Municipal Cultural Systems in Canada and Québec, Systemic Modeling and Cultural Planning

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Abstract

During the last decade in Québec as in Canada municipal cultural policy, local or regional, has been considered as a strategic planning tool as well as an instrument for municipal management.

One could define cultural planning as a strategic and integrated planning, implicating cultural resources (human resources as well as cultural facilities and various cultural leisure activities etc..) in order to achieve urban and community development. Cultural planning in Canada, during the last decade, helped to bring back cultural issues on the municipal agenda.

As a concept, cultural planning is larger than working out a cultural policy. Cultural planning evolves as a process aiming at the cultural, urban and community development of a municipality. It is a strategic planning process but starting at the grass roots. Under such circumstances all ressources rally such a cohesive urban development. Within that systemic approach the working out of a cultural policy is one of the cultural planning tools. Cultural planning does envelop cultural policy approach in a larger framework of reference.

- Research objective or questions:

Making reference to the data and results of our last four years of research in Québec and in Canada, we will produce the modelling of a typical municipal cultural system in Québec and Canada.

- Research methodology and theoretical perspectives

What is a municipal cultural system in Canada and Québec? We will show that such a system is a lay out or configuration of variables normally called: independant, intervening and dependant variables. But here we will make reference to the soft systems methodology of Peter

B.Checkland. In that perspective those variables will be called: input variables, transformation processes (the conversion of input to output), and output variables of the system.

Those input variables have a long term impact on the cultural action system. They help to define or identify flow of resources, energy or information, to define room or space for actors or stakeholders' play, to define transformation processes or conversion of inputs to outputs, to define decision-making levels.

Thoses transformation processors as «modus operandi» or operating mean between independant variables (or inputs) and dependant variables as selected by stakeholders (or outputs)   are playing the role of intervening variables. Those intervening variables constitute the necessary transformation process (black box) between entrance points and exit points of the system (municipal cultural system).

Finally a fourth type of variable must be taken into account : the feedbacks variables, a kind of information about the performance of the cultural system itself, coming out of the system and returning to the entrance as a new information allowing the system to autoregulate itself and become an evolving repeat business.

- Main findings or conclusions

We will show that various stakeholders can be at the origin of a cultural planning process in a municipality: artists, cultural associations leaders, facilities managers, cultural actors at the local level, citizens, etc.

Diversity of stakeholders means pluralistic demands, needs, and expectations vis-à-vis the delivery services cultural system.

Artists want financial and technical support among other things. Associations' leaders want professional and technical support; citizens want various cultural activities and programs. Facilities managers need quality entertaining program planning. We are confronted to various transformation processes between diversity of demands and outcomes.

The municipal cultural delivery system should answer to various functions: access, training or initiation, support, promotion etc in order to be a sufficient public service to the citizens. Those various functions need a lot of partners to be performed: volunteers, human ressources, working comittees, table of consultation and sharing of knowledge between partners, joint venture with private group. Stronger the links are between partners in the cultural system better will be the resuts or the products. We must know what the rules are of that delivery cultural system, in order to better manage the flow of those valuable ressources. Among them are the cultural policies and cultural plans. Finally a municipality must make the assessment of those operating systems in order to match the new demands and citizens 'needs. Systemic approach is critical of traditional planning methods trying to engineer change through top-down models.

Keywords
Municipal cultural systems, soft systems,

Introduction to a Systemic Approach

Local municipalities, regional municipalities and urban communities as levels of governance are geographically and socially a better location for proximity interventions, being there more efficient and more able to counteract the damages to social cohesion, which are affecting our societies and mostly our cities.

It is worth mentioning that in Canada the municipal government is a delegation of power of the provincial jurisdiction. Municipalities are the creatures of the provinces. Moreover limited capacity at the local level to address complex social, economic and ecological

challenges is a relevant problem in Canada. Let think for instance to the fiscal powers in Canada and the unfairness to the municipalities. On the other hand, at the community level, many innovative experiments take place.

Community indentity and perception of the quality of life at the local level are becoming more and more important for populations. Cultural policies, in that context, are much more strategical, especially those devoted to localities and regions. The local governments being those nearest to populations and to problems derived from the damaging to social cohesion, the municipal level has henceforth to be considered as a strategic level of intervention.

