International Journal of Cultural Policy

Democratic cultural policy: democratic forms and policy consequences

Clive Gray [a]

[a] Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick,
Coventry, CV4 7HS, UK

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Democratic cultural policy: democratic forms and policy consequences

Clive Gray*

Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7HS, UK

The forms that are adopted to give practical meaning to democracy are assessed to identify what their implications are for the production of public policies in general and cultural policies in particular. A comparison of direct, representative, democratic elitist and deliberative versions of democracy identifies clear differences between them in terms of policy form and democratic practice. Further elaboration of these differences and their consequences are identified as areas for further research.

Keywords: democracy; culture; policy; cultural policy

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between democratic forms and policy-making processes, and the consequences of these for the production of cultural policies. Given that two of the key terms to be discussed (democracy and culture) are essentially contested concepts it would be easy to discuss these issues in a normative fashion, with the likelihood of failing to get out of the semantic wood. Instead, various approaches to managing democracy, and how these relate to the creation of policy, will be discussed to investigate what the consequences for policy-making and cultural policy are if differing democratic mechanisms are utilised within societies. Notwithstanding this intention, a short comment on how 'culture', 'policy' and 'democracy' are to be addressed in the paper is required at the start to clear the ground.

'Democracy' can be seen to take multiple forms, appearing as quite distinctive approaches to organising societies at different times and in different places. The underlying purpose of these variants is to find a mechanism to allow the members of a political system a means by which they can participate in making 'decisions on matters that affect all members' (Catt 1999, p. 4): allowing individuals the opportunity to make collective decisions. At this level there is nothing to differentiate between particular mechanisms of involvement provided that they allow this participation to take place, even if differences between policy issues may have an effect upon what are the most appropriate mechanisms in any given case (Fung 2006, p. 683). In the present case, 'democracy' is simply understood as being concerned with the mechanisms through which individuals can contribute to the making of decisions on behalf of all members of the political system. The continuing debate about the underlying requirements for 'democracy' to be a reality (Dahl 1998, pp.

*Email: C.J.Gray@Warwick.ac.uk

37–38, for example, identifies these as involving effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda and inclusion of adults) is not, therefore, at the core of the present paper.[1]

'Culture' can, equally, be seen to take multiple forms with distinct implications for understanding and analysing how it can be used by political (and academic) actors (Gray 2009, pp. 576–577). Any attempt to limit the content of 'culture' will be subject to objection and criticism but for present purposes the word will be used in a minimalist way as being whatever governments include and/or define as falling under this label. This still leaves a large area as being debated territory – policies on language support, for example, could clearly be seen as a part of this version of culture, but then so would be copyright issues that affect areas such as music recording, film and book production that governments may not have a direct policy on.[2] The definitional quagmire that surrounds this particular concept may have its own entertainment value but does not necessarily lead to the development of effective understandings of the political management of cultural concerns: treating 'culture' as a set of governmental policy choices limits what may be discussed but, equally, provides a focus for analysis that may otherwise be difficult to attain.

'Policy' is equally as capable as 'democracy' and 'culture' of being understood in a multitude of ways with distinct consequences for what will be analysed within the field (Gray 2010). Viewing 'policy' as being simply concerned with the specific choices that governments make about what should be done within a particular area of governmental concern fails to take on board the entire phenomenon of non-decision-making, or the existence of implicit policies (Ahearne 2009), neither of which are directly concerned with the making of definitive policy choices on behalf of policy actors, but both of which serve policy aims of other sorts. Indeed, the multiple nature of much policy-making, where there are spillovers between policy sectors and unintended as well as intended consequences, means that a simple focus on what governments (or other policy actors) actually do may serve to miss out on many other policy features that are relevant to a broader interest in policy matters. Despite this probability, this paper focuses on the specifics of policy choice in the cultural field as the intention is to discuss the policy implications of utilising various forms of democratic engagement in the production of policy rather than to investigate any of the other, equally as interesting, policy questions that could be asked.

Democratic forms and policy

There has been a proliferation of labels for 'forms' of democratic system in recent years: Collier and Levitsky (1997), for example, identified 550 types within the existing literature, a number that has only grown since then. This explosion in labelling the descriptive characteristics of political systems serves to identify the particularities of democracy in practice by clarifying which elements of it exist, or are missing, from individual versions of democratic organisation. Rather than follow this approach to analysis, however, the current paper is concerned with the mechanisms that have been, or can be, utilised to link the mass citizenry of a country with the specific practice of making policies.

