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Cultural Policy Evaluation as a Means of a Schemata Construction and as a Policy Instrument

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyse different roles of policy evaluation in reforming and reorienting national cultural policies. I will also assess the possibilities to apply a European cultural policy evaluation scheme developed during the 1980's in Western Europe in other cultural contexts and environments.

My empirical case is the European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews, an evaluation programme developed and implemented by the Council of Europe (CoE). This programme (in the following in brief: the CoE review programme) was initiated in 1985/1986. During the last sixteen years, its review/evaluation process has covered seventeen countries with ten more countries being at present reviewed or getting prepared for the review process. In principle the programme can cover all the 48 signatory countries to the European Cultural Convention if they submit their application for the review.

The CoE review programme was started as an effort to modernise cultural policy to a policy field comparable to educational or technology policies. This purpose was expressed in the discussions and planning documents which introduced the evaluation programmes initiated by the OECD in these two policy areas. The adoption of the term "review" instead of "evaluation" in the later CoE documents reflects, however, the need to take the special character of culture into account in the evaluation approach. Or, in other terms, this reflects a doubt whether cultural policy could and should be reshaped through similar rational evaluation schemes as educational or technology policies. Consequently an inherent tension between *a more rationalist* and *a more value-based* approach was built in the CoE review programme.

An analysis of the CoE review programme offers a possibility to assess the wider applicability of its principles, procedures, and methods. The evaluation programme was designed for the Western European countries in the 1980's context, but was later extended to cover the new democracies of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and even more remote ex-republics of the Soviet Union in Transcaucasia. Thus I can actually compare how the programme's evaluation scheme functioned under very different social, political and cultural conditions.

I will first briefly explicate in general terms the nature of the conceptual problems that may appear in designing cultural policy evaluation programmes. Such problems

certainly emerge not only in cultural policy evaluation but also in the evaluations of other values-bound sectors like the media, education, health, etc. I do not, however, attempt at any comparisons between different policy sectors, but focus only on cultural policy evaluation.

After the conceptual explication I will present my case, the Council of Europe's European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews: its origins, premises, methods and review procedures¹. I will then give a historical account of the geopolitical expansion of the review processes from the Western Europe to the new CEE democracies and beyond. Parallel to this expansion the original review programme has become diversified and its results have been put into a wider use as an Internet-based information Compendium. I will then analyse the implications of these developments from the point of view of wider applicability of the evaluation scheme of the programme.

My material for the following analyses is mainly obtained through participatory observations and related documentary material. It has been gathered in 1992-1997 as I was working as an invited programme advisor at the Council of Europe/Division of Cultural Policies and Action. One of my main responsibilities was to develop and manage the very programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews. Actually I also participated in the 1985 planning process of reviews and was the chairperson of the group of international experts in the third (Austrian) review.

The programme has produced practically a library of planning and evaluation documents – especially if we include the country descriptions (the so-called national reports) and the actual country evaluations (reports by the international evaluators). I will here analyse the premises, procedures and methods of the programme mainly on the basis of two documents, the 1993 report by Robert Wangermee² and the 1996 programme evaluation programme by John Myerscough³. The former, in a manner of speech, codified the programme, the latter deemed the successes and failures the reviews carried out in so far. Of course other relevant documents are also cited to support my descriptions and analyses. In my analysis I do not, however, make references to the above reports by the national authorities and experts. Yet they, in addition to my experiences as a participant observer in twelve finished and two at presently on-going reviews, are also material of the following analyses.

On Approaches to Cultural Policy Evaluation

The following typology summarises the main methodological issues that have appeared in cultural policy evaluation in general and in the case of the CoE's review in particular.⁴

¹ The programme is described well in the paper by professor Carl-Johan Kleberg for this conference, see his "National Cultural Policy Review, a method to discuss and improve cultural policies". I will do the same job here but from a somewhat different perspective.

² Robert Wangermee, Evaluation of National Cultural Policies. Guidelines for the Preparation of National Reports, Council of Europe, DECS-Cult (92) 5, 1992.

³ John Myerscough, European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews, Council of Europe, DECS, CC-Cult (96) 5 rev., Strasbourg 1996.

⁴ When I speak about approach I refer to a coherent combination of premises and methods of evaluation. An evaluation programme or project, like the CoE's review programme, seldom exhibit a

Basic approaches to cultural policy evaluation

	Type of assessment:	
Approach:	<i>Economic achievement or success assessments</i>	<i>Value congruency assessment</i>
<i>Comparative overall or sectoral analyses*</i>	I. "Hard" comparative analysis of national policies in terms of input/output indicators	II. "Soft" comparison of policy objectives and outcomes in respect to pre-defined "common" values"
<i>Unique country or sectoral case analyses</i>	III. A case diagnosis of policy successes and failures of in relations to available resources and opportunities	IV. A case diagnosis of policy successes and failures in respect to unique national or cultural values

* Overall analyses refer to national policies covering the domain of the arts and culture as whole, sectoral analyses cover sub-domains like music, culture industries, enhancing cultural diversity etc.

