David Bell and Kate Oakley’s *Cultural Policy* is a welcome contribution to the ambitious and perhaps daring bulk of literature that attempts to provide an overview of the field of cultural policy. It is certainly a timely contribution as similar attempts such as Toby Miller and George Yudice’s (2002) *Cultural Policy*; Justin Lewis and Toby Miller’s (eds.) (2003) *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*; and Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon’s *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World* were all published over a decade ago. Indeed, it has been exactly ten years since Jim McGuigan proposed that we rethink cultural policy with an emphasis on what he refers to as critical and reflexive cultural policy analysis.

These publications have different agendas, anchoring the term ‘cultural policy’ to subjects as diverse as class, gender, race, cultural industries, cultural institutions, transnational cultural policy, radio, television, film, the internet, the arts, museums, sport, music, international organisations, national cultures, and urban planning. Together, these works map out a field, albeit a very complex and at times internally contradictory one. It is therefore inevitable that painful decisions must be made when deciding how to tackle, limit, and frame a work that seeks to account for the project of cultural policy.

Should one, for instance, apply a sectorial approach? Is it a matter of individual genres and the links between them, of cultural forms and practices? Is it about following the money? Is it about regions, the nation-state, and supra-national bodies? About analysing the field in terms of micro-, meso-, and macro-variants and the linkages between them? Or is it about cultural participation, engagement, cultural citizenship, cultural diversity, gender, race, and ethnicity? Is it about detecting which bodies or individuals have the power to form the dominant discursive formations within the field of cultural production and consumption? Is it about accounting for which theoretical frameworks and methods have gained acceptance within the field? Is it about culture? Or is it about policy? And how does these coincide in the term ‘cultural policy’?

These are, of course, only a selection of the topics that belong to the field of cultural policy. Bell and Oakley’s approach is a ‘spatial’ one, focusing on cultural policy from urban, national, and international perspectives. In the first three chapters, they also present a most useful framing of the work, particularly by focusing on ‘the culture of cultural policy’ and ‘the policy of cultural policy’.
In the chapter on ‘The Culture of Cultural Policy’, the authors offer a condensed discussion of the perils of defining culture, the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ of culture as well as what they term ‘everything in-between’, and debates within cultural and creative industries. Appropriately, the chapter ends by alerting the reader to ‘instrumental’ and ‘intrinsic’ values of culture and how these relate to public policy: ‘Remembering this should alert us to the fact that cultural policy is not simply a question of administration, deciding what gets funded or how to measure the size of the film industry, but something that engages with questions of values, beliefs and priorities in a very fundamental way’ (41).

The chapter on ‘The Policy of Cultural Policy’ is an important one, not only because it asks ‘What is cultural policy?’ – but also because it discusses how to undertake cultural policy research. The authors underline cultural policy studies’ characteristics as an interdisciplinary project and account for tensions between the ‘critical’ and the ‘applied’. They furthermore divide cultural policy research into the four categories of studying it as discourse, as text, as process, and as practice. Although the authors acknowledge that such categorisation is problematic, it particularly suits students within the field well to have an overview of approaches and methodologies that researchers use to design their studies.

Even though this is certainly a step in the right direction, a more focused methodological discussion would suit the purpose of the book quite well. What types of discourse analysis are most celebrated and why? What does a method like the semi-structured qualitative interview contribute to textual analysis? How are expert interviews defined within the field, and what is the reason for conducting them? What about group interviews and focus groups that more specifically look into interactions amongst interviewees? And what about ethnographic methods such as observations? There is a growing tendency within the field of cultural policy to celebrate quantifiable results, and here it would be interesting to discuss the impact of quantitative research on the field and how this affects qualitative research approaches. The authors implicitly discuss some of these methods, but it would match the format of the book to simply provide a denser discussion of methods within cultural policy research, something akin to a methodological toolkit.

The three remaining chapters concern spatial scales, starting with urban cultural policy. In this chapter, the authors choose to focus on cultural policies in the city, on the one hand through ‘the creative city’ and how this feeds into city branding, large-scale cultural events, and tourism, and on the other hand through urban and social sustainability. The chapter on national cultural policy starts with sub-chapters on the ‘grand national’ and ‘imagined communities, invented traditions, banal nationalisms’ – or, in the words of the authors, on the ‘uses of culture in the service of celebrating the nation’ (110) and ‘the use of culture to create, and continually reiterate, national identity’ (112). This is followed by a discussion of models and typologies of national support for the arts, public cultures, and systems of cultural patronage. Again, just as with their def-
inition of the theoretical and methodological contours of the field of cultural policy, the authors highlight the challenges at hand when trying to grapple with the interdisciplinarity of the field through straightforward categorisations. The chapter ends with a discussion of various interpretations and executions of the arm’s length principle and the linkage between subnational cultural policy and national cultural policy, thereby laying the groundwork for the last chapter on international cultural policy. The discussion of subnational cultural policy is a useful addition to urban cultural policy as it places focus on what could also be termed ‘municipality cultural policy’ and how this relates to national and supranational policies. This final chapter delves primarily into cultural trade, cultural diversity, cultural development, cultural diplomacy; and regional groupings, with the European Union serving as a case.

David Bell and Kate Oakley’s *Cultural Policy* does what it sets out to do and is therefore, as noted above, a welcome addition to similar books that attempt to sketch out the field of cultural policy. One of the main strengths of the book is its accessibility and readability. It lives up to its objective of providing a comprehensive work on the field of cultural policy. Structurally, the initial discussion on culture, policy, and cultural policy, followed by the three spatial dimensions, work well to frame contemporary discussions and debates within the field. The authors’ efforts to include topical examples from outside the English-speaking world are also appreciated.

It would also, however, have suited the authors’ spatial approach to include the mixed spatiality of digital cultures as well as a more thorough discussion of the linkages between cultural policy and media and communication policy. The converging characteristic of digital cultural politics concerns infrastructures on a macro-level and how these relate to cultural production, consumption, and use on a micro-level, for instance through social media and much-debated terms like user-generated content and ‘prosumption’. This relates to many of the issues discussed in the book, whether governance, education, identity, arts, aesthetics, participation, copyright, the subnational, the national, and the supranational. It therefore seems peculiar not to treat this pressing topic in more detail.

Despite this deficiency, *Cultural Policy* serves its purpose well and will be heartily welcomed by researchers, teachers, and students within the field of cultural policy.

**REFERENCES**


