if one prefers, what sporting people call the sense of the game; a practical mastery of the logic or the immanent necessity of a game which is acquired through experience of the game and which functions *this side* of consciousness (as, for example, with body techniques). (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 77, emphasis added)

When we apply this "game theory" of sociocultural life to practical policy-making decisions, we can see how "resources for living" in urban environments are often framed within spaces that *tacitly* reinforce certain behaviours and exclude others. Even such mundane niceties like the provision of BBQ facilities, recreation equipment, and taps in public parks have a "policing" function on top

of their “convenience,” because the very availability of these resources results in an automatic crowd control: their public use encourages conformity to *particular* forms of public entertainment and/or *particular* patterns of retailing activity. Bourdieu’s “practical orientation” (or *sens pratique*) is thus very much in evidence whenever people play into the everyday tactical and practical uses of public and private spaces and facilities, as arranged for them in advance, without questioning over much their collective meaning.

Cultural policy and ethical management

Cultural policy is crucially concerned with the ethical management of urban populations. It is thus all the more incumbent on us to rescue cultural policy from the aesthetic domain which has historically dominated it, since the pernicious structural barriers, laws of cultural consumption, and forms of discrimination which have always strongly marked the aesthetic field tend to proliferate if they remain unchecked.

Unfortunately, cultural policy as a whole has not yet transcended an old “aesthetically”-driven disposition towards ethical (self) management, in favour of realizing a new sense of ethical (population or community) management as announced by Foucault. Such a shift would entail a *tactical* recognition of the value of “community” in contemporary politics, together with a *strategic* recognition of community’s complicity in complex plural structures of both social and cultural organization.

Augustin Girard (1978) perhaps best diagnoses the problems besetting current cultural policy:

Without wishing to deny any future to the initiatives of publicly funded ‘cultural action’, it would be interesting if such action was more closely articulated with the activities of the media and cultural industries [i.e., the pluralist paradigm advocated by Foucault]. Of course there are problems with involvement with mass communication technologies, which have their anti-cultural aspects, but there is probably no alternative if those charged with the responsibility for public culture want to enlarge their contact with the majority of the population. New formulas must be invented, involving industrial techniques; risks must be taken and setbacks accepted. But necessity is the mother of invention. Between cultural animation which emphasises the self-expression of a group, and the diffusion of industrial media which emphasises the product, it must be possible to find a new reconciliation. This is the real connection between the new cultural technologies and the new social needs. By accepting this reality as it is now, cultural action will avoid the paradoxical elitism to which its contradictions threaten to confine it. (pp. 603-604, author’s translation)

In other words, the ways in which culture becomes defined have a direct and central bearing on how cultural policy ultimately allocates resources, manages structures, and elaborates programs for development.

Problems of this magnitude clearly cannot be resolved simply by imposing a new hierarchy of cultural forms. Instead, cultural policy must become more rigorously aware of pragmatics, as implied by theoretical analyses of the *cultural field*

as such. Girard insists on the need for increased recognition of the contemporary *cartography* of culture, which includes both "pre-industrial" high art and "post-industrial" popular culture. But cultural policies stubbornly continue to favour the "high" at the expense of the "low"—sometimes explicitly, or sometimes simply by omitting appropriate policy parameters. It is as if "every energy has been directed to placing a preservation order on a Tudor cottage [as in the U.K., for example], while all around the developers were building new motorways, skyscrapers and airports" (Mulgan & Worpole, 1986, p. 9).

Those motorways, skyscrapers, and airports are further buttressed by the music industry, television and video, magazine and book publishing, computers, information technology, and all their adjuncts in production and consumption. These are the "cultural machines [that] have arguably transformed the cultural life of the greater part of the population—intellectuals excluded—more in the last thirty years than in the previous three hundred" (Girard, 1978, p. 597). The problem is that these cultural machines have not produced, *in the policy field at least*, a sufficient number of technicians to sensitively and intelligently make sense of their "mechanics" to the wider public. It is not just a question of taking cultural industries seriously as commodities and services within existing and traditional cultural policy frameworks; rather, it is about understanding their role in the broader cultural debates on community, citizenship, and lifestyle (otherwise known as "ethopolitics"). "We have moved, then," as Nikolas Rose (2001) observes,