The typology pertains to the *methodological choices* in two respects. First, it concerns the need to conduct the evaluation in comparative terms. It is generally assumed that evaluation presupposes comparisons: any country review should reveal successes and failures in relative terms, in comparison to other countries. It is, however, possible to carry out assessments even in a singular case by asking how successfully a given cultural policy has been in using the available resources and opportunities. It can be even argued that cross-national comparisons are difficult and seldom provide unambiguous standards for policy assessment.

The second choice concerns the criteria of assessment. It is generally assumed that evaluations are carried out in terms of input-output ratios relating resources and outcome in some quantifiable manner. The outputs are usually financial resources invested by the cultural policy decision-makers and the outputs are the increases in cultural and artistic activities (e.g. more venues, more visitors/consumers) or in infrastructure improvement (more theatres, seats, etc.) The assessments are done e.g. in terms of indicators that measure the achievement of objectives (effectiveness) or the relative cost of achieving objectives (costs/benefit analysis). The other alternative is to forgo quantitative analyses in economic terms and focus the evaluation on policy objectives and outcomes in respect to some general values, such as cultural diversity, creativity, democratisation of culture, etc.

The typology gives only a schematic presentation and the divisions are in practice by no means mutually exclusive. It can be argued that even the unique case analyses are at least implicitly comparative. Even if we try to analyse the Finnish cultural policy as

single simple approach but pick up elements from different approaches and combines them into its evaluation scheme. The evaluation scheme reflects its designers perception what is culture, cultural policies and cultural development. This is, of course, also the case with the CoE's evaluation programme.

a singular case, we use as the implicit point of reference some comparative common standards from Europe or particularly from other Nordic countries. Similarly, while analysing music sector the very term “sector” implies that there are other sectors that you use as points of comparison. In more value-based analyses we can use input-output analyses. This proposes that we can formulate relevant intermediate objectives: in the case of creativity policies improving the working conditions of artists and thus assume that their successful implementation will enhance creativity⁵. The implementation of these intermediate objectives can furthermore be assessed in respect to effectiveness and cost efficiency.

Consequently few evaluation programmes incorporate only one approach of the potential four outlined in the typology. More or less knowingly they combine elements from two or more of these approaches and the balance between these elements depends what practical values are expected to accrue from the evaluation. If these expectations are *instrumental*, that is, pertain first and foremost to the immediate improving of the structure and functioning of the policy system, input/output analyses are in a dominant position. If the expectations are more value-oriented the evaluation is/should be designed to improve the knowledge and understanding of the overall functioning of cultural policies. Cultural policies are then perceived as a kind of *cognitive schemata*⁶ that organise the complex field of artistic and cultural activities and policy evaluations are expected to help to re-organise this field by opening rational debates and by providing new policy alternatives and appropriate policy measures from varying value perspectives. In more general value terms the evaluation should make cultural policies a kind of a bridge between the present and the past and between the everyday experiences and the general prevailing values.⁷

Cells III and IV of the typology open up another issue, that of the cross-cultural validity or relativity in evaluation. They make us to ask whether we can actually conceive and implement such an evaluation programme that produces valid and comparable results cross-nationally, or, even more importantly, inter-culturally. This issue has two aspects: should special national situations (like poverty, susceptibility to economic crisis) or values (ethnicity, religion) be taken into consideration in evaluation, and can we really identify such general values (like creativity, diversity etc.) that are valid in all cultural contexts. The latter question has appeared in the UNESCO analyses which search for “global ethics” that would be valid in all world cultures.⁸

⁵ Proving a positive causal effect between the intermediate objective and the final value is often the “missing link” in cultural policy evaluation. For a discussion and analysis of this “missing link” in the case of creativity policies, see the draft final report of the project “Creative Europe”, a manuscript presented at the project evaluation in Norrköping, November 2001 (a manuscript).

⁶ I have borrowed this term from cognitive anthropology that define it as a conceptual tool for adjusting the everyday experiences to more general values and present experiences to the past ones, see e.g. Kimball A. Romney and Carmella C. Moore, *Towards a Theory of Culture as Shared Cognitive Structures*, *Ethos* 36: 314-337.

⁷ This is also done in all agenda setting activities that aim at relating facts and values in a new manner; thus some international evaluation activities do not “serve the government” but actually aim at renewing the policies through agenda setting.

⁸ Cf. “Our Creative Diversity. Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development”, World Commission on Culture and Development, Paris 1995, pp. 34-51. The report suggests such elements of global ethics as non-discrimination, freedom of expression, protection of minorities, peaceful conflict resolution and fair negotiation, and equity within and between generations.

I have tried to outline above some major methodological problems that emerge in cultural policy evaluation. They actually pour down into two issues:

- 1) what kind of information cultural policy evaluations can or should produce, and
- 2) to what degree they are cross-nationally and inter-culturally valid. My following case analysis hopefully provides some answers – or at least illustrates these issues.

