

Research Article

# Reframing Cultural Governance: Instrumentality and the Discursive Turn in Cultural Policy

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## Abstract

Cultural policy is far from being a neutral facilitator of cultural production and consumption. Contemporary cultural governance is profoundly influenced by the strategic, and often implicit, agendas and political projects of its key actors. Cultural policies, indeed, have evolved into an instrumental tool leveraged by governments to address broader policy issues and state interests such as education, social cohesion, economic development, and even diplomatic relations. This article examines the intersection of governance, policy, and discourse within the context of cultural policy. It argues that approaching cultural policy through discourse is essential for unpacking its foundational concepts, structural arrangements, and agents involved in its propagation. It explores the notion of cultural governance with an emphasis on the instrumental turn in cultural policy, which serves to advance specific political and economic agendas. Contemporary societies are characterised by a complex web of governance structures and cultural dynamics, where traditional forms of government are increasingly challenged by the evolving concept of governance. The transition from government-centric approaches to the broader framework of governance has sparked vigorous debate within mainstream disciplines such as political science, policy sciences, and public administration, but also in other disciplines such as Cultural Studies and cultural policy studies.

## Keywords

Cultural Governance, Cultural Policy, Discursive Turn, Instrumentality, Critical Policy Analysis

## 1. Introduction

This article examines the intersection of governance, policy, and discourse within the context of cultural policy. It argues that approaching cultural policy through discourse is essential for unpacking its foundational concepts, structural arrangements, and agents involved in its propagation. It explores the notion of cultural governance with an emphasis on the instrumental turn in cultural policy, which serves to advance specific political and economic agendas. Contemporary societies are characterised by a complex web of governance structures and cultural dynamics, where traditional forms of

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often implicit, agendas and political projects of its key actors [1, 2]. Cultural policies, indeed, have evolved into an instrumental tool leveraged by governments to address broader policy issues and state interests such as education, social cohesion, economic development, and even diplomatic relations [3]. Kingdon's notion of 'policy window' [4] elaborates on this phenomenon, illustrating moments when policymakers seize opportunities to champion their favoured solutions or draw attention to pressing issues in cultural policy. These windows of opportunity, contingent upon "focusing events," mark pivotal junctures wherein external factors catalyse the recognition of specific cultural topics as viable solutions to longstanding societal problems, thereby reframing the discursive turn in cultural policy-making.

Within the interpretivist frameworks associated with the practices of Cultural Studies, the examination of cultural policy as a discursive formation holds significant importance [5, 6]. As such, discourse is understood as a broad framework that disseminates particular forms of knowledge and subjectivities, which are then ingrained in social and cultural practices. The discursive turn in cultural policy-making raises questions about the conception and significance of culture as well as its organisational role in producing particular effects and, indeed, particular individuals [7].

The term "governance" has especially emerged as a central focus of scholarly inquiry, representing an expansive framework that transcends the conventional boundaries of government-centric models. Governance necessitates an examination of actors beyond traditional governmental structures, encompassing diverse spheres such as the public, private, and civil society sectors [8-10]. However, the term "governance" has not been immune to critique, with Bevir and Rhodes [11] and Bevir [12] cautioning against its elusive nature and lack of definitional clarity. Despite these criticisms, governance remains a pivotal concept in understanding the shifting discourses of public administration and public policy. Central to the notion of governance, therefore, is the tension between hierarchical control mechanisms inherent in government-centric models and the collaborative, networked approaches emblematic of contemporary governance paradigms. On the flip side, Rhodes [13] defines government as a top-down decision-making process entrenched within the public sector, while governance signifies the sharing of authority among diverse actors across various sectors and geographical contexts. The transition towards network-type governance reflects the phenomenon of the "hollowing out" of the state, where government agencies cede control to supranational and intergovernmental entities [14, 15].

Against this backdrop, the concept of cultural governance, in particular, emerges as a focal point of inquiry. Cultural governance embodies diverse approaches to managing cultural resources and shaping cultural policy, reflecting the influence of neoliberal political and economic forces [3, 16]. As culture assumes a pivotal role in governance processes, scholars grapple with the challenges of operationalising cul-

tural capital within policy frameworks and quantifying culture's impact [17, 18].

The notion of cultural governance, thus, extends well beyond traditional government-centric models to encompass a broader array of actors and institutions involved in shaping the contours of cultural policy making and implementation. Within this framework, cultural governance involves not only the formal decision-making processes within governmental structures but also the informal networks and collaborations that influence cultural policy outcomes. This inclusive approach to governance acknowledges the diversity of actors involved in cultural policymaking, including cultural institutions, cultural administrators, community organisations, artists, and citizens. At the same time, cultural governance intersects with broader debates surrounding democracy, citizenship, and identity in multicultural societies. As such, cultural policies play a crucial role in shaping national narratives and fostering social cohesion. However, they also raise questions about power dynamics, representation, cultural hegemony, and cultural ideologies—what people believe to be true about culture, why is culture important to them and how it should be governed [19]. As such, cultural governance entails not only the management of cultural resources but also the negotiation of contested values, identities, narratives, and interests.

This paper is structured into four main sections. The first section, "Cultural Policy and Critical Policy Analysis", explores the disciplinary and theoretical underpinnings of cultural policy and policy analysis, emphasising the importance of critical and reflexive engagement with cultural policy frameworks and practices. The second section, "The 'Culture' of Cultural Policy", and the third section, "The 'Policy' of Cultural Policy", shift the focus towards examining the dynamics inherent in cultural policy discourse, exploring the definitional fray of the notion of "culture" in the context of cultural policy and the complexities surrounding the "policy" aspect of cultural policy. Finally, the fourth section, "The Governmentalisation of Culture", discusses the governance frameworks that govern cultural policy, examining the transition from traditional government-centric approaches to contemporary governance paradigms, and providing insights into the diverse mechanisms through which cultural policies are implemented and managed within governance structures.

## 2. Cultural Policy and Critical Policy Analysis

Cultural Studies has risen to prominence as a pivotal approach within the broader spectrum of cultural analysis. Situated at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences, Cultural Studies represents a robust academic project with a substantial community of scholars. Notably, this community, both in terms of sheer numbers and academic influence, surpasses that of cultural policy studies. The interdisciplinary

nature of Cultural Studies allows for a comprehensive exploration of diverse cultural phenomena, drawing from both everyday experiences and elements of popular culture. Rooted in perspectives such as phenomenology, cultural anthropology, structuralism, and critical theory, Cultural Studies adopts a critical outlook towards the circuit of culture and cultural phenomena, positing that cultural institutions often perpetuate the interests of dominant classes.<sup>1</sup> This perspective emphasises the role of cultural ideas, or ideology, in sustaining the cultural and economic hegemony of these dominant classes.

In the progressive project of Cultural Studies during the 1990s, a notable shift occurred as scholars from within the Cultural Studies tradition displayed a newfound openness, and in certain instances, even enthusiasm, towards integrating the study of 'policy' into their scholarship. This pivotal development did not entail a dilution or abandonment of their critical engagement with cultural phenomena. Rather, it marked a reflexive engagement with the institutional frameworks underpinning the production of culture within *governmentalised* spheres [22, 23]. Inspired by the seminal insights of French philosopher Michel Foucault, scholars like Tony Bennett embarked on a trajectory that examined state institutions through a critical approach, particularly those involved in the production and support of culture. With a blend of critical inquiry and pragmatic utility, these researchers sought to forge a cultural policy analysis that not only maintained its critical edge but also transcended complicity with established hegemonic forces [24]. This approach, grounded in the ethos of Cultural Studies, underscores the scholarly commitment to exploring the dynamics of cultural production and policy formulation while steadfastly upholding a critical stance towards prevailing power structures.