While there are various approaches that can be taken to this linking of citizens and policies, the following four approaches will be focused upon:

- Direct democracy through voting (using referenda to allow for direct individual choice on a given issue).
- Representative democracy through elected representatives (elected assemblies and executives making decisions on behalf of their electorates).
- Democratic elitism through stakeholders (using arm's-length organisations to make decisions on behalf of an institutionally-separate public).
- Deliberative democracy through value clarification (using discursive techniques to identify appropriate policy choices for given circumstances).

There is a considerable literature on each of these approaches to generating policies amongst the competing demands and conflicting interests that exist within societies, and there is no intention of rating them against each other or against some set of evaluative criteria. Instead the intention is to identify what the implications are of following the logic of each of these methods for making choices, and whether they may lead to the creation of distinct types of policy choice. If the consequences of pursuing particular paths to democracy involve the creation of limits to, and opportunities for, the forms of policy that may be pursued then these need to be identified to allow discussion about which limits and opportunities may be preferred in any given case. Equally, if there are no real distinctions between these approaches to policy-making, then the generic consequences of democracy for policy-making may be identified, and these could then form the basis for further discussion. The choice of the particular forms that will be analysed has been intended to incorporate both different institutional forms for aggregating views, and different mechanisms for identifying and expressing choices within the policy-making process.

Direct democracy through voting

The most straight-forward democratic mechanism, for determining what the view(s) of the collective society is (are), is probably the vote. While voting may not account for the intensity of feeling on given issues that are held, it does allow for the direct expression of the general feeling of the electorate as a whole at a given time. The formal mechanism that allows for this direct expression of feeling on a specific issue is normally the referendum. Referenda can be held on any subject whatsoever but normally they are limited to either matters concerning the transfer of sovereignty, constitutional, economic or moral issues or 'miscellaneous' ones (Qvortrup 2005, p. 63), or territorial, foreign policy, ecology or environmental matters (Budge 2006, p. 605). In each case, the intention behind holding an open vote on a given subject is to discern the opinion of the general population, removing the subject matter from the control of governmental or other societal groupings and letting the public directly choose.

The use of referenda has been criticised on many grounds – that they depend upon 'the rule of ignorance' or the 'incompetence of the masses' (Michels and Dicey, both quoted in Qvortrup 2005, pp. 51, 88); that they can be manipulated by campaign expenditure, favouring the wealthy (Magleby 1994); that the result is often determined by other issues than those that the ballot is actually about[3] and that they undermine representative democracy (Qvortrup 2005, p. 12). The validity of such concerns is open to question, with most falling in the Scottish legal category of 'not proven' rather than being unambiguously correct or incorrect. Indeed, it could be argued that the use of referenda provides such clear democratic benefits

in terms of allowing the public to directly contribute to policy decisions that even if such criticisms were true they may be an acceptable price to pay for encouraging the active, direct, participation of people in the political system.

The extent to which the use of direct voting in the field of culture, through the use of referenda, affects the wider democratic content of policies can only be effectively demonstrated through the use of empirical data. Unfortunately there is relatively little evidence to work from. Frey and Pommerehne (1995) (updated in Frey 2003) provide some indicative data from Switzerland which shows that between 1950 and 2001, referenda on cultural matters at the municipal level had much the same turnout and similar levels of success as referenda on all other matters at the same level, even if support for increased cultural expenditure was 12% lower than for other matters (Frey 2003, pp. 129–130). The fear that voters will exercise their democratic choice on the basis of ignorance or incompetence was argued to be invalid in the cases examined on the basis that before the referenda were held there was a period of discussion and debate (Frey 2003, pp. 137–138) that allowed for an education of the electorate about the issues involved. While this may indicate that the openness of the democratic system allowed for the overcoming of lowest common denominator fears, the evidence that Frey and Pommerehne (1995, pp. 58–62, Frey 2003, pp. 132–135) present from one referendum in Basle actually indicates that a range of socio-economic variables accounted for 85% of the difference between 'yes' and 'no' voting, implying that education and debate have, at best, a marginal effect. The sociological literature concerning culture and the arts (see, e.g. Alexander 2003, pp. 228–235, Bennett *et al*. 2009) has already identified a clear social basis for the consumption of art so the referenda evidence may simply be re-phrasing this rather than identifying anything particularly novel about the impact of direct democracy on the production of cultural policies.