European National Cultural Policy Reviews: Origins and Original Scheme

The CoE's review programme was modelled after the OECD review of national systems of education⁹. The 1985 seminar in Saltsjöbaden, Sweden proposed that the Council of Europe should initiate the planning and experimental work in order to develop a similar programme for reviewing national cultural policies. The need to develop methods and knowledge basis (statistics, indicators) was emphasised in the meeting.

The CoE, its Council of Cultural Co-operation (CDCC), considered the proposal already in the same year and decided to start the experimental phase of the proposed programme¹⁰. The evaluation procedure was to follow the OECD formula.

After a country's application for policy evaluation was accepted, the process should proceed through five stages:

- 1) the national authorities prepare themselves/contract from outside researchers a national report that describes the national cultural policy system and policy objectives and means;
- 2) the CoE appoints a group of independent international experts to carry out their own fact-finding missions in the reviewed country;
- 3) the expert group writes its own review report on the basis of the national report and the results of its own fact-finding missions;
- 4) a summing-up meeting is organised between national authorities and the group of experts under the auspices of the CDCC;
- 5) the national reports are published in English and French.

France and Sweden were the two first countries whose cultural policies were reviewed through these procedures. When these evaluations were finished and three other reviews (Austria, the Netherlands and Spain) were in process, the CDCC contracted an international expert, Mr. Robert Wangermee, to summarise the experience and correct the approach as to its method and procedures, if need be¹¹. Wangermee considered the experimental phase a success, but added some important expansions and refinements to its conceptualisation and procedures. Thus he outlined the general objectives that should be considered both in the national report and by the group of experts in their own report. Wangermee enumerated nine such objectives which were later condensed into four: (1) promotion of *creativity* and (2) assertion of people's

⁹ Carl-Johan Kleberg, "National cultural policy review, a method to discuss and improve cultural policies", see Footnote 1.

¹⁰ The administration of the programme was relegated to Cultural Policy and Action Department of the Council of Europe

¹¹ Wangermee, op. cit.

cultural *identity*, (3) enhancing *participation* in cultural life and their *access* to the supply of the arts and culture, and (4) promotion of *cultural diversity*.

The last of these objectives is a general term that covers such Wangermee's more specific objectives as the promotion of popular culture, multiculturalism, right to free self-expression and support for cultural oppositions, "counter-cultures". Furthermore he emphasised the need to break potential monopolistic cultural elite formations by providing citizens with more and better information about cultural life and the supply of artistic and cultural products and services. Later on decentralisation as a means to enhance autonomy of creative work and right to participate in/influence directly on cultural policy decision-making was included among these objectives.¹²

From the very beginning of the programme it was taken for granted that the national reviews covered national cultural policies as a whole, such as they are carried out on all levels – central, regional local – by public authorities. Thus, the problems of *vertical decentralisation* and division of decision-making powers and financing responsibilities have played a major role in the country reviews.

Horizontal decentralisation has also been a major issue: it is generally assumed that the decision-making and implementation in the promotion of creativity presupposes special organisational arrangements (arm's length bodies, quangos) that guarantee the creators autonomy and freedom of expression. Wangermee emphasised the importance of paying attention to these structural aspects of cultural policy-making. The special attention should also be paid to culture industries and varying policy orientations and measure used to promote and control their "commerce".

Wangermee also took up the need to create a reliable knowledge base for monitoring and evaluating cultural policies. In creating this base special attention should be paid to *indicators* for cultural policy monitoring. From the point of view of country comparisons this calls forth developing, on the one hand, indicators for "envisaged resources" and actually used resources for policy implementation, and, on the other hand on achieved results in terms of such quantitative indicators as infrastructure improvement or increased access to cultural offer¹³. Although this seems to suggest to the adoption of a technical *input/output approach*, Wangermee definitely rejected the

¹² Among Wangermee's objectives was also the "safeguarding the national cultural heritage". This was removed later as an explicit objective, because the assessing of heritage policies was considered in the CoE to be task of the Division of Heritage. This case indicates how vulnerable evaluation programmes and processes are in the situations of bureaucratic jurisdictional conflicts. The list of objectives (or "main theses") include at present also the protection of cultural minorities and fundamental rights and the role of culture industries in cultural development, cf. Appendix 1.

¹³ Developing of a European system of cultural statistics and indicators was, to start with, considered a major *raison d'être* of the programme, see the Council of Europe/CDCC, "European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews. Diversifying procedures and methods to overcome perceived problems, CC-Cult (93) 23, Strasbourg, 6 October 1993. Special meetings were organised by the CoE/CDCC to promote this line of development. For instance the Meeting of Experts on Cultural Statistics and Indicators held in Strasbourg in 1992 produced some basic European documents in this area, see e.g. Augustin Girard, "Cultural indicators: A few examples", Council of Europe, European Programme for Cultural Policy Reviews, DECS-Cult (92), 6, August 1992. In recent years the work on European cultural statistics and indicators has been continued by the European Union/EUROSTAT, the cultural policy information produced by the CoE review programme has, in turn, been made available in an Internet-based regularly updated cultural policy compendium providing country profiles in more qualitative terms (see the last section of this paper).

idea of using any type of cost/benefit-analysis and emphasised that “...*value judgments linked to aims and general objectives in a cultural policy are decisive for assessing the effectiveness of the means used in (cultural policy) programmes....*”.