The critical approach advocated by scholars like Bennett hinges upon a meticulous examination of institutions, exploring their internal mechanisms to unearth the power dynamics inherent in the production, circulation, and consumption of culture as facilitated by these very institutions. Drawing inspiration from the intellectual lineage of Foucault, Bennett's scholarly oeuvre is imbued with a profound appreciation for the role of institutions as pivotal sites of cultural governance and regulation. By scrutinising these institutional structures and their operational modalities, this critical approach elucidates the *normative* underpinnings of culture and cultural policy, thereby uncovering the intersection between institutional frameworks and cultural dynamics. This analytical framework emphasises the centrality of institutions in shaping cultural norms and practices, hence the imperative of critically engaging with institutional approaches that exert influence over the cultural field.

This shift in perspective within Cultural Studies towards a more inclusive and utilitarian orientation should not be mis-

construed as a departure from critical inquiry. Rather, it signifies a maturation of the field characterised by the cultivation of a critical ethos. This evolution highlights an orientation that neither compromises on critical principles nor succumbs to institutional co-option. A prime example of this orientation is evident in the scholarly exploration of the museum as a cultural institution [25]. By excavating the historical complicity of museums in legitimising colonial orders of the 19th century and examining the persistence of such mechanisms in contemporary contexts, scholars such as Bennett embark on an intellectually ambitious endeavour that serves as a potent critique of oppressive power dynamics. This critical engagement not only interrogates existing power structures but also furnishes insights that can inform more socially acceptable policy directions. Embracing this ethos parallels the trajectory of academic work valued for its applied utility, as emphasised by Bennett, thereby underscoring the imperative for the emergence of "public intellectuals" within cultural policy studies. The collective efforts of scholars such as Tony Bennett [22-24, 26-28], Jim McGuigan [5, 29-31], Clive Gray [3, 6, 17, 32, 33], Justin Lewis and Toby Miller [34], Kevin Mulcahy [1, 2], Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett [35], Dave O'Brien [15], David Bell and Kate Oakley [36], Carole Rosenstein [19, 37], Eleonora Belfiore, Steven Hadley, Brea M. Heidelberg, and Carole Rosenstein [38], Steven Hadley [39] and others, served as a clarion call to galvanise the development of a critical (and reflexive) cultural policy analysis. Despite its acknowledged limitations, this collective endeavour represents a commendable stride towards consolidating and advancing the research agenda in the field.

### 3. 'Becoming useful, Remaining Critical': Cultural Policy Studies and Applied Policy Research

The rise of cultural policy studies has been intertwined with the broader field of Cultural Studies, rather than emanating from traditional disciplines such as political science or policy studies. This unique genesis sheds light on the perceived disconnection of cultural policy studies from the broader landscape of public policy studies [36]. Within the field of Cultural Studies, a notable yet relatively small cohort of scholars has heralded the significance of studying cultural policy. Angela McRobbie [40] notably characterised it as the "missing agenda of cultural studies," thereby highlighting its pivotal role within a rather disciplinary framework. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that these scholars often espouse diverse theoretical standpoints, thereby enriching the discourse surrounding cultural policy studies within the broader ambit of Cultural Studies.

In this context, it is crucial to consider Stuart Cunningham's [41] perspective on cultural policy studies, wherein he characterises it as a "centrist" or "reformist" rejoinder to what he perceives as the shortcomings of Cultural Studies. Cunn-

<sup>1</sup> The circuit of culture offers an analytical lens for examining popular culture artifacts. This circuit comprises five interconnected components: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. These elements vary in their degree of exposure to the public sphere [20, 21].

ham contends that the conventional tenets of Cultural Studies, marked by reflexive anti-capitalism, anti-consumerism, and a “romanticised” portrayal of sub-cultural resistance, have become insufficient in addressing the complex intersections of governance, politics, and culture in contemporary societies. This critique highlights the need for a more ‘useful’ and pragmatic approach, which cultural policy studies purportedly offers by navigating a middle ground between radical critique and pragmatic reform. Indeed, Cunningham’s characterisation prompts critical reflection on the evolving contours of Cultural Studies and the exigency of engaging with various socio-political dynamics within modern societies.

One such prominent argument, epitomised by the scholarship of Tony Bennett [23], revolves around an instrumental or “useful” conception of culture. Drawing upon Foucault’s notion of governmentality, this perspective views culture through the lens of its utility and instrumental value. It emphasises its role within broader mechanisms of governance and societal regulation and frames debates surrounding the definition of culture and its implications for policy formulation. Conversely, another strand of thought, prominently articulated by Jim McGuigan [29, 30], suggests a communicative notion of culture, which is conceptualised in alignment with Habermas’ notion of the public sphere. This communicative approach emphasises the role of culture as a medium for fostering public dialogue, deliberation, and democratic engagement, thereby underscoring its significance within the realm of policy discourse. These divergent conceptualisations of culture exemplify the diversity of approaches within the emerging field of cultural policy studies and the inherent complexities associated with defining and interpreting culture within policy frameworks.

Bennett suggested that the potential of emancipatory politics, often championed within Cultural Studies, could only be realised through substantive engagement with the institutional frameworks and governance systems shaping culture. His proposition for rendering Cultural Studies “useful” cantered on the cultivation of “cultural technicians”—intellectual workers adept at effecting technical adjustments to the governmental deployment of culture, thereby facilitating more “enlightened cultural policies,” particularly within cultural institutions like museums or concert halls [23]. However, a critique of Bennett’s approach by McGuigan particularly highlights what he perceived as a lack of critical distance from the entrenched power structures. This debate, echoing similar discussions within the context of cultural and creative industries [42-44, 15] and cultural economy [45], reflects the ongoing divergence of perspectives among scholars regarding the overarching objectives of cultural policy studies. In fact, the ensuing dialogue exemplifies the richness of theory and approach within the field.

It is pertinent to acknowledge the inherent distinctions between studies of and approaches to cultural policy conducted within academic spheres and those commissioned by governmental or quasi-governmental agencies. Typically, the

latter falls within the realm of the “applied” tradition, often characterised by its alignment with administrative imperatives [36]. However, it is essential to recognise that such applied studies are not devoid of critical engagement with policy development. Scullion and García’s [46] examination of cultural policymaking in Scotland post-devolution illustrates this dynamic. While both critical and applied policy research may draw upon similar data and evidence, the framing and contextualisation of the research diverge significantly. Applied research tends to prioritise “how” questions over “why,” focusing on pragmatic solutions rather than theoretical inquiries. For instance, Scullion and Garcia highlight the treatment and framing of Scottish nationalism within the context of cultural policy, noting its critical examination within academic discourse contrasted with its relatively unproblematic treatment within applied cultural policy studies. This juxtaposition exemplifies the interplay between academic scholarship and applied policy research, prompting critical reflection on the contextual factors shaping policy discourse within diverse research paradigms.

More particularly, the burgeoning prominence of the cultural industries and creative economies as a global policy discourse represents a shift in how societies and governing institutions perceive and interact with culture, particularly in its organisational, governmental, and instrumental forms. This shift extends beyond traditional notions of culture as confined to artistic endeavours and heritage preservation; instead, it encompasses a broader understanding of culture as a driver of economic growth, innovation, community development, sustainability, and social cohesion [6, 47]. As such, the intersection of culture, governance, and economy has propelled cultural policy to the forefront of policy agendas worldwide [18, 48]. This increased attention to cultural policy has not only permeated academic circles but has also resonated within governmental and non-governmental circles.