from *culture* to *cultures*, including fusions of culture and commerce. Many of the new practices of generation, regulation and evaluation of techniques of self-conduct fuse the aim of manufacturers to sell products and increase market share with the identity experiments of consumers. Commerce and self-culture are mediated by highly developed techniques of market research into finely calibrated and segmented consumer target groups. Advertising images and television programs interpenetrate in the promulgation of images of lifestyle and narratives of identity choice. These images and narratives typically highlight the ethical aspects of lifestyle choices. Styles of aestheticized life choice that were previously the monopoly of cultural elites have been generalized in this new habitat of subjectification This fragmentation of the social by the new commercial technologies of lifestyle-based identity formation has produced new kinds of collective existence lived out in milieus that are outside the control of coherent norms of civility or powers of political government. *The politics of conduct is [thus] faced with a new set of problems: acting on the ethical self-government of human behavior in this new plural field.* (p. 8, emphasis added)

Towards a new calculus for the cultural field

I have quoted Rose's argument at length because it provides a crucial bridge between the form of analytical advocacy already in circulation, and the need for a new system of "notation" in cultural policy that takes the combination of economic, social, familial, and cultural behaviours more fully into account. Rose suggests a way out of the theoretical-practical impasse by integrating the "cultural

dimension” into a broader and more strategic framework for quality of life evaluation, which does not simply attempt to “add culture and stir.”

Certain terms and concepts such as liveability and conviviability have opened up new measurement-and-evaluation terrain regarding quality of life and culture. But since there is still a dearth of quality of life research per se, the information amassed to date rarely makes the transition to becoming truly operational or productive “policy knowledge.”

This is the result, firstly, of a failure to reconcile the evaluation of objective indicators (the work of the statistician) with subjective or perceptual indicators (what people actually think and value). Secondly—and this is not unrelated to the first problem—there has been a failure to come up with a sufficiently comprehensive and flexible range of indicators that reflects the subtleties of countless individual perspectives or experiences. If we tell the residents of New York that the events of September 11 and after represented a net increase in Gross National Product for the U.S. population and therefore a net increase in “quality of life,” then we will get an appropriately “skewed” response. Similarly, if we tell women or the aged or the socially marginalized that they are living in one of the world’s most liveable cities, we will hear (unreasonably perhaps, if we are listening only with the ears of the statistician) that they do not in fact feel safe on the streets after five o’clock. The latter is a particularly pertinent example of an evaluative and perceptual response which is *as real* to those groups as any “official” indicators on crime rates issued by the police authorities.

A fresh attempt to work around these blind spots can be found in the 1990 report, *Life in the World’s 100 Largest Metropolitan Areas*, published by the Population Crisis Committee (PCC) in Washington, D.C. Among these 100 largest metropolitan areas in the world (cities with populations of over 2 million), quality of life was seen as dependent on ten indicators: public safety, food costs, living space, housing standards, communications, education, public health, peace and quiet, traffic flow, and clean air.

Like all such selections, the choice of indicators here is clearly governed by a particular agenda—in this case, a leaning towards a perception of overpopulation. The PCC report thus takes certain pains to show a particular inverse pattern between urban living standards and urban growth rates. On the whole, those cities with the highest scores were found to have the lowest average annual rates of growth, while those with the lowest rankings were found to have the highest average annual rates of growth. This finding is of interest at the international level because it addresses the question of population growth and its effect on urban areas. But it is not particularly useful at the national, regional, or urban levels of analysis, since the indicators which were employed at an international level must be reduced in order to become comparable. And this means that some factors must be skipped entirely, due to inconsistencies in methods of calculation. Thus, the acknowledgment that

indicators such as nutritional status or unemployment turned out to be too inconsistent or too incomplete for use . . . [and] . . . A few measures, particu-

larly those related to entertainment and culture, are missing from the analysis and from the questionnaires. In these areas it proved impossible to find measures which did not reflect a class or regional bias. (p. 3)

Of course, it is just these aspects of entertainment, leisure, and culture that prove to be so integral to a more nuanced understanding of quality of life at the national, regional, and urban levels of experience.

We live, as economist and environmentalist Hazel Henderson has put it, in a multidimensional world in which quality of life needs to be measured in a multidimensional way—economically, certainly, but also socially, environmentally, culturally. We need to be able to evaluate not only whether a city, town, or region is economically viable, but also whether it is environmentally, socially, and culturally sustainable. To appreciate these multiple strands of value and affiliation, we need to develop comprehensive and flexible measures for assessing the vitality and conviviability of our increasingly congested urban landscape.