After the Wangermee report the following review (Finland, the Netherlands and Italy) settled very much to the scheme such as its was “codified” in the report. This implied that, in terms of the typology above, the approach became split into two. The need to use qualitative input/output data was recognised, but, at the same time, national country reviews were carried out in terms of the general objectives enumerated in the list of Wangermee.

As the above quotation bears witness to, Wangermee linked the cultural policy objectives to overall value systems. Later on they have been adopted into evaluation documents and debates on cultural policy under different labels: *as objectives or aims, as principles or themes*. The last of these terms is now used in the Council of Europe presentations of the evaluation programme (see Appendix 1). It seems that the value links emphasised by Wangermee have been slowly eroding in practice.

The programme thus settled, at least to start with, to sit on two chairs, but, as my following analyses will bear witness to, this has not turned out to be a handicap. On the contrary, it has allowed for such flexibility that has made possible its applicability in new cultural contexts.

The CoE contracted in 1995 another assessment of the review programme. The assessment report by John Myerscough focused on the *efficiency in the management of the evaluation processes and on the aftermath of the already completed country assessments*. The latter focussed particularly on the policy debates inspired and policy changes initiated by the evaluations.

Myerscough’s assessments were by and large favourable. The programme had provided a wide variety of services to the CoEs member countries and achieved “...*a considerable professional standing*”. Yet, in a closer analysis, the number of completed reviews during the ten-year period of the programme had been rather low and the debates inspired and the reactions of national cultural policy authorities in terms of policy changes had been rather few.

Myerscough’s assessment seems to suggest that the programme had managed to affirm the conception of what cultural policy actually stood for and how it should be conducted. The direct benefits to the reviewed countries, had, however, been considerably slighter. Only few actual reforms could be identified. It seems that the review programme had functioned, at least during its preliminary phase, more as a *means of schemata construction than as an actual instrument of policy reform*.

Yet, at about the same time as Myerscough presented his assessment of the programme, two turning points of the global and European development, that is the turn of 1989 and *deepening and geopolitical expansion of the European integration*, started to give new reason d’etre to the programme – and also to its host organisation CoE as a whole.

The integration of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries to international cultural co-operation over and above the old political constraints had already started during the perestroika period. After the re-birth of the CEE new democracies, the cultural policy programme became an effective tool for cultural modernisation and broader pan-European integration. We should also bear in mind that cultural policy review programme has, from the Western European perspective, also been seen as one of the monitoring devices for the progress of democratisation and observance of European code of democracy and freedom of expression in terms that were set up in the Vienna summit (1993) of the Heads of State signatory to the European Cultural Convention¹⁴.

Geopolitical Expansion of Reviews in 1995-2000

Due to new cultural co-operation activities initiated already before and during the turn of 1989, the new democracies could be fast drawn into the activities of the CoE's review programme¹⁵. The cultural policy of Estonia was reviewed in 1995, that of Slovenia in 1996, the Russian Federation in 1996, Latvia in 1997, Lithuania and Croatia in 1998, Romania in 1999, Albania in 2000, Moldova in 2001¹⁶.

Although CDCC organised special meeting to revise the programme to respond better to the challenge of new cultural – and political and economic – contexts of the CEE countries, no major revisions were considered necessary in respect to the methods and procedures of the reviews¹⁷. Each review included the established five stages and tried to stick to the original objectives such as they were listed by Wangermee. At the same time the review process was accelerated by routinisation of the procedures – and also by delimiting the contents of the national report recommended by John Myerscough in his programme assessment report.

Yet, when we take a closer look, the review process itself was rather radically transformed when it was transferred to the new democracies. The target of evaluation was no more a *stable and highly institutionalised cultural policy system*, but a system that had *experienced a radical change and was still in the process of fast transition*. The review process had to focus *on the nature and effects of this change and analyse the birth-bangs of the new system*. In this task the main problems faced by the review process and reviewers (especially the group of international experts) were the knowledge base and the *lack of common language and terminology*.

¹⁴ See e.g. Council of Europe “Compliance with Member States’ Commitments: Background Information Concerning the Committee of Ministers Monitoring Procedure set-up on November 1994, Monitor/inf(96), 4 November 1996. The main focus of this monitoring has been the establishing and functioning of democratic institutions that has been jointly monitored by the Council of Europe and the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

¹⁵ This, of course, presupposed that the countries to be reviewed had already become signatories to the European Cultural Convention of the CoE. Thus e.g. the review of Croatia could be started only after the Balkan conflict was over and the country was deemed to be democratic enough to become a member of the CoE.

