
Flowing borders of cultural policy

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There are some large, difficult to perceive and challenging concepts that have been disturbingly relevant in scientific discussions for several decades now. The concepts might be so complex that definitions and interpretations cannot adequately account for all the temporal and qualitative variations. In the book *Flowing borders of cultural policy. Culture in Finnish social development policy*, docent of cultural policy, Simo Häyrynen, tries to dissect in 223 pages such broad concepts as culture and identity and relate them to currently changing policies.

The book has six sections, an extensive bibliography and a short index of keywords. The structure of the book consists of a theoretical chapter on the concept of the culture, followed by a chapter on the aims of those in power for how culture should be implemented and managed, a chapter on the borders of cultural policy and a chapter on identity games as part of the development of cultural policy. The starting point for the book is the argument that there is still a need for public and national cultural policy as a balancing system between different cultural groups and points of view. Growing levels of polarisation and isolation nowadays create more and more pressure to identify and recognise cultural features and phenomena. Häyrynen demands improvements in the way cultural politics are practiced; there are continuously strong requirements for adopting new approaches and ideas and moving beyond traditional sectoral thinking.

According to Häyrynen, such discussions take place mostly at the level of institutes, social groups and collective identities. His case studies and other examples are neither so unique nor very inspiring to an ethnologist, but they still manage to clarify the complexity of cultural policy in Finland. There are also shared interests and possibilities for collaborative work between the humanities and cultural policy, which is mostly inspired by social sciences. In these theoretical chapters, Häyrynen introduces a number of social scientists and their thoughts about culture, identities and various aspects of cultural politics. Many famous theoretical thinkers, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, Zygmunt Bauman and Doreen Massey, are mentioned when Häyrynen provides definitions for the key concepts of the book. The theorists and their ideas are already quite familiar to ethnologists, and this book discusses them from the perspectives of mental guidelines and the cohesive forces of communities.

An interesting part of the chapter has to do with the aims and way culture is implemented and managed, elaborating on heritage and sustainable development. Again, on first glance, the book does not offer very fresh or exciting viewpoints on the tangible or intangible aspects of heritage and heritage policies in Finland. But when you read this chapter more carefully, you can find some sharp comments about the current political situation. For example, Häyrynen warns that tame and nondescript declarations of cultural policy, combined with the complexity of everyday life, might transfer the concept of culture into a form of image politics. Häyrynen also criticises strongly the instrumental aims behind efforts to manage culture. It has been popular to link culture and art to such strong indicators as lifespan or economic growth. These kinds

of indicators do not however cover the entirety of diversified culture, but rather quite randomly define some sectors of culture based on a set of calculations. With cultural policy, it would be essential to understand what parts of the culture(s) might escape the attention of this kind of the policy making.

What about those flowing borders that Häyrynen wants to address in this book? What are those borders and what does he mean when describing the borderlands of cultural policy? The borders are mainly remains of the traditional sectoral boundaries that are currently being re-arranged. In this book, Häyrynen wants to raise both the meta-questions about cultural policy and the hidden and unofficial cultures behind the official boundaries of cultural policy. Both of these difficult topics would need flexibility and collaboration between traditional sectors. Many questions about minorities and civic activity are not directly part of some sector of politics, but they would need widely recognised and border-crossing actions from different political sectors.

This is also the question of power. In the last few years, actors in the cultural field have wanted to become part of the discourse on such fields as welfare and entrepreneurship or so-called startup businesses. The sector of culture could and still

should also express and indicate how much influence culture should have in such fields, fields that do not often consider culture as part of their interests or core content. As Häyrynen argues, the strong sectoral thinking creates artificial boundaries between culture and other 'non cultural' worlds. Sectoral thinking also creates a sense of control and formality, thereby creating larger divides between the core of the management and unofficial forms of cultural actions. These considerations are valuable for actors in the fields of culture.

Docent Simo Häyrynen has written this book as a textbook for students, but it is also intended for actors in the cultural fields. The book is also a critical work on the current state of cultural policy. I think this book works better in the real and complex fields of culture and art. You can read this book as a guideline for how to impact and have an influence on cultural policy. At the very least, you can read the book and be surprised about how politics are formed and the broad and multifaceted ways in which they impact society as well as about how unofficial forms of influence are constantly confronting the official boundaries between the state and various communities.

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