If the national or provincial cultural policies stow themselves to macrosocial aspects of identity, they do contribute very few things to the manifestation of local identities. The municipal cultural policies are contributors to them. And local community governance, capable of mobilizing resources and energies across the public, private and voluntary sectors, seems to emerge. But as Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson indicated some years ago, the basic challenge is the increasing social, spatial and cultural segregation. « Can cultural planners and policy makers encourage (...) disadvantaged social groups to demonstrate the relevance of their ideas, aspirations, skills and resources to the city's overall development? »[1]

The Earth Summit underlined in 1992 that « Local level strategies and plans have proved far more successful than those at the national levels in terms of making direct impact» (Kleberg, Ed. 1998)

Situation in Québec and Canada

It was the policy of the provincial government which gave in 1992 the major orientations in the field of culture, especially those concerning local and regional municipalities, about the access to and the participation of citizens to cultural life. These orientations have had implications at the local and regional levels.

In Québec were found in 2001 85 municipalities (73 local and 12 regional) which have approved a cultural policy (these municipalities totalize the majority of the Québec population; 33 other municipalities (15 local and 18 regional) were going to do the same shortly. In the coming months or years, Québec was to profit of 118 local or regional cultural policies. This was true before the amalgamation process launched in 2002 by the Québec government.

Obviously forced amalgamations will change the figures about those municipal cultural policies. Sooner or later nearly thirty municipal cultural policies should vanish because as much as thirty cities having passed such a policy have been amalgamated.

Finally, at the end of the process, the number of cities with a policy will go from 75 to 66, on the other hand the number of regional municipalities with such a policy will be around 41. So we can say that finally 107 local and regional municipalities in Québec will have a cultural policy (before and without amalgamations one could foresee 118 or 120 policies). As a matter of fact, in march 2004, there are 49 local policies approved by local councils and 25 regional policies (total: 74).

It must be underlined that in Québec the amount of municipal cultural policies has been multiplied by 14 between 1990 and 2001.

In Canada according to Cardinal and Baeker (MCPP : Municipal Cultural Planning Project) we can find ,at municipal level, four broad categories of cultural plans and policies : single issue policy (art, museums), negotiated agreements (service agreements, facility operation agreements), arts and culture components within larger plans (official plans, community strategic plan, leisure strategies), and comprehensive cultural plans. Another category is mentioned by Cardinal and Baeker : incremental approach. Incrementalism seems to be for some cities more in keeping with the pragmatic culture of local government than the more formal policy models imported from senior levels of government.

In Québec province we find all those categories, but the most current one is by far the cultural policy i.e a comprehensive cultural plan. In Québec most of those municipal cultural policies or comprehensive cultural plans are complemented by cultural action plans. The cultural policies documents being more steering and orienting papers, and the action plans being more listing of actions implementing the objectives coming from the policy. For instance here is the conceptuel framework of the content of such a cultural policy, coming from a raw model such as city of Longueuil (before amalgamation).

Figure 1 : Conceptuel framework of the content of a cultural policy, Longueuil case study

VARIABLES	comprehensive cultural policy content **adopted in 2001**
CIVIC MISSIONS	Municipality cultural leadership To preserve and to bring out the value of local cultural and heritage assets Sense of belonging Quality of life Cultural education
VALUES	Access to culture Fairness and right to culture Cultural identity Quality of cultural intervention Recognition Freedom of expression and creativity
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	The city is willing to carry out its energy and its leadership in the cultural field. The city is willing to maintain its role in the cultural field. To recognise culture as an economic and urban development factor To make sure to offer services matching the citizens needs in the cultural field To recognise or create cultural development organisations, giving them specific mandate, and guarantee of a suitable support
CULTURAL SECTORS	Live theatres and performing arts Visual arts Litterature Heritage
CULTURAL FUNCTIONS	To develop To give access to arts and culture Education and training Support developments to arts and culture Decentralisation To concert To present, to produce (e.g. theatre operators) To inform about arts and culture To promote Preservation of heritage and planning
CULTURAL FACILITIES	Existing Arts and cultural venues Foreseen Arts and cultural venues A brand new central library A brand new cultural community center

Cf. Stéphanie Laquerre and Michel de la Durantaye , Society and Leisure, Vol.26.,1, 2003, PUQ