These are not fringe or soft policy issues. The Rand Corporation in the U.S. found that quality of life, defined as the "physical and social attractiveness of a place," ranked third overall in plant and infrastructure relocation decisions throughout the 1980s. Quality of life is a very important factor in influencing people to move to, live in, visit, work, and stay in any given area.

Having said that, we now come to the slightly trickier question of what it is and how to measure it. We can perhaps begin to do this if we throw academic caution to the winds and simply declare that it's whatever makes us feel good about being (or staying) in a place. How, then, do we go about reconciling such feeling content (subjective or perceptual indicators) with more objective indicators applicable to policy development?

Let us now turn to one research program that has ambitiously attempted just such a reconciliation between the subjective and the objective: the Glasgow University Quality of Life Group. This was a project that initially selected 38 major cities for evaluation in 1988, with 34 additional towns and cities of a smaller size in 1989. The selection of an appropriate geographical area was based not on an administrative or purely statistical unit—a common failing of many attempts at quality of life evaluation—but on a functional region, a Local Labour Market Area (LLMA) characterized by patterns of commuting to work, employment characteristics, and retailing patterns. Thus, a large city with a functionally interdependent town or smaller city nearby constituted one such region. To establish a schedule of subjective or perceptual indicators, the Glasgow researchers "did something rather odd": *they asked people for their opinions* through a survey of 1,200 people nationally with a further booster sample of 203 from social classes A and B (professional and managerial). The aggregated results of 19 perceptual indicators on a scale of 1 to 5 are presented in Table 1.

Note the position of economic indicators: only one specifically economic indicator enters into the top six ranking (cost of living). Even the cost of owner-occupied housing ranks eighth, *after* "access to areas of scenic quality." Employment prospects, wage levels, and unemployment levels all come *after* edu-

Table 1: Average weightings for the dimensions of quality of life as developed by the Glasgow University Quality of Life Group (on a scale of 1-5)

Dimension	Weighting
Violent crime	3.709
Non-violent crime	3.693
Health provision	3.633
Pollution levels	3.407
Cost of living	3.390
Shopping facilities	3.308
Access to areas of scenic quality	3.007
Cost of owner-occupied housing	2.992
Education provision	2.869
Employment prospects	2.826
Wage levels	2.822
Unemployment levels	2.729
Climate	2.638
Sports facilities	2.629
Travel to work times	2.516
Leisure facilities	2.477
Quality of council housing	2.204
Access to council housing	2.204
Cost of private rented accommodation	1.916

Source: Rogerson (1989, p. 28).

cation provision. Similarly, quality of and access to council housing and private rented accommodation barely make the list, since the question of climate, sports facilities, and leisure facilities all take precedence. These are interesting indicators because they demonstrate a good range of factors—social, cultural, environmental, and economic—as well as a possibly surprising order of priorities.

What the Glasgow group then did was to take 50 established objective indicators—number of hospital beds, incidence of crime, number of schools, teacher-student ratios, etc.—and multiplied them by the weightings in related perceptual indicators to come up with a ranking of the 38 cities in the first sample. The winner was Edinburgh, with Aberdeen second and Plymouth third. Cardiff was fourth, while Motherwell was fifth. The “Celtic fringe,” interestingly enough, takes out four of the top five places. At the bottom of the list are the four West Midlands towns of Wolverhampton, Coventry, Walsall, and Birmingham (in that order). London came in just before those four, at number 34.

There are some problems with this method, but it does have the fundamental advantage of integrating *perceptual* indicators with all the properly required

methods of "statistical cleaning," regression analysis, and so forth. It takes into account a number of important factors in evaluating quality of life. These include:

- The recognition that variables of age, education, sex, social status, and ethnicity are important prior factors in any evaluation of quality of life which need to be built into the calculation of perceptual indicators. Geographical areas are marked by high degrees of diversity, and any evaluation of quality of life based on a single set of external and objective criteria will not serve much purpose at a larger area level.
- The recognition that quality of life is concerned not only with the *availability* of services, infrastructures, etc., but also (and sometimes more importantly) *access* to those services and infrastructures. While London may on an objective ranking be shown to have more cultural and leisure facilities, more schools, etc., than comparable metropolitan areas, the real or perceived access to those resources clearly does not rank very highly in the perceptual indicators.
- The weighting of indicators is based on *public* opinions, rather than those of academics or other specialists.
- Finally, and most importantly, the Glasgow authors summarize the significance of their findings in terms of human-driven factors, or human-centred performance indicators. "One of the most interesting features of the survey . . . is not that it illustrates that the cities of the Celtic fringe are the best place to live, but rather that *it is the controllable and humanly determined characteristics of urban life which would appear to be chiefly responsible for this pattern*" (Rogerson, 1989, p. 13, emphasis added).