¹⁶ Actually the review of cultural policy of the Russian Federation echoed already the third round of the expansion of the geopolitical scope of the review programme: that covering the member countries of the CIS (the Commonwealth of the Independent States).

¹⁷ See e.g. Council of Europe/CDCC, “European programme of Review of National Cultural Policies. Methodology seminar for the new member countries”, DECS-Culture/CP (94) 5, Strasbourg, 6 December 1993.

The communist regime of cultural policy decision-making and administration had provided rather extensive and sometimes even reliable cultural statistics on the *output* side, especially *on the number of cultural and art institutions* and number of visitors to art and cultural institutions. The statistics on the input side were much more confused and unreliable. This was due to the complex institutional arrangement of cultural policy decision-making involving not only government (state and lower level) administration but also, first and foremost, the Party and, on the lower level, trade unions and working place organisations (factories, collective farms). The actual contributions of all these levels to the financing (housing, studios, facilities, salaries etc.) of the arts and culture was impossible to determine in practice.

After the collapse of communism and for some countries at the same time regaining their independence the complex institutional system of cultural policy financing and implementation collapsed quickly and, in the lack of functioning regional and local administration, the state/central government had to take the main – and often even the sole – responsibility for supporting the arts and culture. A similar collapse happened in the domain of culture industries and the media that had also been a part and parcel of the state-owned industries. The state started stepwise to desettled the sector, or at least radically to diminish its financing and control.

Due to these developments the writers of national reports and the international experts in their fact-finding missions got into trouble in trying to assess the actual effects of the regime change on cultural policies. The problems of determining the input changes were great and they were often made insurmountable by the change of currency and the rampant inflation. What usually could be said was that abrupt downward spiral of financing and promoting of the arts and culture had taken place. No exact answers could be provided to the questions how deep the fall actually was, what kind of latent compensation mechanisms emerged and when the turn to better had started or could be expected.

Similar lack of reliable information ensued also on the output side. The decline in participation both as regards to consumption of cultural goods and visits to cultural institutions was obvious. Detailed information on the rate of decline and its causes, especially the relative role of objective causes (decline in offer, lack of money) and subjective reasons (declining interest in traditional offer) was seldom available. This, of course, set strong restraints to analyse the change and transformation processes within any quantifiable input-output scheme. On the other hand, many output changes were so apparent e.g. in the financial state of institutions and in the low income of artists and cultural workers that detailed input/output analyses would have looked rather ridiculous.

The problem of common language became apparent in all these new reviews. The problem was not only that of replacing the old *totalitarian schemata of decision-making and bureaucracy* with *the modern democratic and rational policy language*. During the transition period the reviewed countries displayed in their cultural policy planning and debates a whole rainbow of different *schemata fragments* varying from the defence of the old system – or at least its safety nets – to some extreme *laissez-faire* orientations. The language also varied from one policy sub-sector to another. Thus the need to maintain old safety nets was emphasised in art and artist policies, attempts were made to make sense of the vertical decentralisation and related

ownership of the regional and local institutions (e.g. libraries, theatres, cultural centres), and the drives of privatisation competed with attempts to maintain state control in culture industries and the media. Additional confusion was caused by the attempts to revive and invigorate civil society and re-organise artists' organisations and unions through new legislation.

Amidst all this confusion of languages it is surprising that the review programme produced rather rational results. National reports were written, the experts' fact-finding missions were organised and the experts managed to write their review reports and evaluations in terms that were understandable in the reviewed countries and made the dialogues in the final meetings rather sensible and constructive. I will later return to discuss how this was possible. Before that it is necessary to have a look at the later development of the review programme¹⁸.

The number of signatory states to the European Cultural Convention and the actual members of the Council of Europe had increased steadily in the late 1990s and so did the number of applicants that wanted to have their cultural policies reviewed. The motives behind this willingness were diverse. One motive amongst the new democracies was that the review process was seen as a prerequisite for becoming a modernised European country in respect to cultural policy decision-making and administration system. Countries with ethnic unrest and minority problems like were latecomers both to the Convention and the evaluation process mainly for political reasons involving their credibility in human rights issues.

"Torn" countries that had or were experiencing actual military ethnic conflicts joined the process in the late train. Such countries were for example Bosnia-Herzegovina, and FYR Macedonia where reviews were initiated in 2000 or which expressed their willingness to be reviewed in 2000 or 2001. An exception among the Balkan countries was Slovenia (reviewed already in 1996). The last expansion of the geopolitical scope so far has been the group of the Transcaucasian ex-Soviet Union republics (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan) that entered the processes also in 2000-2001¹⁹.