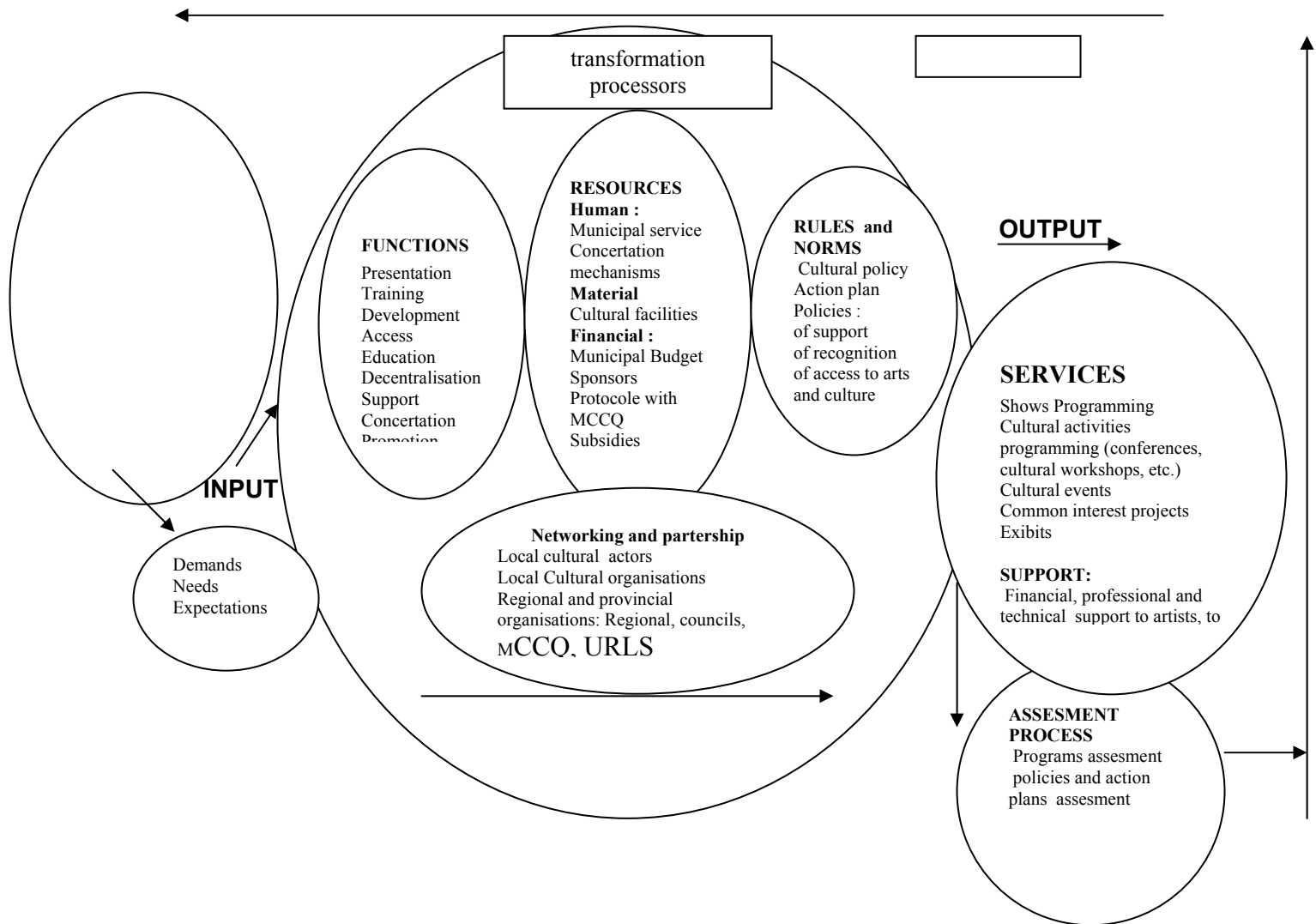## Localism and Regionalism : A More Holistic Way