"*Controllable and humanly determined*": this brings us directly back to the relationship between quality of life indicators and their possible impact on policy development. Quality of life indicators, in other words, can and should be taken seriously as performance indicators by governance stakeholders.

Probably one of the best examples of this transformation of quality of life indicators into performance indicators or benchmarks is from the United States: the *Oregon Benchmarks*, produced by the Oregon Progress Board as a report to the State Legislature in 1991. These benchmarks were developed directly as a result of *Oregon Shines*, a twenty-year "strategic vision document" developed in 1989. "By the year 2010," the introduction says, "we can distinguish Oregon as one of the few places that has maintained its natural environment, built communities on a human scale, and developed an economy that provides well paying jobs to its citizens" (p. 1). Of the 159 indicators in total, the following provides a "cultural capital"-oriented sampling:

Benchmarks for Exceptional People (73 indicators) including

- Home life (6 indicators)
- Social harmony in the community (4 indicators)
- Start in life by ethnic groups (1 indicator)

- Civic and occupational participation (3 indicators)

Outstanding Quality of Life (47 indicators) including

- Outdoor recreation (5 indicators)
- Access to other communities (3 indicators)
- Access to cultural enrichment (2 indicators)
- Political participation and volunteerism (3 indicators)

There are many other categories of indicators (especially under “Diverse, Robust Economy,” clocking in with 39 indicators), in which culture offers a “hook” or bridge towards still broader quality of life agendas and measurement systems.

None of these benchmarks sprang from the ground fully formed. They are both perceptual and objective in that they were the outcome of various processes of public and community consultation and surveys. And their soundness as a group of performance measures can be seen in the targets for achievement that are projected over the next twenty years—a “road map of progress” that will “enable Oregonians to think about the future in concrete terms. They enable governments and institutions to consider the costs of pursuing (or not pursuing) specific goals, and they give policymakers a means of allocating scarce resources” (Oregon Progress Board, 1991, p. 2). This means that we can begin to understand quality of life indicators as “tools of policy dialogue” and as fundamental elements of strategic policy and planning. But where and how does culture fit in?

Conclusion: From liveability to convivability and beyond

We can answer this question by referring to the constitutive role of culture—its resources, assets, capital, and capacities—not only in terms of “liveability” but also the more substantive value cluster of *convivability*, as defined below:

There is consensus now that economic growth is not enough to improve the human condition; other factors are crucial for human development and must now be targeted in development policies. These include democratic government, civil society organization, poverty eradication and culture in development. Working with civil society, in fact, touches on all these aspects at the same time. Yet we lack an analytical concept that allows us to understand all of these factors together . . . I would like to put forward that of *convivability* . . . for such a purpose. (Arizpe, 2000, p. 1)

Arizpe suggests that sustainability in development cannot be achieved without the co-operation and involvement of civil society, which depends crucially on that aspect of *convivability* defined as “reorganizing cultural allegiances to enable human beings with different ideals of a good life to live compatibly in a living biosphere” (p. 1).

This will involve investigating the role of cultural resources and capital in a number of areas, including

- the quality and “economics” of amenity;
- citizenship formation and civic participation;
- the custodianship of community resources;

- community asset and resource management;
- the role of cultural development in new forms of "postindustrial" wealth creation; and
- the role of culture in developing "soft" and "creative" infrastructures for sustainable communities.

Since a considerable overlap already occurs between these areas, a successful cultural policy will draw upon the connections without marginalizing one domain at the expense of another.

In order to further link these areas, we have elaborated four "master" categories for the determination and evaluation of an integrated cultural quality of life, as follows:

- cultural vitality, diversity, and conviviability;
- cultural access, participation, and consumption;
- culture, lifestyle, and identity; and
- culture, governance, ethics, and conduct (see Mercer, Galan, Mlama, Shorthose, & Fryer, 2002).

