CULTURAL POLICY
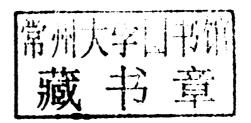
Management, value and modernity in the creative industries

DAVE O'BRIEN

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CULTURAL POLICY

Contemporary society is complex, governed and administered by a range of contradictory policies, practices and techniques. Nowhere are these contradictions more keenly felt than in cultural policy. This book uses insights from a range of disciplines to aid the reader in understanding contemporary cultural policy.

Drawing on a range of case studies, including analysis of the reality of work in the creative industries, urban regeneration and current government cultural policy in the UK, the book discusses the idea of value in the cultural sector, showing how value plays out in cultural organisations.

Uniquely, the book crosses disciplinary boundaries to present a thorough introduction to the subject. As a result, it will be of interest to a range of scholars across arts management, public and non-profit management, cultural studies, sociology and political science. The book will also be essential reading for those working in the arts, culture and public policy.

Dave O'Brien is Lecturer in Cultural and Creative Industries at City University, UK. He specialises in cultural value and urban cultural policy issues and has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Liverpool, UK. His work on cultural value includes a recent secondment and report to the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport, along with several conference papers and forthcoming research articles.

'Dave O'Brien's much-needed textbook succeeds in integrating cutting-edge sociological research on social change and inequality with an analysis of urbanism, creativity and cultural value. This book is now the state of the art and will be a crucial resource for all students of cultural policy.'

Mike Savage, *London School of Economics and Political Science, UK*

'O'Brien's book strikes the right balance between a well-made introduction to all basic notions and issues in cultural policy, and a wide array of rich and always stimulating case studies. It is a timely book, which helps rethink and reinvent new ways of practising cultural policy in a moment of great challenges for the creative industries.'

Jan Baetens, *University of Leuven, Belgium*

'This is a timely and pertinent text in the arena of cultural policy, addressing all the main issues in relation to cultural policy and its various manifestations in the UK. This is a textbook that is long overdue and an essential for undergraduate and postgraduate students across a range of disciplines, including cultural management, tourism management/development, museum management and curatorship, arts management, etc.'

Clare Carruthers, *University of Ulster, UK*

'In his broad-ranging and engaging book, Dave O'Brien provides a welcome, distinctive and enriching political science perspective to key issues and debates in cultural policy studies. The result is a thought-provoking new contribution to understanding cultural value as one of the defining debates of twenty-first century British cultural policy.'

Eleonora Belfiore, *University of Warwick, UK*

'O'Brien's urgent, wide-ranging and original synthesis of ideas provides a limpid and challenging framework for anyone wishing to make sense of contemporary cultural policy and its importance. It will prove invaluable for those of us teaching future cultural workers and researchers as well as those in the industries or involved in the formulation of policy and its assessment. Henceforth, when I hear the word culture, I'll reach for O'Brien.'

Paul Long, *Birmingham City University, UK*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is complex, governed and administered by a range of contradictory policies, practices and techniques. Nowhere are these contradictions more keenly felt than in cultural policy. This book demonstrates the importance of cultural policy as both an important part of the modern world and a distinctive, interdisciplinary, academic field. Cultural policy has often been a neglected area of study, falling between a range of academic disciplines. In political science it is seen as peripheral compared with the study of health, defence or education. Cultural studies, an area that cultural policy developed from, has traditionally questioned the extent and importance of engagement with policy. Sociology, particularly the sociology of culture, offers much to help understand cultural policy but has, as yet, not been integrated into cultural studies or political science approaches to the topic.

Cultural Policy: Management, Value and Modernity in the Creative Industries is the first book to bring these three areas together. The following text synthesises insights from political science and sociology to illuminate questions that are important for a cultural studies approach to cultural policy. It argues that cultural policy is a useful case study for understanding issues of management, value and modernity by showing how cultural policy is crucial to both economy and society in modernity.

The starting point for this argument will be a consideration of the meaning of key terms: culture, value and the creative industries. The introduction will then turn to explore the question of the unique or special status that might be afforded to cultural policy as a result of its entanglement with ideas of aesthetics and artistic critique. An associated discussion, of management, is framed by a specific focus on the relationship between artistic discourses and public policy, closing this introduction ahead of the book's theoretical and case study chapters.