According to Cardinal and Baeker (2001) the context in which municipal cultural directors and elected officials make decisions and offer leadership is more complex, less able to be managed and understood in traditional planning and public policy terms. Cultural

directors must build stronger links with other areas of municipal activity, such as social services delivery, health promotion, recreation and leisure services, economic development, tourism strategies, that until recently were seen to be irrelevant to cultural development. Indeed that relationship between culture and development is a complex one. Integrating culture into other areas of public concern is not obvions. Devolution of more responsibilities to the local and regional levels is required. Horizontal approach is relevant. It seems to them that there is growing recognition that these areas of municipal planning and responsibility cannot be approached independantly. « Cultural directors want a more holistic way of approaching collaboration in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes » they said. Our own researches bring us to the same conclusion : under such circumstances, a systemic model approach would be relevant. Outcomes and outputs are important in a systemic model, as well as inputs, demands and needs coming from the stakeholders of the system. So Cardinal and Baeker, refering to their research report about MCPP[2] : Municipal Cultural Planning Project, present the two most often-voiced needs of the MCPP participant cities : having information (about best practices, about policies and programs, about case studies and theoretical frameworks) and access to information (e.g. knowledge base), and having tools to assist in decision-making (shared with broader networks of elected officials or cultural directors). That means better links between knowledge exchange and training and human resource development.[3]

Levels of Governance and Amalgamation Process: A New Regionalism

In Québec, during that post- amalgamation period, other strategic and systemic concerns come from ex-local municipalities now called boroughs or « arrondissements» in the new amalgamated entity. Those boroughs, as local civic entities, need to work with one or more large urban centres as well as small hamlets within the administrative confines of the same new city. Wether elected people like it or not those boroughs will have to participate in a new regionalism. This regionalism is a must and will take the shape and form of inter-municipal cooperation among such a number (N) of autonomous or amalgamated local units within a region. The regional level of governance will become more and more strategic level in such a systemic context. In Québec, according to the new law number 9 this regional cooperation will concern the new «agglomération» wich is a large regional urban area, a kind of conurbation. Wether or not the «de - amalgamation» process in Québec succeed and where it will succeed, this new regionalism, this regional cooperation, will be inevitable. This inter-municipal cooperation among boroughs or ex-local municipalities will be necessary. And this perception of that necessity comes from an holistic and systemic approach in municipal affairs, in a context of economic globalization and larger networking. We must recognize that effective cultural strategies must be scale-specific. In other words different kinds of policies, plans and programs are needed at different scales of activity.[4] Policy assumptions are not necessarily tranferable from one level of governance to another (e.g.delineation of artistic and cultural disciplines from national to local context, distinction between professionnal and amateur activity, judgements about artistic excellence...)

Figure 2 : Modeling of a municipal cultural system

transformation
processors

OUTPUT

INPUT

FUNCTIONS

Presentation
Training
Development
Access
Education
Decentralisation
Support
Concertation
Promotion

RESOURCES
Human :
Municipal service
Concertation
mechanisms
Material
Cultural facilities
Financial :
Municipal Budget
Sponsors
Protocole with
MCCQ
Subsidies

**RULES and
NORMS**
 Cultural policy
Action plan
Policies :
of support
of recognition
of access to arts
and culture

SERVICES

Shows Programming
Cultural activities
programming (conferences,
cultural workshops, etc.)
Cultural events
Common interest projects
Exibits

SUPPORT:
 Financial, professional and
technical support to artists, to

Demands
Needs
Expectations

Networking and partership
Local cultural actors
Local Cultural organisations
Regional and provincial
organisations: Regional, councils,
MCCQ, URLS

**ASSESMENT
PROCESS**
 Programs assesment
 policies and action
plans assesment

Cf. Stéphanie Laquerre and Michel de la Durantaye , Society and Leisure, Vol.26.,1,
2003, PUQ

Modeling of a Municipal Cultural System

A cultural system is a configuration state of variables or factors (figures 2, 3, 4, 5).
Various stakeholders and actors play in the municipality field: artists, cultural
organisations leaders, partners, cultural facility managers, cultural actors, citizens,
audiences, participants, etc...

Those different clienteles do not have same demands, same needs, same expectations
from the municipal cultural service. Artists will need financial and technic support;
organisations leaders will need expertise services, citizens will need diversified cultural
activities, cultural facility managers will want programs of quality presentations and
shows. So, between demands, expectations, needs and results, different means of
transformation exist.

Municipal service delivery must meet and fulfill such a function : presentation, training,development,access,education,decentralisation,support,concertation,promotion,initiation, etc.. in order to play its role of public service to citizens.