#### 4. The ‘Culture’ of Cultural Policy

Irrespective of its semantic and etymological variations, use of the term culture has proliferated to such an extent that it has become too inclusive to know what to exclude. Settling on a definition of culture is notoriously difficult. British critic Raymond Williams famously noted that “culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” [49]. In the field of cultural policy studies, the engagement with the notion of culture is marked by its involvement with public policy frameworks in two registers: the *aesthetic* and the *anthropological*. Culture in the aesthetic sense is understood as the sum of artistic activities, symbolic expressions, creative manifestations, and aesthetic practices that traverse temporal, spatial, and contextual boundaries. Culture, in this sense, encapsulates a dynamic tapestry of artistic traditions, innovations, and interpretations that reflect the collective consciousness, historical trajectories, and evolving sensibilities of a society. It embodies the human propensity to imbue



materials, sounds, movements, and visual forms with layers of meaning, invoking emotions and narratives. Through culture's artistic manifestations, individuals engage in a continuous dialogue with their heritage, aspirations, and contemporary realities, forming a nexus of artistic practices that catalyse introspection, connection, and the perpetual evolution of creative thought.

In the anthropological sense, culture emerges as an all-encompassing construct that includes the entire spectrum of human existence—what Raymond Williams referred to as the “structure of feeling”—beliefs, behaviours, values, norms, practices, worldviews, and ways of living. The anthropological definition of culture emphasises “holism” and the “totality of meanings” [37]. Culture, in this context, is understood as a complex hub of shared meanings, symbols, rituals, and social structures that constitute the fabric of a given society. It is the intangible yet profound force that shapes how individuals interpret and engage with their environment, organise themselves, and make sense of their existence. Culture is not merely a static backdrop, but an active agent in human lives, perpetually shaping and being shaped by individual actions, interactions, and historical trajectories.

How we understand cultural policy, however, depends on how we define the vexed notion of culture. Only attempting to assume a given definition of the term is not helpful in understanding cultural policy. Close attention, therefore, should be paid to what falls within the remits of cultural policymaking. Indeed, culture has proven to be an elusive category for political-administrative regulation, given its proclivity for non-linear and unpredictable progression [50]. The way that states engage with, support, censor, or regulate certain forms of cultural expression is characterised by selectivity and contingency [36]. Thus, what counts as ‘culture’ in cultural policy comes down to a certain conception of culture.

It is interesting to note that the interpretation of culture, viewed through an anthropological outlook, is generally not within the purview of cultural policy across much of Europe, North and South America, Canada, and Australia. In these contexts, cultural policy predominantly centres around artistic pursuits, even though the definition of ‘artistic’ is notably expansive and subject to fervent debates [36]. However, the anthropological notion of culture as a comprehensive way of life retains its influence. This influence is evident in the development discourse, particularly applicable to post-colonial societies in the Global South as part of the re-evaluation and re-thinking of ‘culture’ within the realm of public policy—such as what is referred to as ‘intangible cultural heritage’ within the UNESCO’s cultural framework, encompassing a wide spectrum of phenomena ranging from oral traditions and languages to rituals and spiritual beliefs—and partly shaped by the scholarship of Cultural Studies and its examination of the cultural circuit, identity, and representation politics.

The use of such broad conceptualisation of culture as a comprehensive way of life has raised many a question among the gurus of cultural policy studies [6, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 36,

51, 52]. One such notable point of contention lies in the demarcation between the ‘cultural’ and, indeed, everything else. This conundrum poses analytical as well as methodological difficulties and is even more intricate in the context of public policy, which often necessitates well-defined categories of activities and concepts for effective engagement. In an effort to address the challenges surrounding the dual scope and delimitation of culture, and responding to both semiology and structuralism, Raymond Williams came to a revised concept of culture as “a realised signifying system” [53]. This perspective confines culture to denote the specific practices and institutions through which meaning is constructed. These practices and institutions are characterised by their inherent focus on symbolic communication, often constituting the primary purpose and even a self-contained objective, as exemplified by the act of attending a movie theatre for instance. While activities like filmmaking and cinema attendance are rooted in socio-economic contexts, they remain discernible from endeavours aimed at sustaining basic life necessities, like food, as well as from products primarily functioning as utilitarian means rather than intrinsic ends, such as transportation systems.

In an attempt to problematise this broad conceptualisation, for Bennett [22], when we think about culture, we can compare it to the development of “the social” in society. This means looking at culture as something that is not fixed throughout history but is shaped by how society manages it. Instead of trying to define culture as a specific level of social formation or a domain of practices and texts, we should see it as a product of history, regulated by how these methods are organised into government programmes, and how these programmes are put into action using cultural tools and technologies.

## 5. The ‘Policy’ of Cultural Policy

Having navigated through contrasting interpretations and applications of the term culture, the focus now pivots toward the notion of policy. We are poised to address and resolve what may initially appear as a straightforward query: what precisely is meant by the term ‘policy’ within the context of cultural policy? The French term ‘police’ made its entry into the English lexicon during the sixteenth century, initially encompassing the notion of governance in a broad sense and eventually evolving to connote ‘policy.’ As evidenced in 1732, Jonathan Swift remarked, “Among all great cities, nothing is held more commendable (...) than what the French call police; by which word is meant the government thereof” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, OED). While the English language saw the emergence of ‘policy’ from ‘police,’ the French language itself adopted the term *politique* to encompass both political matters and policy-related concepts (similar to the use of the term ‘سياسة’ in Arabic).

While some still advocate for the complete separation of politics from culture—advocating for culture, for instance, to

be regarded solely as a means of refining individual sensibilities—history highlights the rather inherent political nature of culture, and so there is no indication that it can evade the ruses of power dynamics and public debates. That being the case, the perspective on policy expounded in this article emphasises the confluence of policy and politics as a field of contestation between competing discourses, ideologies, and interests [19]. This approach diverges from constraining policy to its more technically-oriented, albeit inherently political, interpretation as a form of regulation. Rather than exclusively associating cultural policy with matters of management and regulation, its significance transcends a seemingly apolitical dimension of pragmatic procedures subject solely to administrative and regulatory oversight by governmental officials and policy-makers. In this respect, Bell and Oakley [36] provide a working definition of cultural policy which pertains to the broader domain of public policy: “cultural policy is the branch of public policy concerned with the administration of culture”. However, as is customary when grappling with definitional intricacies, this definition immediately propels us into a set of inquiries: What precisely constitutes the scope of public policy? How do we delineate the contours of policy itself? These questions serve as the initial steps to understanding the intersection of the ‘cultural’ and the broader domain of public policy.

A classic formulation coined by Thomas Dye [54] to elucidate the essence of public policy defines it as follows: “public policy is what governments choose to do or not to do”. Cultural policy, therefore, can be construed as the sum of governmental actions and initiatives pertaining to culture, encompassing the decisions governments make or refrain from making within the cultural domain. This assertion serves as a poignant reminder that our focus should extend beyond the realms of governance and decision-making, exploring what Mulcahy [1] aptly terms the “ecological complexity” inherent in public policy. Notably, cultural policy does not subsist in isolation but intersects with governmental activities and choices spanning various policy and political domains, including but not limited to economic policy, social welfare policy, and foreign policy.