We could have expected that the process in these less modernised or war-torn countries would have been even more problematic than in the new democracies that were reviewed first. The rate of completed processes has, however, remained the same, about 2-3 per annum. One reason has been the lesser requirements set for the information contents and evaluative aspects of the national reports. The international examiners and their rapporteurs have often also been more trained, that is, they have participated the process for a second or third time, and they also know where to look for information and what kind of information. The idea of assessing policies in terms of quantitative input-output analysis, especially in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, has been often abandoned partially or totally. As to the basic objectives the issues of multiculturalism and ethnic appeasement have taken a prominent position instead of such objectives as equal access and participation. We can say that the

¹⁸ The adoption of the new cultural policy thinking in the Baltic states was reflected in the conference "New Challenges for Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Cultural Policies" organised in Tallinn in October 200, see the Web-site http://www.kul.ee/balti2000/balti2000_4.html

¹⁹ Some of the Mediterranean countries that are located in the margin of the continent like Cyprus, Portugal and Malta have been latecomers to the process and others (like Greece and Spain) have abstained for the political reasons mentioned in the text above.

scheme of the review programme, the very idea of cultural policy, has been made simpler and less complex in the later country reviews. On the one hand we can ask to what extent these later reviews after 1998 have really filled their functions either in terms of providing new policy instruments or better knowledge base, or through internalising a new cognitive scheme in the national cultural policy-making process.

While examining the post-1998 national and expert reports we can notice a distinct shift in the orientation of the reviews. They are less evaluative and more like reports laying ground for technical assistance projects. This observation is confirmed by the fact that some reviews of the South East European and Transcaucasian countries have been financed from the two technical assistance programmes of the CoE: the Mosaic (in the South East Europe), and the Stage (in the Transcaucasia). The shift that turns the review results into practical teaching lessons is, from this point of view, understandable. Yet, at the same time, we can ask how we should judge the results from the point of view of the basic philosophy spelled out in the Wangermee report. According to that document the task of the examiners is to analyse and propose questions that “make the decision-makers think”, not propose any ready-made reform formulas. No doubt the review programme even in its original form offered a rather strict scheme to organise cultural policy thinking. Yet, as the earlier national and expert reports bear witness to, the scheme made the experts more to ask than to answer.

The diversification of the review programme

Although the recent development of the CoE programme as an overall review of national cultural policies into a kind of groundwork for technical assistance might be only a temporary modification, it may also forebode the end of the road for it in that form. Actually the programme has already bred two off springs that could take its place.

Wangermee already pointed out that the review does not need to cover the whole domain of national cultural policy, but it can be *transversal*, a country comparison of analyses carried out in some specific policy area. The CoE has already finished one such study on the role and position of the national cultural institutions (national operas, theatres, historical museums, symphony orchestras, art galleries, etc.) in six member countries and is at present carrying out one on cultural diversity policies. (See Appendix 1).

The second offspring is more directly a result of original review programme. The CoE has established an information system, a cultural policy compendium that condenses and updates the information contained in the national reports produced in the review process. The information system, that is planned to offer Internet-based cultural policy profiles of all the signatory countries to the European Cultural Convention (now 48 all in all), is organised by and large along the cultural policy scheme that has served as the basis of the review process. The structure even reflects the five basic objectives – and the issue of decentralisation as the sixth – which were distilled out of the Wangermee report. The country profiles also include some hard data on public policy inputs and outputs, and the compendium monitors the recent policy changes and related changes in relevant legislation.

In some sense these two offsprings of the original policy review programme are more policy relevant than the original programme as to their immediate results. The transversal studies do not propose all-over reforms but identify sectoral problems and also propose practical solutions. The compendium, although not providing much new information or policy advice, present national cultural policies as a *standardised cognitive scheme* that, as proposed at the outset, is “...*built between the present and the past and between everyday experiences and general prevailing values*” and provides “... *the possibility for country comparisons and in terms of specific policy measures*”. What is missing in respect to the scheme of the original review programme are the explicit *value-based assessments*. The compendium scheme is certainly an interesting instrument but it does not deal directly with the issues of “better” and “worse” policies nor policy reform.

Conclusions I. A policy instrument or a means for schemata construction?

The time has come to return back to the typology presented above and the issues it raises. The first of these is, what has been the balance between the functions of the policy evaluations in the case of the CoE’s European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews. *Has the programme contributed more as a policy instrument inducing practical reforms or as a means for schemata construction by increasing our understanding of the issues and leading to debates on policy alternatives?*

It would be an easy way out to say that the programme has served both of these purposes. My case analysis has hopefully proved that paradigmatic variations in a long-term evaluation programme deserve a close scrutiny. They indicate first that the method and evaluation procedures of the programme itself did not remain stable but varied according to the nature of the country groups that were reviewed/evaluated. This actually meant that the reviews/evaluations were adjusted to *different definitions what cultural policy is and could/should be under different political, economic and social conditions*.

The original approach, such as it was outlined in Wangermee’s report, was designed for the complex situations and financing and decision-making systems of the Western European welfare democracies and the proposed 4-5 main value-based objectives which reflect the political values of these countries. The approach became simplified as the review process was applied to new CEE democracies where cultural policy decision-making and administration were being overhauled under the conditions of radical overall reforms. In the case of the first group of the reviewed new democracies (the Baltic countries, Slovenia) the original method and procedures and, above all, the complex Western European idea/scheme of cultural policy, were maintained, although its main features and values became longer-term objectives to be achieved, not something that already could be evaluated²⁰. In these countries a start was also made to develop the knowledge base for cultural policy decision-making along the lines suggested in the founding documents of the programme.