Culture

It is widely accepted that culture is a difficult concept, at once utterly familiar, but also complex and hard to fully pin down. Going back to the Victorian period, culture was associated with the moral betterment and spiritual development that would come from the contemplation of 'the best which has been thought and said in the world' (Arnold 1993). However, by the 1960s, in the UK, culture came to be associated with a more anthropological understanding, being concerned with the construction and transmission of meaning (McGuigan 2004), where culture is about the artefacts and activities associated with a given community's 'way of life' (Williams 2010).

Notwithstanding the debate in the UK, sociology from Germany and France also further complicates the question of how to understand culture. The German Romantics introduced a distinction between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, which still exists today in the German language (Elias 2000). This distinction contributes to the modern view of 'culture' as creative achievement and production of artistic work, in contrast to aristocratic notions of social position expressed in good manners. This gave rise to a number of persistent but problematic themes in the valuation of culture, including the notion of culture as an expression of national achievement, the notion of excellence as an expression of cultural attainment, the notion (Bourdieu 1984) of culture and cultural participation as a signifier of social distinctions, as well as the notion of the relativity and individuality of cultural judgements and preferences. Those writers who have built on Bourdieu's work (e.g. Bennett *et al.* 2009) in particular illustrate the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture which is still important in contemporary debates, as the arts, institutionalised in galleries, theatres and opera houses are consumed by those of higher social status, in contrast to the consumption of popular culture in the form of television and popular music (although the work of Chan and Goldthorpe [2007] has challenged this).

The more anthropological definition of culture suggested by Williams (2010) raises an immediate problem for considering cultural policy: what are its limits and how will these be demarcated? This question has led to extensive debate over whether it is appropriate to talk in terms of 'implicit' or 'explicit' forms of cultural policy (Ahearne 2009).

This book does not engage with those debates for two reasons. In the first instance, that debate has returned the study of cultural policy to its cultural studies roots and has further distanced the study of cultural policy from the field of political science (although Ahearne [2010] has attempted to connect political science with French cultural policy). As this book is concerned with connecting political science and sociology to cultural policy, it does not follow a line of thought that accentuates this distance.

However, and to make the second point, the case studies presented in the book reflect the recognition that the implicit/explicit concept adds detail to the potentially unclear idea of culture and thus cultural policy. Chapter 3 explores

cultural consumption, focused on a whole range of practices that range across markets and state provision. Likewise, discussions of life in the creative economy (chapter 4), urban development (chapter 5) and management theory in cultural organisations (chapter 6) all reflect a broad understanding of what cultural policy is, even as they are focused on actions and activities that are commonly understood to be cultural policy.

Value

The political philosopher Ricardo Blaug (Blaug *et al.* 2006:23) shows how the word 'value' contains at least three meanings:

> To some it means economic value—how much a product or service is worth relative to other things as indicated by its price. Value can also relate to preferences and satisfaction with a particular service at a specific point in time. Finally, values such as security and integrity derive from moral and ethical debate and will always be hotly contested.

So the word 'value' describes an idea about economics, an idea about personal expression and an idea about morality. This complexity is important as it mirrors the complexity of the term 'culture'. Much of the discussion of value and culture is about describing the characteristics of cultural goods and services that are valuable (e.g. McMaster 2008), with many assertions of what the values of culture *are*, in terms of 'the qualities and characteristics seen in things' (Mason 2002:7). These assertions raise questions for the policymaking regime that is described in this book, which uses management techniques that depend on the ability to measure and quantify, rather than drawing on assertions or descriptions of value.

The complexity surrounding the term 'to value' helps to explain why the concept is so difficult. The anthropologist Daniel Miller (2005, 2008), in his studies of the UK government's 'Best Value' programme for public services, sees the term as 'doing an outrageously broad amount of work' in common (and more technical) language, with a fundamental disjunction between the meanings described by Blaug *et al.* (2006). In particular, Miller is keen to stress how value, when understood as 'price', is in direct opposition to 'value' understood as 'values'. For Miller (and many others, including many economists, e.g. Arrow, cited in CASE 2010:18), values are irreducible to price. They are those things that simply cannot be expressed in monetary terms.