All those functions cannot be fullfilled without help. So the municipal service needs human resources, working comittees and tables of concerting partners. Physical and material resources are also needed. Because a city willing to offer presentations and shows, classes and workshops, exhibitions, etc..need to have various venues where to present all that and meet the demand.

Clearly a city cannot have a direct intervention concerning all services or activities it is offering on its territory. Indeed a municipality should work in partnerships with different stakeholders or actors. Those partnerships will help the city to fulfill his duties and cultural functions in a cultural system that works.

Major players in such a cultural system, like a presenter, or an organisation offering workshops, a regional cultural council, or the ministry itself, can help the municipal cultural system to better perform, bringing expertise, workforce, or subsidy.

The strength of cultural system lies partly in the networking among different organisations and institutions in order to better answer to the needs and expectations of players and clients of the system.

More the linkages are strong among them more satisfying the results will be. Rules and norms are necessary for the better working of such a system. Cultural policies adopted by municipal councils become a tool and a framework for the municipal service and staff.

In the cultural sector, it could be naturally a cultural policy or plan, but also a policy of recognition and support for the cultural organisations, in the community, it could be a presentation and access policy, an heritage policy, an exhibition policy, a literacy and reading policy, etc..

Those policies must be matched by an action plan that would specify more in details actions to be done, agenda and deadlines, and available resources, and responsibles of implementation. All those tools and means must combine to reach satisfying results for various stakeholders of the cultural system.

Another part of the systemic model is the notion of feedback, follow up and asessment. A municipality must always ask questions about the results of its process. The city must be assessing and must review its ways of doing things, if the city wants to answer, in a suitable manner, needs of citizens

The input variables have a long term impact on the cultural action system. They help to define or identify flow of resources, energy or information, to define room or space for actors or stakeholders' play, to define transformation processes or conversion of inputs to outputs, to define decision-making levels.

The transformation processors as «modus operandi» or operating mean between independant variables (or inputs) and dependant variables as selected by stakeholders (or outputs) are playing the role of intervening variables. Those intervening variables constitute the necessary transformation process (black box) between entrance points and exit points of the system (municipal cultural system).

Finally a fourth type of variable must be taken into account : the feedbacks variables, a kind of information about the performance of the cultural system itself, coming out of the
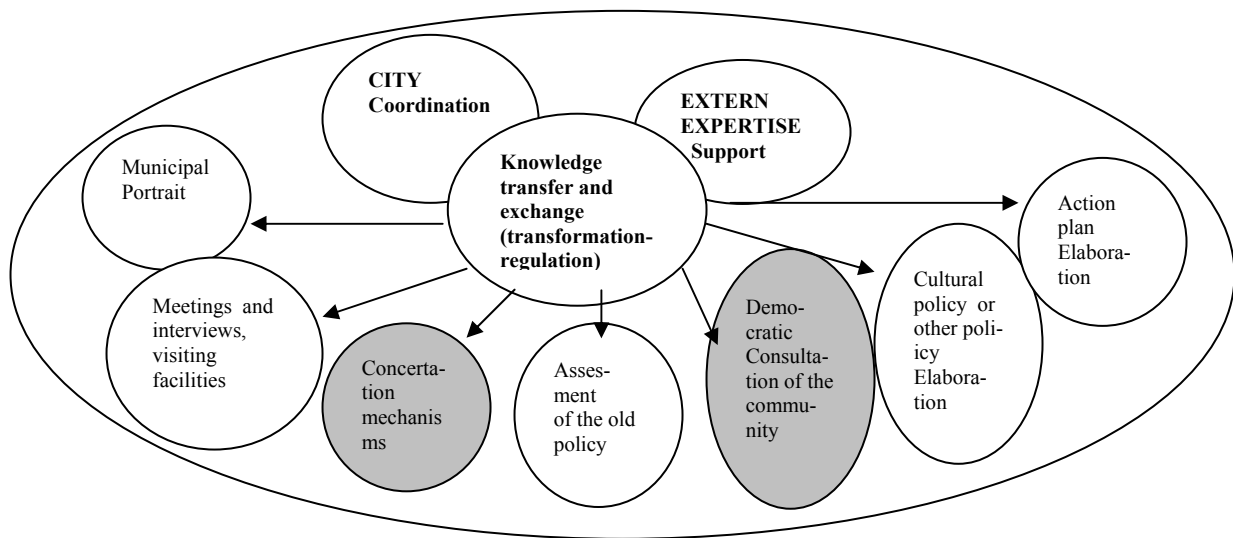
system and returning to the entrance as a new information allowing the system to autoregulate itself and become an evolving repeat business.