Cultural policy fundamentally constitutes a variant of public policy. This assertion bears significance as David Hesmondhalgh [52] astutely notes that in cultural policy studies “it sometimes seems to be forgotten that these are areas of public policy more generally”. This lapse holds consequential implications for the methodology of cultural policy analysis and, furthermore, for the trajectory of the emerging interdisciplinary domain of cultural policy studies. Therefore, it is imperative to retain a refurbished appreciation for the interaction between cultural policy and the expansive spectrum of public policy dynamics.

That public policy is “what a government chooses to do or not to do” implicates that these choices generally arise from and are directed towards a particular problem or a cluster of problems. This implication forms the bedrock of conceptual-

ising the term policy. Howard Lasswell [55], the political scientist who laid the groundwork for what has been referred to as “the policy sciences” in the 1950s, viewed the term policy as “commonly used to denote the most pivotal decisions made in organized or private life”. In his perspective, the driving force behind policy formulation originates externally to, and independently of, government; it is a predicament necessitating resolution. Lasswell’s perspective was deeply rooted in American Progressivism, notably influenced by the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey, who advocated that informed problem-solving constitutes the core practice of democracy [57]. Lasswell’s conception of policy encompassed the process whereby decision-makers address compelling issues by amassing pertinent evidence and data regarding alternative approaches, evaluating their efficacy as solutions, and leveraging this knowledge to construct a strategic path towards predefined objectives. Nevertheless, paradigms that establish policy within the context of an issue/problem external to and detached from the processes of policy formulation and execution have encountered persistent criticism. The act of identifying a problem, deliberating on its suitability for governmental intervention, selecting suitable tools to tackle it, and discerning when a concrete scenario aligns with that specific type of problem are all inherent in policy itself [58-64].

Carol Bacchi’s *Analysing Policy: What’s the Problem Represented To Be?* [63], offers a unique approach to understanding and analysing public policy. Bacchi’s framework challenges the conventional understanding of policy analysis by focusing on how problems are framed rather than assuming problem definitions as objective and neutral. This approach not only highlights the constructed nature of policy issues but also exposes the power dynamics and underlying ideologies shaping policy agendas. At the core of Bacchi’s approach is the recognition that policy issues are not self-evident, but are rather constructed through various discourses, practices, and representations. She emphasises that policy problems are not discovered, but *invented*, and that the way problems are framed determines the subsequent policy responses. She introduces the concept of “problem representation,” which refers to the specific way a problem is defined and articulated within a particular policy context. This representation is influenced by social norms, values, ideologies, and power relations.

More importantly, Bacchi’s approach resolutely challenges the long-standing notion of objectivity within policy analysis, emphasising the deeply ingrained presence of subjective judgments, biases, and worldviews within ostensibly neutral and objective problem definitions. This profound awareness has both theoretical and methodological implications as it serves to rouse analysts from complacency, compelling them to undertake rigorous introspection into the very assumptions and underlying perspectives that intricately mould the contours of policy problem definitions. Departing from the conventional stance that often focuses on ‘diagnosing’ problems

as if they subsist objectively, Bacchi's approach shifts the focus to understanding how problems are constructed through language, discourse, and societal values.

One field in particular, Critical Policy Studies, has challenged the notion that policies emerge detached from the interests and values of the concerned policy communities. Instead, this approach scrutinises the prevailing policy commitments against normative assumptions such as equality, democracy, and empowerment. "Basic to policy analysis generally," as Fischer et al. [60] remark, "are two very old ideas – namely, the ideas that government decisions should be based on sound knowledge, and that such knowledge should rise above politics". The ideas of evidence-based policy-making and the prominence of cost–benefit analysis as a decision-making methodology, stemming from a longstanding tradition, envisages a governing elite of technical experts operating as neutral agents of societal progress. This technocratic model, with its roots in post-World War II era and influenced by nineteenth-century positivism, has shaped the approach to policy analysis and governance. However, this technocratic stance is seen as both promising and threatening—promising enhanced expertise-driven decision-making yet threatening the realms of practical knowledge and democratic governance [60].

One of the fundamental concerns in critical policy studies pertains to the very essence of knowledge. This includes two areas: (a) knowledge that informs policymaking, and (b) the forms of knowledge and implicit assumptions that underlie the implementation of policy choices. This critical evaluation of knowledge leads to a departure from the positivist conception, which has historically guided policy studies and analysis. Instead, an interpretive, culturally and historically constructivist understanding of knowledge comes to the fore. As Fisher [60] explains, this perspective adopts an approach that is informed by cultural and historical contexts in the creation and provision of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> In particular, Fisher [59] introduces a thought-provoking perspective by suggesting that policy is best understood as a "discursive construct." This notion fundamentally redefines policy by shifting the emphasis from the conventional understanding of policy as a mere set of concrete actions or decisions to a more intricate and comprehensive framework—policy ceases to be a static, isolated entity; instead, it emerges as a product of discourse

and communication among various stakeholders within the policymaking sphere. Rather than being confined to the deliberations of policymakers and experts, policy takes on a dynamic character as it evolves through interactions that occur among diverse actors, such as interest groups, the general public, and different societal sectors.

The discursive framework emphasises the central role of language and rhetoric in shaping policies. It acknowledges that policy outcomes are not solely dictated by technical expertise or objective analysis, but rather by the ongoing negotiations, articulations, and debates that unfold among stakeholders. This conceptualisation recognises the interplay between power dynamics and persuasive rhetoric in influencing policy formulation, interpretation, and implementation, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of governance itself. Indeed, Fischer's proposition challenges the conventional perception of policy, urging us to embrace a more holistic understanding that encompasses the interactive, communicative, and evolving aspects of policy formation.

Approaching policy as discourse reveals a multi-dimensional understanding of how policy operates within the framework of discourse. It especially culminates in an understanding of discourse, whereby its often politically malleable nature is emphasised. Policy-as-discourse scholars such as Bacchi underlie the challenge of achieving progressive change, emphasising the formidable constraints that discourses impose during the process of constructing meaning. Central to her argument is the notion that social and political issues are often framed in ways that undermine progressive intentions, thereby perpetuating the prevailing social status quo. This perspective navigates the uses and impacts of discourse, acknowledging its potential to both drive transitions and produce lived, constitutive effects. A vital dimension of this approach pertains to the tangible consequences of discourses, spotlighting the capacity of distinct groups—or what has been referred to as epistemic (policy) communities [61, 65]—to wield agency in the construction and utilisation of discourse. Therefore, the notion of discourse is understood to be far from an overarching, immutable structure existing in isolation from historical context; instead, it suggests a relational connection to individuals and groups who engage in shaping and contesting representations to either bolster or contest prevailing power and authority configurations.

In his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, French historian and social critic Michel Foucault [66] initially framed discourse formation within the context of the social sciences. Curiously, however, he concluded with a speculative hint at an "archaeology of political knowledge"—an uncharted terrain that probes the extent to which "the political behaviour of a society, a group, or a class is not shot through with a particular, describable discursive practice". Indeed, it was Foucault's profound insights, presented earlier in a series of lectures delivered in the 1970s, that initiated the discursive interpretation of policy as *governmentality*—an intellectual vista that extends far beyond the orthodox conventions of governance.

<sup>2</sup> During the 1980s, a group of policy scholars, primarily originating from North America and later Europe, embarked on a quest to explore alternatives that extended from the epistemological critique previously advanced by philosophers and political theorists. By combining theoretical inquiries into knowledge with the pragmatic complexities of policy challenges, these scholars sought to construct a critical vantage point concerning public policy. This endeavour was profoundly informed by the critical theory expounded by the renowned German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, notably his scrutiny of scientism and the legitimacy crisis within contemporary society. Leveraging their focus on language and communication, scholars such as Fischer and Forester [60] outlined the emergence of what has been known as the 'argumentative turn' within policy formulation and analysis. While several other influences contributed to this shift, this body of work significantly contributed to redirecting the analytical approach away from pure empiricism, inviting an acknowledgment of the assumptions underpinning, and the communicative processes mediating, the formulation and enactment of policies.