Budge (2006, pp. 605–606) has also indicated that referendums are normally held on matters that are general, with long-term implications, or on issues that have a largely non-party political basis to them. This implies that, in general usage, referenda are not normally associated with the making of specific decisions that are based around clearly-defined political positions. This is perhaps misleading as referenda do provide direct questions that require an answer, whether this is a simple yes/no decision, or whether it involves multiple-choice options requiring a single choice, or a rank-ordering of priorities. To some extent all referenda are specific, even if it involves being specific about general matters. Whether the results of referenda are capable of being generalised to demonstrate that they produce either better or worse outcomes than those achieved through the utilisation of other methods of democratic choice depends more upon the level of support for the general principles that lie behind the differing mechanisms that are available for making collective choices than it does upon some evaluation of the specific results that are produced. By directly involving citizens in the process of making specific choices between alternative courses of action, referenda have clear democratic benefits, at least in terms of potential quantity of involvement, if not necessarily in terms of quality.

The applicability of referendums to all matters concerned with the making of cultural policy is, however, another matter. While the possibility that voters may be swayed in their choices by the publicity that is presented to them, the levels of expenditure that can be made by supporters or opponents of different positions, their knowledge of the particular issues that are at stake – which are applicable to all forms of voting – their significance in the case of the specificity of referenda

decisions is perhaps of more concern than elsewhere, even if the evidence concerning these fears is, at best, ambiguous. Effectively, the argument becomes one of whether there is trust in the competence of voters en masse to make decisions for themselves, and a willingness to accept these decisions when they have been made. At this level, concerns about what decisions are made become less important than concerns about the direct involvement of citizens in making decisions for their communities. The limited evidence from Switzerland on cultural referendums may indicate that people are perhaps less willing to spend money on culture than on other matters but it does not appear to show that they behave particularly differently in their actual voting behaviour.

Representative democracy through elected representatives

A more common mechanism to allow for the making of collective decisions for a political system is through the utilisation of assemblies of elected members who make decisions on behalf of the population that elected them. Accountability in this system is ensured through the need for periodic re-elections of representatives, while different interests can support candidates who will defend their particular concerns and candidates can be held accountable by these interests if they fail in this. While these general points are a standard part of the literature on both assemblies and voting, the reality is far less clear-cut. Assemblies are not simply decision-making machines representing particular political, economic and social interests, they must also scrutinise the executive, provide legitimacy for the political system, create and destroy governments, and debate matters of public concern. Indeed, in many assemblies, these other matters are as, if not more, important concerns for their members as the taking of decisions and the passing of laws: for example, the control of the lifespan of governments in Italy has traditionally depended upon the factional infighting of Parliamentary parties (Furlong 1994, pp. 160–164), which recent reforms to the Italian system appear to have had limited effect upon.[4]

In general terms, decision-making in the form of passing legislation and overseeing the activities of the executive are central components of the functions of assemblies. As mechanisms for the making of policy in the more general sense of creating strategic plans or directions for others to put into practice, assemblies are less the focus of attention than a mechanism for amending, commenting upon or, at times, sabotaging the choices of executives. The relationships of executives and assemblies in systems of representative government are central to understanding how policy is finally produced in such systems[5] but what is more significant is that citizens are expected to have a less than central role within them. While citizens in democratic representative government systems are expected to participate through voting for candidates (thus providing electoral legitimacy), to place pressure on the political system through varieties of pressure-group activity, and to comment on the activities of their representatives through a variety of means (such as the mass and electronic media) they are not expected to take a direct role in the actual production of policy itself. As such, representative forms of democracy are clearly less inclusive of the mass of the population than are referendums. Representative democracy, however, offers potential benefits – such as specialist knowledge and expertise and a more consistent involvement of policy-makers with policy than individual citizens may exercise – that the actions of the mass of the citizenry may not be effective in matching. These benefits are, in part at least, a consequence of which interests

representatives see themselves as serving – whether those of their party, their elec-
tors, or geographical or organisational interests – and they can behave in a variety
of ways while doing so: as delegates (where their actions are determined by the
interests that they serve), trustees (where they exercise their own judgement on
behalf of their constituents) or mouth-pieces (either for their parties, other interests
or their constituents). This multiplicity of roles means that it is difficult to be
entirely clear how individual representatives are acting at any given time, but it also
means that it is difficult to be sure that there is only one picture of the way in
which they behave, making simple generalisations debatable. Given the limited role
that assembly members may play in directly contributing to the creation of policy
in some political systems (Cowley 2006), a focus on the executive as the source of
policy-making power may even be more appropriate.