²⁰ In the case of the Russian Federation the original review approach functioned seemingly rather well on the federal level. On the other hand, it did not provide starting point for the analysis of the complex federal structure and the obvious dominance of the federal cultural policy decision-making vis-à-vis the autonomous republics and other autonomous units.

When the review process moved to cover countries that were politically, economically and in respect to ethnic unrest considerably more unstable, the Western idea/scheme of cultural policy was pushed even more to the background and the immediate problems of rescuing artists and artistic and cultural institutions from the total economic collapse came to the fore.

* * *

The above conclusions suggest, what happened to the idea that evaluation could and should lead to rational reforms based on systematic decision-making and input-output analyses. In the countries reviewed after 1998 the need for more basic structural reforms or need to solve some immediate practical problems took the priority and the idea of rational debate on policy values and alternatives was pushed aside.

One of the main objectives of the original review approach was that systematic reviews would bring in information in the form of statistics and indicators that could be used to compare national cultural policies and trends of cultural development. The above analyses suggest that this objective was scarcely achieved. This certainly is the case if we try to use the national and expert reports as data sources. On the other hand, the seeming success of the CoE cultural policy compendium suggests that the review exercise has not been a failure even in this respect. Compiling and updating the country information according to the adopted cultural policy scheme has been a difficult task, but without the path-breaking activities of cultural policy reviews it would not have been possible. This also indicates that, at least to a certain extent, the review processes have succeeded to make CoE's cultural policy scheme more understandable and that it has also put into use at the national level.

Conclusions II. On “uniqueness” of culture and the need for a diagnostic approach

The typology on page 4 proposes that the comparability of cultural policies and trends of cultural development should not be taken for granted. Its lower two cells suggest that instead of unwarranted comparisons, we should aspire for *diagnostic* case analyses of countries or policy sectors. Cell IV even suggests that the diagnosis should be done by using native, not imported values as reference points.

My above account and analysis of the reviews do not directly address this issue. The reference to *the multiple languages* that emerged in the new democracies in the re-organisation processes of their cultural policy decision-making and administration opens up an entrance to it. These languages did not reflect only the confusion due to the radical overall change, they reflected also different layers of manifest and latent values that had been adopted during the past fifty/seventy years or so. The two obvious value layers were those inherited from the earlier period of independence and from the period of the Soviet/communist rule. These values intermingled with the new ones adopted – or made manifest – during the short perestroika and liberation period. The combination of these different values and the resulting multiple language should not be seen in terms of simple contrasts. For example the Soviet period conceptions of the need to maintain special privileges and safety nets for the arts and artist survived

the turn in some CEE countries. The Soviet period had also created into cultural life not only opposition but also new cultural formations based on new latent values. The following quotation from the formation of the present renaissance in the Lithuanian theatre suggest how these new latent values were formed:

“In the past decade the Lithuanian theatre has dissociated itself from the traditions of Russian theatre which were so evident for more than fifty years in Lithuania and created its own theatrical aesthetics. On the one hand this new aesthetic extends and develops certain traditions of Lithuanian theatre, while confronting and attacking them on the other... The younger generation of directors has created more socially oriented theatre, whereas the older generation has tended to focus on more aesthetic theatre and on the preservation of an archaic Lithuanian world outlook.... The archaic and the modern are combined in contemporary Lithuanian theatre in a unique way. Lithuanian theatre has become integrated with the broader context of Western European theatre of the past decade. In particular it is the younger generation of directors who have been most influenced by the processes taking place in Western European theatre”²¹

These kinds of compose latent values appearing both in cultural policy debates and in the artistic and cultural life are a formidable challenge to any evaluation system and researchers / experts who are responsible for the evaluation process. They presuppose that evaluators should function as well-trained anthropologists or ethnologists that teach themselves to understand these values and the culture of the reviewed country in general.

Of course these kinds of skill requirements cannot be set upon or met by the examiners in the CoE review programme. Yet, as some examiners participated in two or more review processes “anthropological” learning processes started to take place. The recruiting of the examiners also turned out to be important. The success of the reviews seemed to presuppose that at least some of the examiners came from a cultural environment close by or similar to that of the reviewed country. The tours across the country and hearings and discussions in its separate parts contributed to the cultural understanding and although the examiners’ reports are by no means exercises in cultural hermeneutics, many of them contain culture-bound diagnostic observations, analyses.

Conclusions III. On cultural transferability of the policy review approach

The above comments on the role of examiners lead us to the final concluding question: is the cultural policy evaluation, either such as it has been carried out under the auspices of the European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews or in any other forms transferable to different cultural environments?