Foucault's proposition, instead, urges us to perceive policies as a crucible through which the "art of governing finds expression" [67]. This framework beckons us to transcend the myopic view that government actions are mere manifestations of power or authority. Insightfully, Foucault conceptualised power in two ways: i) as a *productive force*, power produces knowledge rather than merely suppressing its expression; ii) as a *relational process*, power dynamics operate between individuals rather than as a 'thing' that some people have and others do not. Discourse, therefore, is theorised in the framework of power mechanism. That is, power is perceived as a generative force, actively producing the constructing meanings, categories, and societal practices, or facilitating their growth, rather than repressing pre-existing, ostensibly 'natural' meanings, categories, or practices. That being the case, government actions, when identified as policies, inherently unfurl a sense of an organisational effect that reverberates across multiple dimensions.

Embedded within what has been known as the interpretive approach to Cultural Studies lies a critical exploration of cultural policy's manifestation as a discursive construct. In this context, "discourse," as Bell and Oakley [36] explain, "is a broad and shared framework for understanding, the product of particular forms of knowledge, which is then embedded in and permeates through society and social and cultural formations and practices". When cultural policy is approached through the lens of discourse, it necessitates an inquiry into the foundational understanding of how culture is defined, its purpose and utility, the structural arrangement underpinning the generation of specific outcomes, the agents responsible for disseminating this understanding, and the diverse mechanisms employed for its propagation.

Bennett [24] has dedicated a substantial portion of his scholarship to unravel the emergence of culture as a tool of governance, scrutinising how notions about culture's functions and merits coalesced into the phenomenon now recognised as cultural policy. His historical investigations into the genesis of culture's transition into an instrument of governance, as mentioned in the previous section, examines several aspects. For instance, Bennett [24] probes into the "discursive conditions" that rendered it conceivable for cultural reformers in the nineteenth century to perceive establishments like public libraries and museums as vehicles for instilling sobriety and sexual prudence in the working class in the UK. In essence, he sought to comprehend the birth and consolidation of the particular concept of culture's efficacy in civilising individuals, especially those from the working class, while also scrutinising the discourse that characterises this class as uncivilised. In his exploration of "the multiplication of culture's utilities", Bennett [27] traces the discourse on culture's civilising effect through parliamentary records, committee reports, nineteenth-century literature, as well as institutional records, thereby illuminating its trajectory of evolution and transformation.

## 6. The Governmentalisation of Culture

### 6.1. From Government to Governance

Contemporary developments in governance and public administration have been the subject of considerable scrutiny in political science, particularly in the context of an ongoing debate concerning the transition from government-centric paradigms to the more encompassing concept of governance. The term governance, in its essence, serves as an overarching framework that necessitates an examination of actors beyond the conventional boundaries traditionally explored within the realm of government [8-10]. However, it is noteworthy that the term governance has not been without controversy in academic circles. Bevir and Rhodes [11] and Bevir [12], two leading figures in governance studies, have described the term as a "weasel word", a somewhat elusive term that obfuscates more than it clarifies. In its early conceptualisation, governance was often challenged for its perceived lack of definitional clarity, with Rhodes [13] and Stoker [8] asserting that it includes multiple meanings, conflating a theoretical construct, a descriptive and narrative tool, as well as a normative standpoint. In fact, as Jessop [68] aptly argues: "governance has been hailed as a new social-scientific paradigm, a new approach to problem-solving that can overcome the limitations of anarchic market exchange and top-down planning in an increasingly complex and global world, and as a solution to the perennial ethical, political, and civic problems of securing institutional integration and peaceful social co-existence".

According to Rhodes [13], government is best understood as a top-down decision-making process, involving hierarchical control mechanisms primarily entrenched within the public sector. This traditional model has been subject to critique, particularly through the lens of what has been known as the New Public Management movement.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, governance signifies the collaborative sharing of authority and decision-making among an array of actors representing diverse spheres, including the public, private, and civil society sectors. Moreover, governance increasingly transcends the confines of the nation-state, drawing upon agents from a broader international context. This shift towards "network-type governance" aligns with the phenomenon of the "hollowing out" of the state [14, 15], where government agencies relinquished control over specific functions to supranational and intergovernmental entities, such as the Eu-

3 The New Public Management (NPM) is an administrative and managerial approach that emerged primarily in the context of public sector reform. It represents a shift away from traditional bureaucratic models of governance toward more market-oriented and performance-based methods of managing public services and organisations. Key characteristics of the NPM include: decentralisation, performance measurement and accountability, competition and market mechanisms, and Managerialism. The NPM approach has been influential in shaping public sector reforms around the world since the 1980s. However, it has also faced criticism for its emphasis on market mechanisms, which some argue may lead to the commodification of public services and undermine the public interest. Additionally, the NPM approach has been associated with concerns about accountability, equity, and the erosion of public sector values such as social justice and equality.



ropean Union, United Nations, UNESCO, World Bank, as well as civil society and the private sector during the 1980s [13]. Consequently, both government and the state underwent a process of fragmentation, both downward and upward, as transnational organisations gained significance in policy-making and service delivery within governmental structures.

While Rhodes' concept of governance as "networks" has been influential, it has also drawn criticism for its potential limitations in fully capturing the complexity and diversity of policy processes. One primary criticism revolves around the notion that a strict adherence to the concept of governance as networks can obscure other significant forms of behaviour and policy processes, particularly hierarchical control structures. This critique, often referred to as the problem of "over-rigid flexibility" in network theories of governance, draws from the insights of scholars like Davies [69], Jessop [70], and Whitehead [71]. These scholars argue that while networks are undoubtedly a valuable lens through which to understand governance dynamics, an exclusive focus on networks might lead to an oversimplification of the policy-making process.

One of the key concerns raised by these critics is the potential exclusion of alternative governance forms and power structures that do not neatly fit into the network paradigm. In doing so, the network theory of governance may overlook important variations in how policies are formulated, implemented, and enforced. For instance, the continued existence of hierarchical control mechanisms within certain policy domains and geographical contexts challenges the notion that governance is exclusively network-driven. Moreover, a rigid conception of governance as networks can oversimplify the complexities of policy processes by downplaying the role of formal institutions, state agencies, and top-down decision-making. While networks certainly play a vital role in shaping contemporary governance, they coexist, and often interact, with more traditional governance structures. More specifically, the problem of over-rigid flexibility highlights the need for a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of governance. Rather than solely relying on a network-centric approach, scholars and policymakers should recognise the coexistence of diverse governance forms and acknowledge the variations that exist within different policy contexts and geographical regions. This perspective encourages a more comprehensive examination of the complex nature of governance, encompassing both networked interactions and hierarchical controls, to better inform policy analysis and decision-making.

An additional criticism in the discourse on governance aligns closely with the concerns raised about "over-rigid flexibility." This critique centres on the various forms of policymaking and implementation, specifically focusing on hierarchical partnership relations, wherein the policy process adheres to a clearly defined chain of command and allows minimal room for negotiation [69, 71]. This issue finds resonance in Jessop's [68, 70] concept of meta-governance,

which suggests that the state wields significant influence over the operational context of a network. These ideas bear resemblance to Lukes' [72] idea of the "third face of power," wherein the state possesses the capacity to shape the structure of a network. For instance, this can involve the state's ability to determine that only certain partnerships are permissible, preventing networks from forming autonomously and thus imposing hierarchical control from a distance. This criticism highlights a fundamental tension within governance theory: the interplay between centralised authority and decentralised collaboration. In some instances, policy processes may be characterised by a hierarchical approach, where decisions flow from a single authority without substantial input from networked actors. This top-down model, exemplified by hierarchical partnership relations, can limit the ability of network participants to engage in meaningful negotiation and influence the policy outcomes.