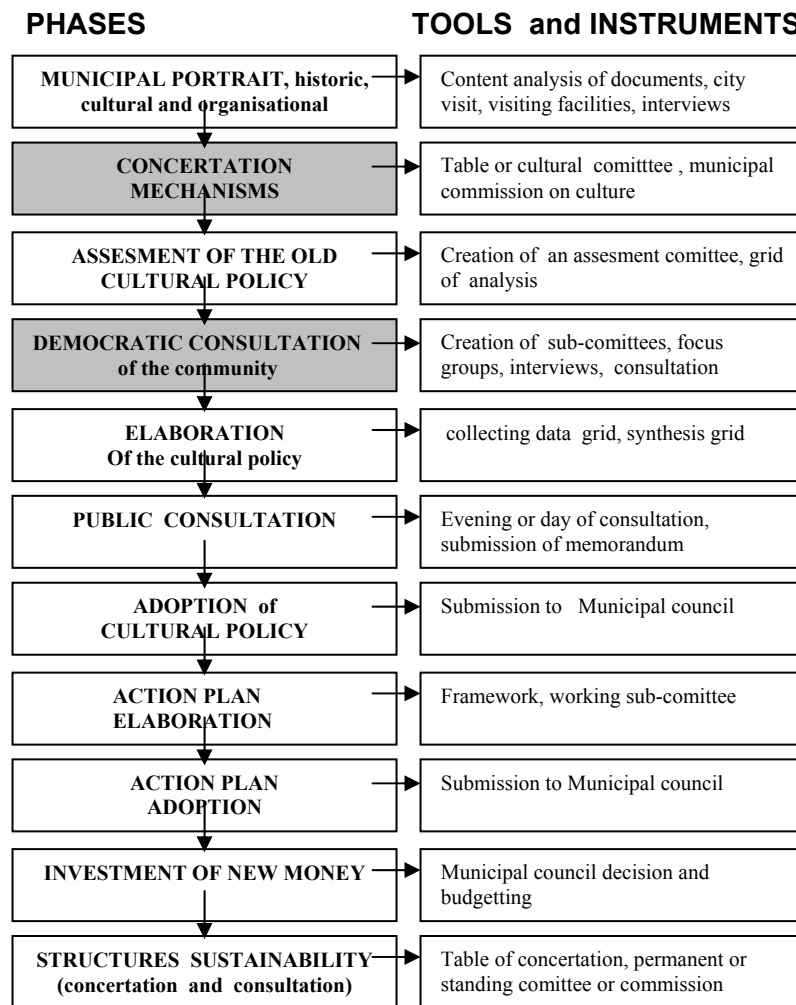**Figure 3 : analytic and planning model of cultural system**
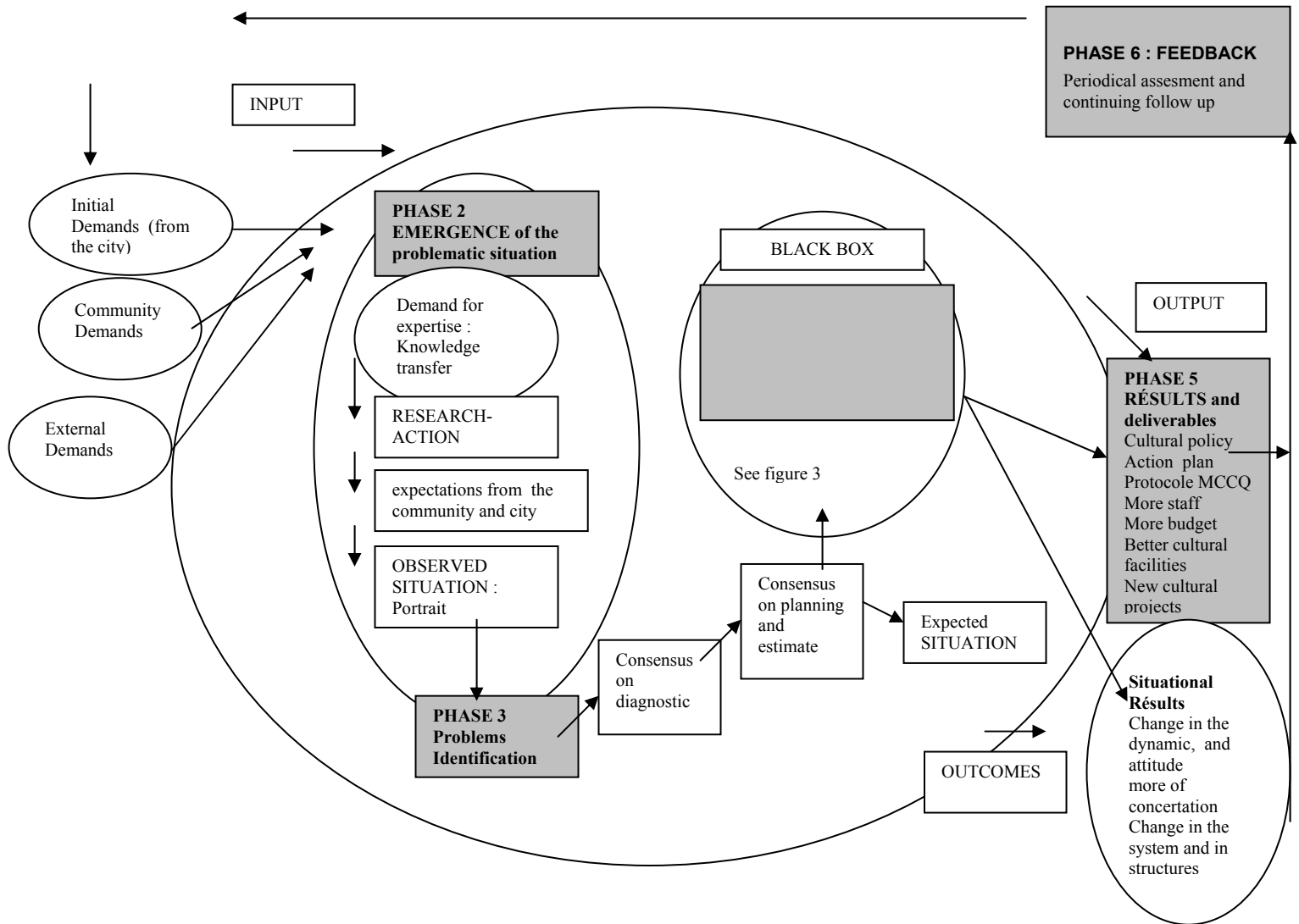
Figure 4 : Phase 4 : Solutions (means selected by consensus)