This is another expression of the well-established tension between economic forms of activity, such as the market, and the modernist-influenced vision of artistic and cultural practice (Vuyk 2010) that is described in more detail below. Although this tension is important, there are moments when value, as price, and values, as ethics or morality, meet. This can be seen in much of the recent work by economic sociologists (e.g. Callon 2006, MacKenzie 2005). For these thinkers,

the market, and the economic ideas associated with it, is always embedded in social relationships, forms of activity, and specific tools and devices that allow it to be constructed and to operate. Value, in the economic sense, is dependent on human activity and the associated expressions and ethics that fall under the term 'values' (Beckert 2010). Chapters 2 and 4 illustrate how cultural policy is a good example of when and where the multiple meanings of value converge.

If it is the case that value is inextricably bound up with values (Stark 2011), then the practice of giving value to something is of particular interest. That expressions of value are dependent on values suggests that when we come to understand the value of something, such as an activity, an exhibition or an organisation, its value will depend on the kind of values we as users, practitioners or creators bring to the valuation. This may seem like a straightforward point to make, but it becomes crucial in light of recent debates and research in cultural policy.

When we value something, it indicates we are giving it a special status, suggesting we are willing to make particular kinds of judgements about it; we are willing to value it (Korsgaard 2010). This is a good example of the problem of pinning down what value means, as it is a process, a description and an activity. Fundamentally, it is not clear how we go about establishing the meaning of value and thus it is not clear how we would think about fitting it into the public policy regime found in modernity.

Making value judgements

The difficulty of defining culture and the difficulty associated with value are displayed clearly in the attendant problem of making judgements in cultural policy, particularly when so much of policy is related to funding decisions. For John Tusa (1999, cited in Reeves 2002:36), former managing director of the Barbican in London, aesthetic quality should be the essential category for decision-making:

> Mozart is Mozart because of his music and not because he created a tourist industry in Salzburg or gave his name to decadent chocolate and marzipan Saltzburger kugel [sic]. Picasso is important because he taught a century new ways of looking at objects and not because his painting in the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum are regenerating an otherwise derelict northern Spanish port. Van Gogh is valued because of the pain or intensity of his images and colours, and not because he made sunflowers and wooden chairs popular. Absolute quality is paramount in attempting a valuation of the arts; all other factors are interesting, useful but secondary.

However, several authors, most notably Gibson (2008), have noted the relative and socially constructed nature of aesthetic worth (and its obvious relationship with class, e.g. Bennett *et al.* 2009 and Bourdieu 1984). At the extreme, the relativism inherent in aesthetic judgements presents the impossible and utterly

counter-intuitive challenge of commensurability, identified succinctly by Cowen (2006:6):

> It is difficult to decide whether Shakespeare's Hamlet is better than his King Lear and even harder to persuade others of our decision or define what such a ranking would mean. How many Gershwin songs sum up to a Shostakovich symphony? Is a Haydn string quartet better than a Hemingway short story? How does a Blake poem compare to a modern ballet performance?

The dilemma identified by Cowen is not just a matter for philosophical discussion: it has a practical impact on funding decisions. The focus on aesthetics suggested by Cowen and Tusa makes it difficult to connect the cultural sector with decision-making frameworks that are grounded in economic theory and monetary valuations (HMT 2003). For example, the work of Plaza (2010:156), when discussing how to value museums, gives a sense of the distance between the cultural sector and central government's decision-making framework:

> It is obvious that the non-market value of museums (meaning, for instance, their artistic, cultural, educational, architectural and prestige value to society) cannot be calculated by means of financial transactions.

There we have the conundrum of cultural policy: how best to narrate culture's value, in terms of *culture* rather than economic or social impact. In essence, this is the search for an answer to the question posed by Gibson (2008:14): 'if we consider that to support one person's or groups' culture is also to a make a decision not to support another's, on what basis do we make these decisions?'