The concept of meta-governance, as articulated by Jessop, underscores the state's capacity to exert influence not only through direct intervention but also by shaping the overarching environment in which networks operate. This influence can manifest as regulatory constraints, structural requirements, or the imposition of specific governance frameworks, all of which serve to guide the behaviour of the so-called networked actors. On the other hand, Lukes' notion of the third face of power complements these arguments by emphasising the state's role in structuring governance arrangements. Rather than networks emerging organically and autonomously, the state can actively shape their formation and functioning. This strategic influence extends to the determination of whether partnerships or other forms of governance prevail, ultimately affecting the distribution of power and control within the policy landscape.

The criticism centred on hierarchical partnership relations and the state's meta-governance role underscores the multi-dimensional nature of governance dynamics. While networks offer a valuable framework for understanding contemporary governance, it is essential to recognise that governance processes can encompass a spectrum of power relationships, from hierarchical control to decentralised collaboration. Acknowledging the state's role in shaping these dynamics is pivotal in comprehending the intricate interplay between centralised authority and networked governance structures.

A more comprehensive critique of governance by Stephen Bell and Andrew Hindmoor [73] offers a distinctive perspective that challenges the prevalent notion of the hollowing out of the state previously mentioned. In their book, they assert the enduring and central role of states, primarily at the central or national government level, in the process of governance. While states do engage in collaborative relationships with various actors, Bell and Hindmoor contend that states remain the dominant force within these interactions. Their viewpoint bears similarities to Jessop's concept of meta-governance, which also emphasises the continued prominence of government [70]. Contrary to the idea that government has re-

treated from its central role in governance, Bell and Hindmoor argue that it has undergone a reconfiguration. In their perspective, governments have expanded their reach into a diverse array of policy areas by employing punitive measures and hierarchical solutions, particularly in response to issues that governments perceive as problematic or indicative of anti-social behaviour. This expansion of state power into individuals' lives, while paradoxical in the context of modernity's promise of greater freedom, underscores a significant shift in governance dynamics [15].

What is particularly noteworthy in Bell and Hindmoor's analysis is the utilisation of markets and civil society organisations as instruments to achieve policy outcomes. Rather than indicating a retreat of state involvement, this approach signifies a deliberate strategy to enhance governance. In this state-centric governance model, power and efficiency are intricately intertwined. Governments strategically leverage these non-state actors to achieve specific policy objectives, thereby reinforcing the state's pivotal role in shaping governance outcomes. In particular, Bell and Hindmoor's critique challenges the prevailing narrative of diminished state influence in governance. Instead, they emphasise and re-assert the adaptability and resilience of governments, which have evolved to utilise a broader toolkit of governance mechanisms, encompassing both punitive measures and collaborative approaches. This perspective sheds light on the evolving nature of governance in contemporary societies, where the state continues to be a dominant and dynamic actor in the pursuit of policy objectives.

The enduring significance of states and central governments serves as a compelling reminder to exercise caution when fully embracing the idea that governance operates exclusively through networks of asymmetrically powerful actors. It also highlights the inherently constructed nature of governance from a social-scientific perspective. This dual perspective on governance as both a "theoretical construct" and a "narrative descriptor" invites a reflexive moment that prompts us to engage in a broader discussion regarding the role of the social sciences in our quest to comprehend the world's complexities [15].

Mark Bevir and David Richards [74] have made noteworthy contributions by seeking to "decentre governance," situating it within specific political and party traditions. Within this framework, governance emerges as a concept that is constructed and shaped significantly by the narratives individuals craft about the challenges facing government in the context of modernity and their corresponding responses as policymakers. Importantly, these networks, which are often central to discussions of governance, are not just the result of social action but are also deeply influenced by the beliefs and traditions that provide the backdrop for such actions. These beliefs and traditions, in turn, are themselves influenced by social scientific understandings of the world, as articulated by Anthony Giddens [75]. In this respect, governance can be viewed as possessing a "social life" that transcends static

definitions or fixed structures. According to Bevir [12], "governance thus consists of a complex and continuous process of interpretation, conflict, and activity that produces ever-changing patterns of rule". The continued importance of states and central governments challenges us to re-evaluate the prevailing notions of governance as solely a product of networked relationships among powerful actors. Instead, it urges us to embrace a *reflexive* understanding of governance as a concept deeply intertwined with the narratives, traditions, and social scientific perspectives that shape it. Governance, in this perspective, is not a static construct but rather an evolving and dynamic phenomenon that continually adapts to the changing dynamics of the polity.

In the context of this paper, governance is understood as a conceptual framework that emphasises the ecological complexity of public policy [1] and significance of the amalgamation of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations in the administration of cultural policy as well as what O'Brien referred to as "the fragmentation of policymaking in modernity" [15]. The definition in question aligns closely with the conceptualisation of governance presented in Stoker's seminal works [8, 9, 76]. Stoker proposes an intriguing perspective, describing governance as an "organising framework" meticulously designed to facilitate the study of policy development and political engagement. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the evolving dynamics within the governing process, shedding light on its transformation over time. More importantly, this framework serves as a compass, guiding researchers toward areas of inquiry without being burdened by the constraints of historical narratives or specific theoretical implications. This framework assumes particular significance when contemplating the contemporary landscape of political science and its engagement with the construction of governance [15].

## 6.2. Cultural Governance

The notion of cultural governance embodies a wide array of approaches through which the domains of culture and governance intersect. Culture, in its multifaceted nature as discussed earlier, is inherently ambivalent, capable of representing various dimensions. It can signify both sensory experiences and symbolic meanings, encompass personal experiences or the broader symbolism associated with a way of life or its artefacts. Conversely, governance seems to offer a relatively straightforward definition, referring to the management, process, or conduct of governing, often involving the act of ordering, commanding, or directing. Indeed, cultural governance can assume several interpretations. It can signify the process of *governing* influenced or embedded within a cultural context, whereby culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the mechanisms of governance. Simultaneously, it can also denote the cultural attributes or characteristics inherent to governance itself, highlighting an aspect of governance specifically concerned with culture [77]. In essence, cultural

governance epitomises the intricate interplay between culture and governance, representing a fluid concept that resists being pinned down to a single, fixed denotation. Instead, it invites us to explore the dynamic and context-dependent nature of governance as it intersects with culture, emphasising that any understanding of this term is inherently tied to the specific social and practical circumstances in which it is employed.

The notion of cultural governance, however, holds a distinctive and relatively stable position within the specific historical context of neoliberalism and its subsequent consolidation and dominance in post-industrial capitalist societies since the 1980s. It is crucial to note that neoliberalism, despite its economic underpinnings, stands as a political project aimed at extracting value from economic processes by exerting influence over political systems and structures, thus transcending its mere economic framework [77]. The central argument put forth here posits that contemporary cultural policy emerges directly from this contextual backdrop. Rather than resolving the inherent definitional ambivalence associated with culture, contemporary cultural governance strategically mobilises this ambivalence. It does so within the overarching framework of neoliberalism, where cultural policy becomes a tool, an instrument, for advancing specific political and economic agendas. As such, cultural governance operates as an instrument through which political and economic forces assert their influence over the cultural [3, 16]. This approach recognises culture's inherent complexity and ambivalence as well as its instrumental role. It emphasises the critical role of cultural governance in shaping the socio-political landscape within contemporary societies, wherein culture becomes both a resource and a terrain of strategic action for political and economic agency [78, 79].