The role of the executive as the electorally legitimated *vox populi* is controlled
by its ability to maintain constitutional support from the legislative and judicial
branches of government (Colomer 2006), political support from the electorate (Hey-
wood 1999, pp. 236–238), and administrative support from the bureaucracy (Peters
2010, chap. 6). It is normally assumed that some form of policy competence is
required to enable executives to continue to gain such backing. The freedom of the
executive to make decisions and choices about the direction that policy will follow
is also normally accepted as absolute, provided that support can be maintained.
Without this the legitimacy of executive decisions would be open to considerable
questioning, with consequent effects on the effective implementation of policy and
the acceptability of such policy for the population as a whole. Notwithstanding such
constraints on executive action, the constitutional centrality of executive power over
policy in many political systems reinforces the view that an examination of the
executive may provide the key location for policy-making activity. In practice, a
great deal depends upon which model of the policy process is adopted by the ana-
lyst: in some pluralist and neo-pluralist models, the executive is simply one
amongst a multitude of sources and locations of policy choice;[6] in rational choice
models, the focus of decision rests in particular individuals/institutions (such as
executives) around which sources of pressure and influence circulate, even if these
have no real impact on the individual choices that are made (see Hindmoor 2006).

Regardless of the niceties of policy activity that take place, the elected represen-
tative model implies that the relationship of the representative and their publics
necessitates a gap between the two: the role of the representative is to act on behalf
of the public but this does not mean that the public should necessarily be an active
participant alongside them. Indeed, the whole point of representation is to effec-
tively remove the mass of the public from the policy-making equation, leaving the
responsibility for choice to the elected. The decisions that are made are not neces-
sarily those that the population as a whole may agree with but it is normally
assumed that the political expertise and electoral legitimacy of the representatives
will make their decisions acceptable ones. This may indicate that there is a degree
of democratic sub-optimality of policy and decision with representation as a conse-
quence of the limiting effect on public involvement that is involved.[7]

A key concern at this point is the basis upon which elected representatives are
making their choices. Representatives may stand on the basis of a detailed mani-
festo, a set of ideological principles, particular policy choices or a platform of oppo-
sition to what is currently occurring. Whichever of these are involved will have
consequences for how the system functions after the appropriate election has taken

place. For example, in the British system of representative government, policy proposals in party manifestos can be delayed and amended in the second (un-elected) chamber in Parliament (the House of Lords) but they can never be simply dismissed. A vague platform containing few, if any, policy commitments would, in this case, be a recipe for at least delay, if not, at worst, of complete sclerosis of the system. The more explicit candidates are about what they are committing themselves to doing, then the stronger becomes their claim to electoral legitimacy. Provided that secondary democratic principles concerning access to information, ability to vote and freedom of speech, for example, are adhered to then the voting public will have a relatively clear idea of what they can expect to get from the representatives that they elect. The amount of detail that is provided to the electorate can thus provide a basis upon which to evaluate the performance of representatives which is something that direct democracy through referendums is less able to provide. Thus, for a longer perspective for assessing the performance of policies (and politicians) representative democracy is potentially superior to some forms of direct democracy, particularly those dealing with specific policy choices.

One difficulty with providing a general manifesto is that electors are voting for the whole package rather than for particular component elements: supporting a representative for their views on taxation, for example, also necessarily means supporting their position on a host of other policy concerns, regardless of whether such policies are actually those that are preferred. The lack of opportunity to discriminate between individual policy components may mean that electors end up choosing the least bad candidate, in policy terms, to vote for, but unless all policy is to be determined by individual voting (through referendums), then this is the consequence of representative democracy. To this extent, the depth of feeling that electors have in terms of the policy proposals that are presented to them becomes important. The centrality of policy issues to the individual voter will have some effect upon how their vote will be cast[8] and has been seen, by some, as the cause of inevitable public policy failures where voter ignorance, or lack of concern, leads to the creation of policies that are biased against the interests of the many in favour of the interests of the few (Kleiman and Teles 2006, pp. 640–641). Whether cultural policies have ever formed the focus of electoral choice is a matter for conjecture, even if it has spurred the formation of protest groups in some countries (Duelund 2003, p. 43).

The consequences of all these concerns for the production of cultural policies are varied but the importance that is attached to such policies within political systems is clearly going to be of some significance. If cultural policies are assigned little weight by voters, or by those standing to be representatives, then it would be hardly surprising to see them appearing as distinctly low priority to executives, legislatures and assemblies. The extent to which cultural policies *are* assigned such a lowly status can be questioned, even if there is a common assumption, and some evidence, that such is, indeed, the case (Gray 2009, McCall 2009, Gray and Wingfield 2011). In such circumstances, the emphasis of public policy would be on political issues that are seen as being matters of 'high politics', matters over which central political figures have real autonomy, rather than matters of 'low politics', undertaken by politicians away from the central core of the system, and often at provincial or local levels within political systems (Bulpitt 1983, p. 3). As such, the concentration that a referendum can give to a detailed consideration of the content of particular cultural policy interventions is not likely to be a feature of representative democracy – unless, of course, cultural policy does become a matter of 'high

politics' within a political system. Representative democracy does, however, provide a more general, systemic, legitimisation of the cultural policies that are produced by political actors as part of an entire package of policy interventions that is not dependent upon particular issues or specific arguments. Whether the policies that are produced as a result of this are good, bad or merely indifferent both as policies per se, and as exercises in democratic government is another matter altogether and rather depends upon what starting point for assessment is adopted. There is nothing to say that representative democracy is any better or worse than direct democracy would appear to be.