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Figure 5: Elaboration process of a cultural policy according to analytic and planning model of cultural system

PHASES	TOOLS and INSTRUMENTS
MUNICIPAL PORTRAIT, historic, cultural and organisational	Content analysis of documents, city visit, visiting facilities, interviews
CONCERTATION MECHANISMS	Table or cultural comitttee , municipal commission on culture
ASSESMENT OF THE OLD CULTURAL POLICY	Creation of an assesment comittee, grid of analysis
DEMOCRATIC CONSULTATION of the community	Creation of sub-comittees, focus groups, interviews, consultation
ELABORATION Of the cultural policy	collecting data grid, synthesis grid
PUBLIC CONSULTATION	Evening or day of consultation, submission of memorandum
ADOPTION of CULTURAL POLICY	Submission to Municipal council
ACTION PLAN ELABORATION	Framework, working sub-comittee
ACTION PLAN ADOPTION	Submission to Municipal council
INVESTMENT OF NEW MONEY	Municipal council decision and budgetting
STRUCTURES SUSTAINABILITY (concertation and consultation)	Table of concertation, permanent or standing comittee or commission

Cf. Stéphanie Laquerre and Michel de la Durantaye , Society and Leisure, Vol.26.,1, 2003, PUQ

One can define municipal cultural policy as follows :

« A cultural policy is the set of premises , axioms, foundations , orientations of a community, concerning cultural matters. Also it is a tool that the community wants to use in order to reach his expectations in this field. » [5]

We define municipal cultural policy as follows :

« Municipal cultural policy , in the field of arts, heritage and culture, comprises public willingness, general purposes, global orientations , great shared values, great civic missions culture driven, strategies and relevant intervening means. They stipulate operating principles, administrative rules and management processes.. All that in good harmony with municipal. Council goals » [6]