The emergence of instrumental approaches to the management of cultural resources and, indeed, cultural policy, is closely intertwined with the evolution of the commodification discourse in public policy [17]. This transformation in the treatment of culture as a resource finds its roots in the concept of cultural capital, which has played a pivotal role in advancing our understanding of the values inherent to culture. This concept of cultural capital encapsulates the idea that culture possesses intrinsic value that extends beyond its mere existence. It recognises that culture, in its various forms, holds the potential to enrich society in numerous ways, from fostering creativity and intellectual growth to contributing to social cohesion and economic vitality [80]. As such, cultural capital implies that culture is not merely a passive reservoir of historical artefacts and artistic creation; rather, it is a dynamic force that can be harnessed for various purposes, including social and economic development.<sup>4</sup> This shift in perspective

signifies a departure from viewing culture as a static and passive entity and highlights its active role as a valuable resource that can be strategically managed and leveraged for the betterment of society, or so it is thought.

It is interesting to note that there has been a veritable surge of fascination surrounding the “quantification” and “rationalisation” of culture. While traditionally associated with the field of Cultural Studies, the interest in cultural governance has now cast a wide net, ensnaring the attention of scholars across diverse disciplines, including those of accounting and auditing [82-84]. Cultural policy has morphed into an arena dominated by the perplexing quandary of how to quantify the elusive ambivalence of culture. This transformation has been ushered in by the longstanding evolution of governmental approaches to policymaking, with particular reverence to the evidence-based practices of audit and accounting [17, 18].

The challenge encountered here primarily revolves around the endeavour to operationalise culture as a measurable economic component within assessments of policy efficacy. This complex task has led to critical scrutiny, with scholars like Belfiore [85] contending that efforts to showcase the positive impacts of cultural policies in addressing the concerns of other policy domains have inadvertently engendered ever-mounting expectations that these policies are ultimately ill-equipped to fulfil. This somewhat pessimistic perspective gains further ground when we probe the measurements derived from the tenets of evidence-based policy within the cultural sector [17]. Attempting to quantify the value of culture within broader policy assessments has generated complex issues of measurement, leading to debates about the feasibility and practicality of demonstrating the definitive positive impacts of cultural policies on other policy sectors.

Beyond the inherent challenges of assessing the constituent elements of cultural policies lies a more complex dilemma: the attempt to assess the value or impact of cultural policies within the framework of broader agendas, such as social inclusion or economic development. This undertaking often necessitates the evaluation of these external agendas using criteria that may be fundamentally incongruent with the domain of culture itself. For instance, the yardstick for success in terms of social inclusion may not align seamlessly with the objectives of a cultural policy. Long and Bramham [86] have cogently argued that even within the sphere of social inclusion, it is feasible to identify a multitude of approaches and paradigms that can be employed to achieve the goals of inclusion through the utilisation of cultural policies. Notably, none of these approaches assesses the efficacy of these policies from a cultural policy standpoint; instead, they are scrutinised solely in the context of their instrumental contributions to the broader social inclusion agenda. Consequently, any evaluation of these policies assumes an inherently instrumental character, devoid of any substantive assessment of whether they genuinely qualify as cultural policies or merely mas-

4 In an article about the forms of capital, Pierre Bourdieu [81] explains: “Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers

entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.” (p. 243)

querade as substitutes for social inclusion policies. This intricate debate highlights the conundrum faced when attempting to evaluate cultural policies through the lens of external agendas.

The challenge of conducting assessments and evaluations that may not align appropriately with the essence of culture has triggered a profound debate about the very nature of cultural policy itself and its distinct existence, independent of the instrumental policy objectives pursued by governments [87, 88]. This quandary invites contemplation regarding whether culture possesses a meaningful and autonomous policy identity and, if so, how this identity can be authentically substantiated within the parameters of its own sectorial dynamics. At its core, this issue prompts us to question the essence and purpose of cultural policy. Is cultural policy merely an instrument for achieving wider societal goals, or does it hold intrinsic value and objectives unique to its own domain? Addressing these inquiries necessitates a deeper exploration of the nature of culture within the policy framework and the extent to which cultural policies should be assessed on their own terms, rather than through the lens of extraneous policy objectives. The quest to establish the meaningfulness and autonomy of cultural policy within its sectorial context constitutes a fundamental challenge in contemporary policy discourse. It entails not only redefining the role and scope of cultural policy but also shedding light on the intersection between culture and policy in the broader socio-political landscape. These ongoing debates form an integral part of the evolving narrative surrounding the role and identity of cultural policy in the modern governance paradigm.

Ahearne [89] sheds light on a crucial, albeit somewhat contentious, distinction between what he terms “explicit” and “implicit” cultural policy. This distinction, while valuable, presents certain challenges and nuances worth exploring in greater depth. Ahearne’s differentiation begins with explicit cultural policy, which pertains directly to culture and is articulated as such. An illustrative embodiment of this explicit approach can be found in the form of local cultural strategies, which are expressly designed to engage with and promote cultural development within specific geographic areas. These strategies manifest as overt and intentional efforts to nurture and enhance cultural aspects within communities, leaving no room for ambiguity in their purpose and objectives. Conversely, the concept of implicit cultural policy, where policy interventions affect culture in subtle, often unintended ways. He delineates this category as follows: “Within the domain of ‘implicit’ cultural policies, one might... distinguish between the unintended cultural side effects of various kinds of policy and those deliberate courses of action intended to shape cultures but which are not expressly thematised as such”. Herein lies a profound complexity. Implicit cultural policies encompass a spectrum of influence, from those policies with inadvertent cultural consequences to those intentionally shaping cultures without being explicitly defined as cultural policy. In fact, Ahearne’s discussion prompts a fundamental

question: how do we discern a cultural policy when it lacks explicit ‘thematisation’, and where should we delineate the boundary between policies under consideration and those outside our purview? These questions present a challenging analytical puzzle, as policies of varying domains may contain implicit cultural elements, as demonstrated by diverse studies, including those examining social and welfare policy, economic policy, and foreign policy [90].

Indeed, the delineation between explicit and implicit cultural policy is not always clear-cut, making it essential to develop refined criteria for inclusion in our analysis. Explicit cultural policies are readily identifiable because they overtly target cultural aspects and are typically expressed as such. However, implicit cultural policies operate in a subtler manner, often concealed within the broader context of non-cultural policy domains. As a result, recognising and categorising these implicit policies can be elusive. The challenge of distinguishing cultural policies from their implicit counterparts becomes particularly relevant when studying various policy domains. Social and welfare policy, for instance, can inadvertently shape cultural norms and values through the services and support it provides to different demographic groups. Economic policies, on the other hand, may inadvertently influence cultural sectors, such as the arts or heritage preservation, by allocating resources or promoting certain industries. Even foreign policy decisions can carry implicit cultural dimensions, as diplomatic relations and international engagements may impact cross-cultural interactions and perceptions. Nisbett [90, 91] especially highlights the extent to which implicit cultural policies permeate diverse policy domains, emphasising the need for a broader and more inclusive perspective in policy analysis. These implicit policies often operate in the background, outside the immediate scope of cultural discussions, making their identification and evaluation essential for a comprehensive understanding of their impact on society.