The creative industries

Part of the solution to Gibson's (2008) question has come in the reconfiguration of cultural policy by the idea of creative industries. Flew (2012) and Hesmondhalgh (2013) offer detailed, book-length overviews of the concept of creative industries and the idea's subsequent global career. The concept begins in the UK, as the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) attempted to map the forms of economic activity that were associated with cultural practices (DCMS 1998). Initially, the DCMS outlined 13 sectors, including advertising, at the most 'commercial' end of cultural practice, through to performing arts, which had a much more mixed economy of state and market support. The 13 were contentious, including forms of software and database design that seemed to have little to do with more cultural activities such as computer game design with which they were placed (Campbell 2013).

The 13 owed much to a definition of the economic aspects of culture that are related to intellectual property: 'those industries which have their origin in

individual creativity, skill and talent, which have a potential for job and wealth creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (DCMS 1998). However, this was a definition that is at the root of the difficulty of connecting culture and economy. The initial 13 had an over-reliance on software as the basis for grand claims about the economic potential for creative industries. The focus on intellectual property was also bound up with the inclusion of areas of activity that would seem to be essential to cultural life, in particular heritage and tourism, which are an important part of many cultural institutions. Both the 13 and the focus on intellectual property have given rise to almost two decades of debate, as creative industries, much as with culture and value, have unclear limits, leading Bilton and Leary (2002:50) to conclude: 'it is difficult to think of a product which does not exploit some intellectual component in the form of patents, design elements or other intangible, symbolic properties that make that product unique'.

Chapter 4 gives a detailed account of how culture and economy have become intertwined, developing Bilton and Leary's scepticism of both the exclusion of key cultural practices from creative industries, as well as the potential inclusion of economic activity that could only be described as cultural in the very, very broadest sense.

The creative industries became influential as part of a wider narrative of economic transformation and the development of the idea of a creative economy that is considered in chapter 2. Creative industries also have a global career, as the term has gone from the UK to almost every part of the globe. Indeed, even where the term is not especially influential, for example, in the USA (Ross 2007), it has still formed part of the boundaries for cultural policy. Partially this career is related to what Peck (2005) calls the apple pie and motherhood aspects of the idea of creativity. Creativity is hard to be against, it is a difficult idea to reject, and critically engaging with the concept of creativity is made doubly difficult by the way it has similar definitional problems as those encountered in the consideration of culture and value. Osborne (2003:523) has attempted to do this, commenting on how 'creativity' has been used to elide economic activity, government rationality and forms of human capital that are vitally important to the discussions in chapters 3 and 4:

> Yet what we now have now is a romanticism and subjectivism tied to the very demands of rationalisation (economic, performance and efficiency) and 'science' (the expertises of creativity). The doctrine of creativity, though, is more than just ideology. It is real enough. Indeed at the extremity of this sort of interpretation, we might want to say that creativity has actually become a form of capital in its own right.

Aesthetics, states and markets

Osborne's (2003) comments return to the difficult question of demarcating the boundaries of cultural policy, particularly when terms like 'creativity' seem to

capture so many forms of government and social activity. The suggestion that creativity is a form of capital is also important to understanding the relationship between state, market and culture. This relationship is, as with much else in the study of cultural policy, complicated by the peripheral status of cultural policy in government and academic discourses, whilst at the same time cultural policy has a central status in considerations of the economy and society in modernity.

Gray and Wingfield (2011) use the UK as an example to suggest a variety of reasons for the long-standing peripherality of cultural policy, including disinclination to get involved in rows about censorship 'or a lack of political significance being attached to the policy sector in comparison with such matters as the economy, foreign affairs, health, education or trade' (Gray and Wingfield 2011). Although this peripherality would, on first reading, suggest cultural policy may be of secondary concern to the study of both politics and society, cultural policy serves as an example of the development of a complex relationship between the differing ideas of value and the problem of doing public policy in modernity, which chapters 2 and 6 describe in more detail. In the UK, and increasingly across the globe, cultural policy has been expected to fit into a regime of measurement and performance-related targets reflecting the broader audit culture of public policy in modernity (Power 1997). At the same time, culture, particularly in terms of state-funded artistic organisations as well as creative industries, has a narrative associated with a rejection of bureaucracy and management.