An action plan is defined as follows :

« An action plan is based on specific objectives targeted for a defined period of time, with dealines, matched with actions planned in order to reach those objectives.It comprises various resources necessary to get the job done.. Action plan presents concrete gestures to do with whom in order to reach general and specific objectives of the policy » [7]

Framework of Analysis : Cultural System Analysis and Planning Model

This framework introduces systemic model used by us. We start the model with an initial cultural situation. This model is developed in six phases. Phase one is putting the cultural demand on the municpal agenda.It is a starting point. Step two is about the emerging cultural situation : expectations from stakeholders and civic mandate. Phase three is a process of voicing about issues completed by a decision making process. Step four is implementation of decisions and solutions. Finally it is a feedback process.

The first step is about demands for transformation of a cultural situation. That means setting the municipal agenda concerning those cultural municipal issues. These demands are coming from cultural milieu, mobilizing itself behind such issues.

During phase two those receiving civic mandate from the city to bring solutions to the demanding situation, here the research-action team from university, must find the equilibrium among demands coming from the stakeholders. Phase two includes the descriptive picture of the municipal cultural situation and players. This picture could be an historic one, as well as an organisational, a cultural and a touristic description of the demanding situation.

Step three is a diagnostic process. Researchers here must confront all points of view from stakeholders on issues and demands.They try to reach consensus among municipal officers and other community resources on the proposed disagnostic and ways and means to solve the problems. At this moment the researchers have a mediator role, they have explain and convince stakeholders to adopt a problem solving position.

Phase four is implementation process of democratic solutions. At this moment a partnership process is set up in order to harmonize democratic position of implementation team. This bridging structure is a decision process at the implementation level. Around the table should seat elected people, municipal officers, artists, leaders of various associations of volonteers and local and regional institutions. Together they have to build a common vision and a term of reference. This concertation structure could be a municipal commission, a cultural comittee, a table of concertation, etc... There a knowledge sharing and transfer is possible between elected people and officers, and researchers. There should be a moment where we ask people for their point of view and when we consult them in order to get legitimate positions. It should be a democratic process. It is a time for empowerment of various stakeholders concerning the new policy.

Phase five is a result analysis period related to the problem solving process. If results are relevant and fill the gap between expected situation and abserved situation we can conclude that the black box (means of transformation) has done the job.

The sixth step is feedback process. Feedbacks help to modulate new positions to adopt receiving response from the system about implemented solutions. This phase is too often neglected by municipalities.

Conclusion

Cultural planning concept is comprehensive notion . It includes cultural policy and plan. Systemic approach to cultural development in cities is necessary to best understand configurations of complex variables and processes, with a lot of players and stakeholders implicated. More and more horizontal and vertical methodology and tools, like soft systems methodology and cultural policies or family policies will be necessary in a near future to achieve the civic mission of municipalities.

Notes

[1] Bianchini, Franco and Parkinson, Michael. (1993), Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration : The West European Experience, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

[2] Their research involved 25 Canadian municipalities (including Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montréal and Halifax).

[3] Baeker, Greg, and Cardinal, Donna (2001), «Beyong Garrets and Silos» : Bringing Communities Together Through

Cultural Planning ?, in Department of Canadian Heritage, Strategic Research and Analysis, SRA's Tables d'Hôte :

Building Sustainable Communities : Culture and Social Cohesion, Reader #7, Ottawa., pp. 3-25

[4] Cf. Idem.

[5] Our free translation ,LES ARTS ET LA VILLE, (1996). *Actes de colloque, Les politiques culturelles : De l'intention au constat.* Lévis – 25 et 26 octobre 1996, Laval, p.7.

[6] DE LA DURANTAYE, Michel, (2002). Les politiques culturelles municipales locales et régionales au Québec. In LEMIEUX, Denise, (sous la direction de), *Traité de la culture, Le Québec. Son patrimoine. Ses modes de vie et ses productions culturelles*, Sainte-Foy : Éditions PUL-IQRC, p. 1011.

[7] Our free translation ,LES ARTS ET LA VILLE, (1996). Actes de colloque, Les politiques culturelles : De l'intention au constat Lévis – 25 et 26 octobre 1996, Laval, p.7.

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