The concept of policy attachment, on the other hand, explains how culture can intertwine with other facets of public policy Gray [17, 92]. Along with Ahearne’s insights on implicit and explicit cultural policy, this concept suggests the dynamic and interconnected nature of cultural policy, challenging the notion that it exists in isolation or solely within the realm of individuals with culture in their job titles. It also invites us to recognise that the outcomes expected from policy implementation may not always have a direct and immediately discernible impact on culture, though they may indeed influence it in anticipated and unforeseen ways. Consequently, evaluating whether a particular policy falls within the purview of culture necessitates a meticulous examination, as cultural policy’s reach extends beyond its traditional boundaries, demanding a broader perspective on its complex interactions with other policy domains.

### 6.3. Cultural Administration

The concept of cultural administration has existed for as



long as governments have sought to engage with matters of culture and the arts. Throughout history, whenever a state has made the decision to intervene in cultural affairs, administrators have played a pivotal role in planning and executing these interventions [37]. However, a distinct understanding of cultural administration emerged concurrently with the formalisation of the notion of cultural policy. In the earliest cultural policy declarations, a glaring issue surfaced—a critical gap existed in the qualifications of those occupying key positions in the realm of cultural affairs: “in most countries highly responsible posts in the field of cultural affairs are only too often held by artists without any administrative ability or inclination, or else, on the contrary, by civil servants who are entirely unaware of the particular problems facing artists and those who promote cultural activities” [93]. This recognition pointed to a pressing need for a new breed of cultural administrators who could bridge the gap between the artistic and administrative dimensions of cultural policymaking. Over time, this realisation paved the way for the “professionalisation” of cultural administration—a shift that sought to cultivate individuals with an understanding of both the cultural and administrative aspects of the field. These cultural administrators would not only appreciate the creative and artistic aspects but would also possess the necessary administrative and bureaucratic acumen to navigate the complexities of policy planning, implementation, and evaluation in the cultural sphere.

These administrators were envisioned as individuals who could seamlessly blend a profound appreciation for the arts with a steadfast commitment to the principles of bureaucracy (though in most cases the bureaucratic virtue has been the most important). This dual expertise was regarded as the linchpin for ensuring the coherence and consistency necessary to implement and uphold the mandates of cultural policy. In this regard, the role of cultural administrators falls under the broader category of what Pierre Bourdieu [94] referred to as “cultural intermediaries.” This encompassing category includes professionals engaged in various “occupations involving [cultural] presentation and representation,” “cultural production and organization,” and “all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services” [94, 95]. These cultural intermediaries, as defined by Maguire and Matthews [96], assert their “professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural domains”. They wield the power to construct and shape the perceived value of cultural goods, services, ideas, and behaviours by framing how others engage with them. In doing so, cultural intermediaries play a pivotal role in influencing and directing public orientations toward these cultural elements, ultimately determining what is considered legitimate, desirable, and worthy within the cultural domain.

In the context of cultural policy development, cultural administrators embody the essence of these so-called cultural intermediaries. They navigate the delicate balance between their appreciation for artistic and cultural endeavours and their

adeptness in the intricate workings of bureaucracy. In this capacity, they serve as the conduits through which cultural policy is translated into practical action, ensuring that the principles and objectives of cultural governance are consistently upheld. By leveraging their expertise and understanding of both the cultural and administrative spheres, cultural administrators contribute to the construction of value within the cultural domain, shaping the perceptions and preferences of the public and stakeholders alike.

According to Rosenstein, it is important to distinguish cultural administration from other forms of cultural intermediation, primarily due to its distinct entanglement with cultural authority, facilitated by its bureaucratic mandate for consistency. “Bureaucratic procedures,” she remarks, “embody an authority that is presented as neutral and disinterested” [37]. Max Weber [97] elucidated the defining principle of bureaucracy as “the abstract regularity of the exercise of authority, which is a result of the demand for ‘equality before the law... [and] of the horror of ‘privilege’””. In contrast to other roles within cultural intermediation, cultural administrators, while possessing cultural expertise, often distance themselves from exercising explicit cultural authority. Instead, they may even disavow such a role.

The distinctive characteristic of an administrator’s relationship to cultural authority lies not within their personal identity but rather within the procedural framework they operate within. This contrast becomes particularly evident when comparing cultural administrators to roles such as cultural managers and directors; these often derive their status from their personal aesthetic and cultural judgments, along with their ability to legitimise, institutionalise, and promote these judgments through their exercise of cultural authority. Their positions often hinge on their capacity to influence and shape cultural narratives and preferences based on their own perspectives. Cultural administrators, on the other hand, adhere to a more procedural form of cultural governance, emphasising the neutral and standardised implementation of policies and regulations. They channel cultural authority through the bureaucratic machinery itself, eschewing the exercise of explicit cultural judgments in favour of maintaining an appearance of procedural fairness and equality. In doing so, they navigate the delicate balance between cultural expertise and bureaucratic impartiality, embodying a unique relationship with cultural authority within the cultural intermediation framework.

## 7. Conclusions

This paper has explored the nexus of governance, discourse, and cultural policy. Through a critical examination of foundational concepts and theoretical frameworks, we have unravelled the complexities inherent in understanding cultural policy within the context of contemporary *governmental* and *governing* practices. Central to our discussion has been the re-conceptualisation of policy as a discursive construct,

challenging traditional views that confine policy analysis to technical and administrative domains.

This paper suggested a perspective that situates policy within broader discursive formations, highlighting the dynamic interplay between policy and politics as a field of contestation. Rather than restricting policy to a narrow definition as a mere regulatory tool, this perspective places emphasis on the wider implications of policymaking within the context of cultural governance. Departing from a limited focus on management and regulation, this perspective acknowledges the inherently political nature of cultural policy, characterised by competing discourses, ideologies, and interests. Consequently, it transcends the traditional perception of cultural policy as solely an administrative concern under governmental oversight, recognising its role as a site of contestation and negotiation. From the historical instrumentalisation of culture for governance purposes to contemporary debates surrounding cultural democracy and identity politics, cultural policy emerges as a crucial arena for shaping societal values and norms.

Furthermore, our engagement with the concept of governmentality has enriched our understanding of the productive nature of power and the ways in which discourses shape societal practices and meanings. By reconceptualising governance as a discursive construct, we have moved beyond conventional understandings of policy as a mere expression of authority to a potential force in managing and governing collective identities and social structures. In light of these insights, this paper contributes to ongoing debates within cultural policy studies and governance theory, offering a comprehensive understanding of the discursive dynamics that underpin policy processes. By reframing cultural governance within the context of discourse, this paper highlights the importance of critical engagement with policy processes. As we navigate the challenges of governance and policy-making in an increasingly interconnected world, it is imperative to remain vigilant of the discursive forces that shape our societies and to strive for more inclusive and equitable policy outcomes.

## Abbreviations

OED	Oxford English Dictionary
NPM	New Public Management

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## Biography



**Aziz Qaissi** holds the position of a Ph.D. researcher at Ibn Tofail University, where he served as a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts. Currently, he serves as a teaching assistant at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (The Faculty of Governance, Economics and Social Sciences, Rabat, Morocco), where he teaches Academic Writing and Research Methodology. His research interests, informed by academic training in Cultural Studies, focus on the critical inquiry of cultural policy discourses and the intersection of culture and governance. He specialises in critical policy analysis and critical cultural policy analysis, examining the underlying power dynamics and socio-political implications within cultural policy frameworks.

## Research Field

**Aziz Qaissi:** Cultural Studies, Cultural Policy Analysis, Critical Policy Analysis