In his 1982 Reith Lectures, the literary critic Denis Donoghue presents a defence of what he refers to as the 'mystery' of the arts. He writes in opposition to market, governed by price, and economics, also the state, governed by bureaucracy and political calculations. He suggests 'the artistic vision is somewhat ineffable, unspeakable, it deflects every attempt to pin it down by knowledge or to define it in speech' (Donoghue 1983:12). This defence of the artistic vision, of the figure of the artist, and the insistence of the autonomy and difference of an aesthetic realm has, following Kant, taken several forms. The following discussion focuses on two examples: 'art for art's sake' and 'the artist critique'.

The art historian Julian Luxford (2010) traces the birth of the term 'art for art's sake' to 1804 and then into the 1830s, when readings of Kant's works were used to defend, initially, the economic position of the artist in the emerging European nation state system and the freedom of expression for French novelists of the 1830s. Its association with the fine arts, in particular visual art, is established by the 1860s and the English aestheticism movement and, whilst it is nuanced by an association with various artists, critics and movements, can be summarised in two ways.

The term is associated with art having no purpose outside of the aesthetic (Luxford 2010:90); that artists have more creativity and aesthetic judgement than the rest of society, that the creation of art is a higher social purpose and that artists are unencumbered by politics, finances or morals (Luxford 2010:91). Therefore,

as Luxford summarises, the term has a place in our current understanding of art, as well as serving varying ideological purposes:

> Art is separate from other spheres of human experience and that this autonomy conveys privilege, with the corollary, not advanced by all writers on the subject, that such privilege extends to those who make art. These ideas have proven sufficiently useful and provocative to give art for art's sake a prominent place in over two centuries of aesthetic discourse, and to lodge the term, with a wisp of its underlying ideology, in the popular consciousness.

The Sociologist Eve Chiapello (2004) builds on these ideas in her discussion of the artist critique. This suggests a range of positions and practices associated with the relationship of art and artists with modernity, particularly those aspects associated with states and markets. Artists are conceived as both outside the market as well as critical of it; artistic practice represents a realm of authenticity and expression beyond the market and state, with access to 'transcendental truths' (Chiapello 2004:588) and thus authority. Artistic creation is unconstrained and demands emancipation from both bureaucracy and from the market economy. Chiapello (2004:593) echoes Donoghue's (1983) assertion of the mystery of artworks and the possibility they may be capable of defying all analysis:

> It seems to me that the 'artist critique' continues to call attention to unresolved problems. It embodies a discussion as to the value of things and stands in opposition to the commodification of other forms of values which money will never be able to take into account: artistic value, aesthetic value, intellectual value and what Benjamin called 'cultural value'. It draws attentions to the existence of unprofitable activities that cannot be sustained by market forces alone, but whose value must nonetheless be acknowledged. It safeguards in this respect the possibility of greatness and value for all those acts, things, and people who are not valorised by the economic system. It makes it possible to question the commodification of all manifestations of humanity.

However, Chiapello is not just seeking to defend the sort of aesthetic autonomy that is so vital to Luxford's outline of 'art for art's sake', but is also attempting to develop a narrative of the relationship between aesthetics, state and market. Two discussions are useful to develop this idea and to give a clear indication of why linking the study of politics, the study of society and the study of culture in the form of cultural policy.

The first of these comes from Zygmunt Bauman, a thinker who is essential to chapter 2's consideration of the nature of modernity. Bauman (2004:65) initially begins by staking out a position similar to 'art for art's sake', drawn from the tradition of the Frankfurt School and writers like Hannah Arendt, in order to