From both the policy and research points of view, we must all begin to apply (1) much more differentiated and "user-oriented" forms of investigation; and (2) a recognition of the multidimensionality of the "life" that we are measuring in quality of life evaluation: the quality and not the "quantity" of life, as Amartya Sen (1999) has put it.

This is not pie-in-the-sky thinking. It is already happening in various ways, as we saw in the examples from Glasgow and Oregon (which are eminently amenable to specifically cultural considerations). There are also World Bank social capital assessment initiatives (see Krishna & Schrader, 1999), as well as national statistical agencies such as the U.K.'s Office of National Statistics, which recently integrated a health-related Social Capital Assessment Module to its Annual Household Survey. Finally, there is the landmark work of Tony Bennett and his colleagues on the Australian *Accounting for Tastes* project (Bennett, Emmison, & Frow, 1999).

Thanks to the past decade's worth of research, we can now draw on a much more seasoned and sophisticated knowledge base in order to ensure that cultural policy engages with the question of quality of life to the mutual advantage of both. But the real task of integration and understanding is only now beginning.

Note

1. Translations from this text are the author's. The category *l'homme* has been translated as *people* or *person*.

References

- Arizpe, Lourdes. (2000). *Conviviability: The role of civil society in culture and development*. Available at URL: <http://www.crim.unam.mx/cultura/ponencias/pon2.htm>
- Bennett, Tony, Emmison, Michael, & Frow, John. (1999). *Accounting for tastes: Australian everyday cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bianchini, Franco, Fisher, Mark, & Worpole, Ken. (1988). *City centres, city cultures*. Manchester: Centre for Local Economic Strategies.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1987). *Choses dites*. Paris : Editions de Minuit.
- Commonwealth of Australia, Office of Local Government. (1987). *Report of the Office of Local Government*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Commonwealth of Australia, Office of Local Government. (1989). *Local government handbook*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Foucault, Michel. (1986, septembre-novembre). *Omnes et Singulatim : vers une critique de la raison politique*. *Le Débat*, 41.
- Girard, Augustin. (1978). Industries culturelles. *Futuribles*, 17.
- Henderson, Hazel J. (1991, September-October). Redefining the wealth of nations [Interview]. *E Magazine*, 2(5).
- Jacobs, Jane. (1986). *Cities and the wealth of nations: Principles of economic life*. Ringwood: Penguin.
- Krishna, Anirudh, & Schrader, Elizabeth. (1999). *Social capital assessment tool*. Paper presented at the Conference on Social Capital and Poverty Reduction, The World Bank, Washington, D.C. Available at URL: <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/External/lac/lac.nsf/51105678feaadaea852567d6006c1de4/d2d929b5fff4b555852567ee000414ad?OpenDocument>
- Mercer, Colin, with Taylor, Peter. (1991). *Brisbane cultural development strategy: Towards a cultural policy for Brisbane*. Brisbane: Brisbane City Council & Institute for Cultural Policy Studies.
- Mercer, Colin, with Galan, Andrea Theresa, Mlama, Penina, Shorthose, Jim, & Fryer, John. (2002). *Improving the tools for the planning, reporting and assessment of cultural policies for human development*. Stockholm: Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA).
- Mulgan, Geoff, & Worpole, Ken. (1986). *Saturday night or Sunday morning? From arts to industry—New forms of cultural policy*. London: Comedia.
- Oregon Progress Board. (1991). *Oregon benchmarks: Setting measurable standards for progress*. Salem, OR: Oregon Progress Board.
- Perloff, Harvey S. (1979). *The arts in the economic life of the city*. New York: American Council for the Arts.
- Population Crisis Committee. (1990). *Cities: Life in the world's 100 largest metropolitan areas*. Washington, DC: Population Crisis Committee.
- Rogerson, Robert J. (1989). *Measuring quality of life: Methodological issues and problems*. Glasgow: Applied Population Research Unit, University of Glasgow.
- Rose, Nikolas. (2001). Community, citizenship and the third way. In Denise Meredyth & Geoffrey Minson (Eds.), *Citizenship and cultural policy* (pp. 1-17). London: Sage.
- Seed, Philip, & Lloyd, Greg. (1997). *Quality of life*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Sen, Amartya. (1999). *Commodities and capabilities*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Development Program. (2000). *Human development report 2000*. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- Vidler, Anthony. (1985). Grégoire, Lenoir et les « monuments parlants ». In Jean-Claude Bornet (Ed.), *La Carmagnole des muses*. Paris : Armand Colin.