

Situating Local Cultural Policy within International “Culture Circuits”

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Abstract

This paper will present a case for understanding the contemporary cultural policy field as defined by global ‘cultural circuits’— vehicles, which transfer, exchange, export and impose key cultural policy ideas and personnel in and on local, national and regional cultural policy frameworks. While to a certain extent cultural policy has always been developed with reference to key hegemonic cultural policy models, such as, arm’s length funding, the contemporary development of cultural policy is influenced as never before by the international circulation of a few key theoretical models upon which, according to their proponents, cultural policy should be based. I will argue that in order to understand the interconnecting discourses, rationales, contradictions and consequences of local cultural policy frameworks, it is necessary to examine their intersection with key international influences and exchanges. There have been many comparative investigations of national cultural policies and infrastructures. However, there have been no comparative studies of cultural policies, which analyse the international exchange, and export of discourses and personnel (‘culture circuits’) and their intersection with, and influence on, national, regional and local cultural policy networks and initiatives. Given the increasing importance of cultural considerations in supranational policy frameworks and international agreements, it is of considerable concern that there has been little systematic, detailed analysis of the nature and consequences of the international networks of discourses and personnel within which national, regional and local cultural policy agendas, are as never before enmeshed. This paper will examine in detail the mechanisms of: export and distribution; affirmation and verification; and, the local interpretation and application of three of the, arguably, most influential notions in contemporary cultural policy, these are, ‘the creative industries’, ‘the creative class’ and ‘the creative city’. In order to do this the particular mechanisms of import, local interpretation and application will be compared in local governmental contexts in Australia, America and Canada.

Keywords

Cultural circuits, national; regional and local cultural policy frameworks; international influences and exchanges