Democratic elitism through stakeholders

While both of the previous models involve some form of citizen participation through voting, either on specific issues or for a candidate, democratic elitism does not necessarily do so. Instead the interests of particular oligopolistic groups are supported by a variety of political, social, economic and organisational means, only some of which necessarily involve the mass of the population in active participation. The concentration of power in the hands of relatively small groups within societies is argued to lead to a top-down form of societal organisation where direct and representative forms of democracy are as much to do with the maintenance of existing power distributions, dependent as these are on the support and commitment of competing elites, as they are with an expression of effective, open, choice between political options. The active nature of these societal elites and/or oligarchies is distinguished from the relatively inactive role that is played by most citizens within societies, reinforcing the ability of elites to entrench themselves in positions of power and authority (variants of this can be found in the economic democratic elitism of Schumpeter 1944/1994, and the bureaucratic version of Weber: see Beetham 1985, pp. 102–112). Whilst power in democratic elitism is seen to be concentrated in relatively few hands within society, this does not mean that there is some crude form of elitist rule within societies. Instead the legitimisation of the system depends upon the continued involvement of the public to provide an overall democratic framework within which power can be exercised. Such a position may be found within a relatively neo-pluralist political system where power is unequally distributed between competing groups with a subsequent disparity in terms of who consistently wins and loses, as well as in more obviously oligarchic systems.

One mechanism that can serve to entrench existing, unequal, forms of power distribution whilst also allowing for some form of directly democratic control is through the establishment of decision-making fora that insulate the wielders of effective power from wider forms of political involvement by the mass of the population. By providing forms of institutional autonomy for key actors, it is possible to establish a situation where particular forms of expertise are seen as being the basis for making policy choices, and where lack of this expertise effectively disenfranchises the bulk of the population. A normal mechanism for achieving this is through the establishment of various arm's-length governmental organisations (Mangset 2009), or forms of governance arrangement (such as partnerships, networks and various supra- and inter-governmental arrangements: see Kjaer 2004), both of which limit the potential for wider forms of direct citizen involvement in the process of making policy choices. While there may be many reasons for establishing such organisational forms – from the utilisation of technical and/or

professional knowledge and the removal of policy issues from the day-to-day hurly-burly of party politics, to the need for authoritative decisions to be made – the result can often be to create mechanisms that are seen to be inherently anti-democratic to the extent that the public en masse are excluded from the corridors of power. While such claims are perhaps overstated[9] there can be no doubt that the concentration of effective power in relatively few hands is a key consequence of the establishment of such organisations, and effective democratic control is only likely to be as good as the elected politicians who have responsibility for the system allow it to be.

In terms of the production of cultural policies, the use of quango forms of organisation has a relatively long history: the British Arts Council and its successors having more than 60 years of existence while the Finnish system of State Arts Boards is even older, dating back to 1865 (Sokka and Kangas 2007, p. 191). The oligarchic nature of such organisations has often been commented upon (Hutchinson 1982, Gray 2000) and has occasionally been the subject of attempted political reform in an effort to open up their membership to a wider range of views (Jenkins 1979) but, in the cultural field at least, such bodies tend to be dominated by a confined group of individuals, selected from similar backgrounds, sharing similar values, and supporting, in general, a rather top-down notion of what cultural policies should be, and how 'culture' should be understood. The lack of political, social, economic and cultural representativeness of such organisations may be a reality but it need not necessarily be a problem for the production of cultural policies. By establishing independent organisations with real policy-making autonomy it is possible that a coherent, focused set of policies can be created that will meet whatever criteria are applied to them. As long as elected politicians provide a general policy framework for such organisations to operate within, then the normal mechanisms of democratic accountability and control can be seen to be in operation. If the organisation's members fail to meet the demands of the politicians, then they can always be replaced, and if the demands of the politicians fail to meet the expectations of the public then they may run the risk of being voted out of office. Such propositions need not be lived up to in practice, and the willingness of politicians to allow appointed bureaucrats to dominate the policy-making process may lead to a position where the interests of the oligarchic policy-makers swamp those of other groups within society. In such cases, the failing is not with the organisation concerned but with a failing of democratic accountability.