²¹ Skendeliene, Ruta, “Lithuanian Theatre in the Last Ten Years. Directing, acting, and new forms of expression”, *Trans Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* **9. Nr.** Mai 2001, <http://www.inst.at/trans/9Nr/skendeliene9.htm>, 2.

The question has two aspects: a methodological one and a political one. The former concerns “cultural hermeneutics”, the need to understand the evaluated culture from within and take its own internal values as starting point in analyses and evaluations. The latter concerns the danger of “cultural policy harmonisation”, the right to introduce through a strange instrument (policy review scheme) an external control conception (a cultural policy scheme) into another artistic and cultural life.

Many cultural researchers would answer to the above two questions “yes” and “no”: there is a need for cultural hermeneutics, and all forms of cultural policy harmonisation should be negated. As my case study analysis above indicate, the answers need not be black or white. Maybe the three following conditions suffice to legitimate the transfer:

Firstly, the methods and procedures of the review process and the conception/scheme of cultural policy they imply must be flexible – or we could even say negotiable – in a manner that the order they impose is not external but really helps the reviewed country to build a better cognitive system “... *between the present and the past and between everyday experiences and general prevailing values*”.

Secondly, special attention should be paid to the recruiting of the examiners. Although they need not be trained anthropologists in the cultural life of the reviewed countries, they must have ascertained experience and skills to work in multicultural team and in transcultural context.

Thirdly, the evaluation must be politically neutral – both in respect to daily politics and deeper politics of culture. Although evaluations can be critical within the agreed upon value limits, it must not provide any ideological and partisan assets to any groups. These certainly are not final answers to the problems of this last issue. They yet may open a legitimate avenue for cultural policy evaluations, if such is requested for by a country.

Appendix 1.

The Cultural Policy Review Programme of the Council of Europe

Start of the Programme in 1985

Countries reviewed

- FRANCE (1988)
- SWEDEN (1992)
- FINLAND (1994)
- AUSTRIA (1995)
- THE NETHERLANDS (1995)
- ITALY (1995)
- ESTONIA (1995)
- RUSSIAN FEDERATION (1996)
- SLOVENIA (1996)
- BULGARIA (1997)
- LITHUANIA (1997)
- CROATIA (1998)
- LATVIA (1998)
- PORTUGAL (1999)
- ROMANIA (1999)

Some figures

- No of experts involved in the first 15 Reviews: **60**
- No of reports issued on the first 15 Reviews: **30**
- Approximate no of reports issued in different language versions (English, French and national languages): **70**
- Length of review process: **2-5 years**
- Approximate cost of programme for the Council of Europe: **7.000.00**
- Approximate total cost of programme: **30.000.00**

Forthcoming reviews

- ALBANIA (2000)
- ANDORRA (2000/01)
- ARMENIA (2000/01)
- MOLDOVA (2000/01)

Methodology

➤ **Main stages in the review process:**

- Background National Report prepared by/for the national authorities;
- Investigative visits by international examiners (appointed by Council of Europe);
- Examiners' Report produced with recommendations and questions
- "Review Meeting" between national authorities – with the Minister of Culture present – and Examiners at the occasion of the Culture Committee meeting in Strasbourg

➤ **Core themes for national reviews (initial Council of Europe grid):**

- Decentralisation;
- Support for creativity (including arts education);
- Cultural identity and diversity;
- Access and participation (including amateur arts, associations);
- Cultural minorities and fundamental rights;
- The creative industries.

➤ **Additional themes addressed by national reviews:**

- Historical background;

- Cultural policy objectives;
- Cultural policy decision making and administration;
- Policy implementation;
- Legislation in the cultural field;
- Cultural expenditure and trends in financing;
- Heritage aspects;
- Individual cultural activities /sectors;
- Cultural employment;
- Internationalisation and international cultural co-operation;
- Transition towards independence: developments in politics and culture;
- Public discussion of cultural policies;
- Civil society aspects.

Further studies linked to the Programme of Cultural Policy Reviews

- **Transversal Studies series**
- National Cultural Institutions in Transition: “désétatisation” and privatisation (1999)
 Participating countries: - Cyprus - Germany
 - Hungary- The Netherlands
 - Poland - Finland
- Management of Cultural Diversity (1999/2000)
 Participating countries: - Austria- Luxembourg
 - Bulgaria- United-Kingdom
 - Belgium- Switzerland
 - Canada
- **Sectorial Analysis series**
- Book policy (in co-operation with UNESCO, 1999/2000)
 Participating countries: - Bulgaria- Slovak Republic
 - Romania- Lithuania
 - Estonia- Moldova
 - Latvia - Albania
- **Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends on Cultural Policy in Europe – 47 Country Profiles**
 (No1 version including 14 out of 15 countries which have undergone a Cultural Policy Review will be available in January 2000, also in a Web-version)

Source: Kathrin Merkle, Council of Europe Cultural Policy and Action Division Research and Development Unit (RDU)
www.uib.no/kul/ICCPR/rtf/merkle.rtf