contrast this with the ideas and practices of management. Management, for Bauman, has the purpose of regulation, control and the production of persons suitable *to be managed*. Culture, with its roots in ideas of cultivation of perfection, resists this managerial tendency and is seemingly in opposition to what management means, is and does: 'Culture cannot live in peace with management, particularly with an obtrusive and insidious management, and most particularly with a management aimed at twisting culture's exploring/experimenting urge so that it fits into the frame of rationality the managers have drawn' (Bauman 2004:65). This tension is particularly obvious as Bauman considers the instrumental rationality of both solid and liquid modernity's (described in chapter 2) management, with its insistence on measurement, commensuration and technologies of control (Bauman 2004:68). The ideology of 'art for art's sake' argues precisely against this, as does recent work defending the primacy of the aesthetic realm (Lamarque 2010). However, in Bauman's discussion, management and culture have a long-standing relationship, one which Bauman (2004:65) sees as a *sibling rivalry* (emphasis in original). In Bauman's (2004:64) narrative the ideas of management and the conception of culture as cultivation cannot be entirely separated:

> 'Culture' metaphorically applied to humans was the vision of the social world as viewed through the eyes of the 'farmers of the human-growing fields'—the managers. The postulate or presumption of management was not a later addition and external intrusion: it has been from the beginning and throughout its history endemic to the concept.

Although management and culture may have a historical relationship on a conceptual level, there is also the more material relationship that can be seen by considering the formation of the state, specifically state bureaucracy, during the same period as the aestheticism of 'art for art's sake' gathered pace.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, an important figure in the analysis of cultural consumption in chapter 3, provides support for Bauman's reading of the development of management and the development of culture. For Bourdieu (1994:2), considering the development of states and bureaucracies in the nineteenth century:

> Matters of culture, and in particular the social divisions and hierarchies associated with them, are constituted by such actions of the state which, by instituting them both in things and in minds, confers upon the cultural arbitrary all the appearances of the natural.

The conception of the state here is both overdeveloped and totalising, but this should not lead to an outright dismissal of the contention that the actions of the state shape the understanding of culture and that those aspects of the cultural that appear natural, fixed and unchanging social facts are subject to governmental structures. In Bauman and Bourdieu there is the insight that the governmental

techniques of the state are bound up with arts, culture and the aesthetic itself, in contrast to the idea of aesthetic autonomy found in a range of narratives that suggest cultural policy is different, unique or special.

This should not be read as a claim that Bourdieu's work is in support of, or seeks to defend, bureaucratic structures of control. Bureaucracy is neither the universal group able to represent the universal interest, nor a 'rational instrument' of government (Bourdieu 1994:2). In keeping with Bourdieu's wider project, the state is formed as a concentration of various capitals that create mechanisms for domination, dependent on bureaucratic technologies of social science. The state is reflexively produced in the same manner as with its relationship to culture, whereby the techniques of social science that go to produce the products of the state are themselves productive of the object initiating them. Joyce (2003) identifies the immersing of social scientific technologies in the projects of liberal Victorian England, particularly the middle class, an identification supported by Bourdieu's reading of the use of social science for the purposes of solving the social issues confronting Joyce's liberal city. The state, in the process of codifying, commensurating and creating, whether languages, measures or borders, is active not just in enabling the conditions of possibility for cultural activity, but in the production of material that will be the basis of that activity:

> Culture is unifying: the state contributes to the unification of the cultural market by unifying all codes, linguistic and juridical, and by effecting a homogenisation of all forms of communication, including bureaucratic communication (through forms, official notices, etc.). Through classification systems (especially according to sex and age) inscribed in law, through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals (particularly salient in the case of Japan and England), the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division, forms of thinking that are to the civilized mind what the primitive forms of classification described by Mauss and Durkheim were to the 'savage mind'. And it thereby contributes to the construction of what is commonly designated as national identity (or, in a more traditional language) national character (Bourdieu 1994:8).

In this understanding, those works seen most clearly as products of the autonomous aesthetic found in ideas of 'art for art's sake', in whatever expressive form, owe as much to the structuring products of bureaucratic technology as they do to the individual or social act of aesthetic creation. This idea also points to the complexity of considering cultural policy, as it is grounded in an anthropological understanding of culture, whilst having implications for a more restricted view of culture that is closer to just the arts.

A consideration of the development of bureaucracy is complemented by evidence of the co-option of artistic discourses into contemporary market practices (Chiapello 2004, Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). Chiapello (2004:593) describes