Assessing the quality of the policies that have been produced by such stakeholder mechanisms is by no means easy, but, in general, it would appear that while culture-producing communities and organisations may complain loudly and bitterly about the treatment that they receive from the arm's-length bodies that serve them, and while such bodies themselves are frequently the focus of complaints from politicians about the decisions that they make, their functional utility to politicians and the producers of culture seem to ensure that their survival is rarely questioned in anything other than a superficial fashion. Smith (2006), for example, demonstrates that while the upholders of dominant heritage discourses in the form of public organisations are frequently criticised there has been little concerted effort to change the organisations themselves: change appears to arise from internal organisational processes of learning and change rather than from externally imposed sources. The policies that may be produced may be partial towards certain interests, and may be based upon the values and preferences of some groups rather than others, but these

are inevitable consequences of any system of policy-making and are not peculiar to the stakeholder model. Unless or until there is a change in the nature of societies towards rather more equitable power distributions within them it is unlikely that such biases will be eliminated from the policy-making system. It is more likely that as long as the dominant interests within the system continue to operate along lines that their own members – and elected politicians – find acceptable, then the system will continue, implying that the policies that are produced through such mechanisms have at least some acceptability to policy relevant actors, given that a failure to achieve such acceptability *would* lead to reforms of the system.

To this extent, the closing off of policy sectors from wider societal interests may actually produce 'better' policies than would be attainable under direct or representative systems of democracy. By allowing what are effectively technocratic interests to dominate the system, subject to some general steering of it by elected politicians, it is possible that technically superior decisions – in the sense of providing instrumentally rational policies based upon technical considerations – may be made in comparison with those that are being produced through the application of appeals to wider concerns that may be held by the citizenry en masse, or by politicians in general. Whether such technically 'correct' decisions are actually the appropriate ones for either group depends upon the nature of the policy sector that is concerned.[10] The willingness of political actors to abdicate responsibility for controlling the actions of quango or governance arrangements that operate on the basis of technical rationality may have advantages in a political sense, but it may not lead to politically (or socially, economically or legally) ideal outcomes.[11] Neither may they be culturally ideal given the difficulties of adequately defining what this ideal would be and the consequent policy problems that this generates (Gray 2009).

Deliberative democracy through value clarification

The recent development of a coherent approach to deeper understanding of democratic practices through the development of forms of deliberative politics (Elstub 2010) has generated the utilisation of a large number of relatively new mechanisms for assessing the state of competing values within society, such as mediative institutions, citizen forums and citizen initiatives, as well as potentially giving new meaning to older forms of appraisal, such as referenda. As a form of direct democratic engagement, deliberative democracy is concerned with the establishment of collective choices based on informed and reflective opinion (Dryzek and Dunleavy 2009, p. 170), using 'talk-centric' rather than 'vote-centric' mechanisms (Chambers 2003, p. 308). Such preferences are elicited by independent facilitators who manage the mechanisms through which they are expressed.

The intention of deliberative democratic forms is to build on the assumption that effective participation depends upon informed participation, and the mechanisms that are used are explicitly designed to allow for the articulation of informed positions by groups that may often be ignored or discounted in other forms of democratic practice. To this extent, deliberative democracy is in distinct opposition to the top-down version of democracy that is contained in democratic elitism in that it deliberately seeks to discover the views of groups that may otherwise be overlooked in the policy process. It also differs from representative democracy in that it seeks more active engagement with citizens than is contained in simply casting a vote. Recent British examples where deliberative techniques have been employed would

include the Arts Council England 'public value' exercise, concerned with identifying future organisational directions to take (Bunting 2007), and the use of focus groups to inform the development of a new local history museum (Watson 2007). In each case, extensive use was made of developing qualitative assessments of existing and prospective policies and organisational arrangements to contribute to the final decisions that were made.

Such direct involvement rests upon the idea of an active citizenry that has the capacity in both time and resources to effectively participate in the processes that are involved, neither of which is necessarily accurate. Indeed, the difficulties of developing anything other than a symbolic representation of the wider community through forms of deliberative democracy make the value of this approach to collective decision-making open to some question. The anticipation that deliberation will lead in some sense to 'better' forms of decision-making is unproven[12] and the resource costs involved limit the number of people who can be effectively involved in such activities. The intention, however, is to see an improvement in the basis upon which individuals will participate in collective decision-making, rather than with the outcomes of the process – even if it is commonly assumed that such outcomes will be preferable to those arising from democratic mechanisms that do not seek to engage in an open fashion with members of the public.

At the very least, deliberative democracy raises questions about the applicability of representative democracy to public policy (Gray 2008, pp. 212–213), and makes a strong argument in favour of more direct mechanisms for establishing the policy preferences of the public. Such mechanisms, however, are, in general, heavily dependent upon the role of the various facilitators of the system (Smith 2003, p. 88), indicating that the preferences that are generated are not necessarily spontaneous expressions but are, rather, guided conclusions that need not be the same as those that would be generated by different facilitators with different groups. In practice, the extent to which preferences have led to the development of new policies per se, rather than simply contributing to the information collection and discussion stages of the policy process, is open to some question (Fung 2006, pp. 673–676) and it may be fair to argue that the relatively underdeveloped state of deliberative methods and practices contributes to this lack of large-scale impact. While the limitations of such approaches are a real concern they do represent something different as a means of enabling a democratic approach to policy-making.

Conclusions

Assessing the impact of different forms of democratic arrangement on cultural policy is not easy. The different emphases within these forms on direct or indirect involvement of citizens, the role of policy experts within them (either as technocrats or as mediators and facilitators), the role of elected representatives, and the relationship of all of these to matters of information quality and access have direct impacts upon the 'how' of policy creation. The 'what' of policy creation is also affected by the mechanisms that are utilised, from the making of specific choices in the case of referendums to the establishment of general policy directions through deliberative means. The choices that are made clearly have an importance for the cultural policy sector and some consideration of the consequences of differing democratic forms for what citizens and societies will end up with is a first step to deciding which, if any, of these forms is to be deemed to be the most appropriate to use. A further

elaboration of the consequences of adopting particular democratic forms for the production of public and cultural policies is required before such decisions can be effectively made.

Notes

1. The examples that are used in this paper are likewise limited to western liberal democracies on the grounds that the democratic forms that are discussed in it are most commonly seen in these states.
2. Current debates about the impact of information technology on these areas demonstrate the struggles that governments have in managing such matters.
3. As with the 1969 French referendum that became a vote on De Gaulle's presidency rather than necessarily about changes in regional powers and the French senate which were the ostensible concerns of the ballot – see Stevens (1996, p. 95).
4. Although nine governments in the past 18 years may appear to be an improvement on 52 governments in the preceding 47 years.
5. The constitutional separation of Congress and the Presidency in the USA provides a clear example of the importance of this relationship: see Shugart (2006).
6. See the discussion, for example, in Sabatier (2007), of the multiple streams or social construction models of the policy process.
7. This rather assumes that individual choices *will* produce the optimal result for society as a whole. In crude terms, the choice would appear to be between which forms of tyranny one prefers: that of the mass of individuals exercising their positive freedoms or that of the representative minority, applying negative freedoms to constrain the masses. The basic argument concerning negative and positive freedoms is often over-simplified in this way, and neglects concerns about the relative or absolute nature of liberty (and, indeed, human rights as a whole). A detailed discussion of this point is not necessary here but should be pursued in more detailed analyses of the issue.
8. Alongside a range of social, psychological, economic and other political variables: see Harrop and Miller (1987, chaps. 5–8).
9. Beetham (1987, p. 119), for example, in the context of bureaucratic organisation, argues that the problem is more to do with organisational secrecy and the loss of effective control of organisations by elected politicians than it is to do with the fact of organisation itself.
10. In the case of building bridges, for example, the necessary technical competence to ensure that the bridge will not fall down as soon as people try to cross it would probably be seen as being appropriate. Whether this can be extended to other policy sectors where such forms of technical necessity are not available – such as cultural policy – is open to question.
11. The consequences of applying different logics to decision-making processes are that distinct evaluations of what an 'ideal' policy looks like will exist based upon the underlying rationality that is applied to particular cases: see Diesing (1962).
12. It is fair to say, however, that the opposite position – that deliberation will lead to 'worse' decision-making – is equally unproven.

References

Ahearne, J., 2009. Cultural policy explicit and implicit: a distinction and some uses. *International journal of cultural policy*, 15, 141–153.
Alexander, V., 2003. *Sociology of the arts: exploring fine and popular forms*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Beetham, D., 1985. *Max weber and the theory of modern politics*. Oxford: Polity.
Beetham, D., 1987. *Bureaucracy*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Bennett, T.M., *et al*., 2009. *Culture, class, distinction: culture, economy and the social*. London: Routledge.
Budge, I., 2006. Direct democracy. *In*: R. Rhodes, S. Binder, and B. Rockman, eds. *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 595–610.

Bulpitt, J., 1983. *Territory and power in the United Kingdom: an interpretation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bunting, C., 2007. *Public value and the arts in England: discussion and conclusions of the arts debate* [online]. London: Arts Council England. Available from: www.artscouncil. org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/phpwumR4F.pdf [Accessed 15 April 2010].

Catt, H., 1999. *Democracy in practice*. London: Routledge.

Chambers, S., 2003. Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual review of political science*, 6, 307–326.

Collier, D. and Levitsky, S., 1997. Research note: democracy with adjectives: conceptual innovation in comparative research. *World politics*, 49, 430–451.

Colomer, J., 2006. Comparative constitutions. *In*: R. Rhodes, S. Binder, and B. Rockman, eds. *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 217–238.

Cowley, P., 2006. Making parliament matter? *In*: P. Dunleavy, R. Heffernan, P. Cowley, and C. Hay, eds. *Developments in British politics*. Vol. 8. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 36–55.

Dahl, R., 1998. *On democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Diesing, P., 1962. *Reason in society: five types of decision and their social conditions*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Dryzek, J. and Dunleavy, P., 2009. *Theories of the democratic state*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Duelund, P., 2003. Cultural policy in Denmark. *In*: P. Duelund, ed. *The nordic cultural model*. Copenhagen: Nordic Cultural Institute, 31–77.

Elstub, S., 2010. The third generation of deliberative democracy. *Political studies review*, 8, 291–307.

Frey, B., 2003. *Arts and economics: analysis and cultural policy*. Berlin: Springer.

Frey, B and Pommerehne, W., 1995. Public expenditure on the arts and direct democracy: the use of referenda in Switzerland. *European journal of cultural policy*, 2, 55–65.

Fung, A., 2006. Democratizing the policy process. *In*: M. Moran, R. Rein, and M. Goodin, eds. *The Oxford handbook of public policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 669–685.

Furlong, P., 1994. *Modern Italy: representation and reform*. London: Routledge.

Gray, C., 2000. *The politics of the arts in Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Gray, C., 2008. Arts council England and public value: a critical review. *International journal of cultural policy*, 14, 209–214.

Gray, C., 2009. Managing cultural policy: pitfalls and prospects. *Public administration*, 87, 574–585.

Gray, C., 2010. Analysing cultural policy: incorrigibly plural or ontologically incompatible? *International journal of cultural policy*, 16, 215–230.

Gray, C and Wingfield, M., 2011. Are governmental culture departments important?: an empirical investigation. *International journal of cultural policy*, 17, 590–604.

Harrop, M. and Miller, W., 1987. *Elections and voters: a comparative introduction*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Heywood, A., 1999. *Political theory: an introduction*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Hindmoor, A., 2006. *Rational choice*. Palgrave: Macmillan.

Hutchinson, R., 1982. *The politics of the arts council*. London: Sinclair Browne.

Jenkins, H., 1979. *The culture gap: an experience of government and the arts*. London: Marion Boyars.

Kjaer, A., 2004. *Governance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kleiman, M. and Teles, S., Market and non-market failures. *In*: M. Moran, M. Rein, and R. Goodin, eds. *The Oxford handbook of public policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 218–257.

Mangset, P., 2009. The arm's length principle and the art funding system: a comparative approach. *In*: M. Pyykkonen, N. Simanainen, and S. Sokka, eds. *What about cultural policy?* Helsinki: Minerva, 273–297.

McCall, V., 2009. Social policy and cultural services: a study of Scottish border museums as implementers of social inclusion. *Social policy and society*, 8, 319–331.

Peters, B., 2010. *The politics of bureaucracy*. London: Routledge.

Qvortrup, M., 2005. *A comparative study of referendums: government by the people*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press.

Sabatier, P., 2007. *Theories of the policy process*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Schumpeter, J., 1944/1994. *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. London: Routledge.

Shugart, M., 2006. Comparative executive-legislative relations. *In*: R. Rhodes, S. Binder, and B. Rockman, eds. *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 344–365.

Smith, G., 2003. *Deliberative democracy and the environment*. London: Routledge.

Smith, L., 2006. *Uses of heritage*. London: Routledge.

Sokka, S and Kangas, A., 2007. At the roots of finnish cultural policy: intellectuals, nationalism and the arts. *International journal of cultural policy*, 13, 185–202.

Stevens, A., 1996. *The government and politics of France*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Watson, S., 2007. History museums, community identities and a sense of place: rewriting histories. *In*: S. Knell, S. MacLeod, and S. Watson, eds. *Museum revolutions: how museums change and are changed*. London: Routledge, 160–172.