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PEER REVIEWED ARTICLE

# Not cool, but cosy

*Five perspectives on Nordic city cultural policies*

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## ABSTRACT

This article scrutinises the dominant discourses detected in the cultural policies of the Nordic capitals and looks into how these fit general understandings of the Nordic cultural model. The article applies critical discourse analysis to a variety of policy documents that describe the cultural policies of the Nordic capitals and leans towards theoretical frameworks of Nordic cultural policy and city cultural policy. Findings indicate that even though the cities' cultural policies are inspired by discourses resembling narratives supported by the creative industries, cool capitalism, and economic instrumentalisation, these are not at the forefront of their policies. To the contrary, egalitarian aims, access, and participation are high on the agenda for all of the Nordic capitals where emphasis is on openness, access, inclusion, participation, and local cultural contexts rather than artistic excellence or economic incentives.

## Keywords

nordic cultural model | city cultural policy | Nordic capitals

'The Nordic cultural model' and 'Nordic cultural policy' have been widely discussed. The theme of the 2003 publication *The Nordic Cultural Model* (ed. Duelund) was, for instance, taken up again in the 2008 special issue of *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (Mangset, et al.) in which ten ideal-type typologies were identified as characteristic of Nordic cultural policies. These include focus on welfare policy, tradition of strong involvement by public authorities, egalitarian aims that go hand in hand with socio-cultural perspectives, and emphasis on decentralisation. As it is framed in the editors' introduction, 'local and regional cultural administrations and institutional infrastructures are quite strong' (2008: 2). The editors rightly point out that such typologies sometimes exaggerate the differences between cultural policy models rather than scrutinising the differences within these models. Whether Chartrand's and McCaughey's (1989) facilitator, patron, architecture, and engineer variations; Littoz-Monnet's (2007) liberal, dirigiste, and federal variations; or Mulchay's (2006) division of cultural value systems into patrimony, identity, social welfare, and libertarian categories, such models should therefore be seen as identifying perspectives that can and do change over time. These 'changes over time' occur not only between these model archetypes but also within them.

The focus of this article will therefore be on the ‘within’, looking in particular at what could be termed ‘municipality cultural policies’, ‘urban cultural policies’, or ‘city cultural policies’. More concretely, the aim of this article is to scrutinise the most recent cultural policies of the five Nordic capitals and inspect how these relate to the aforementioned discourses of ‘Nordic cultural policy’. Do the Nordic capitals’ cultural policies mirror the objectives of public state policy, or can a shift in policy aims be perceived when moving from the national level to that of the Nordic capitals?

### THEORY, METHOD, AND EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

The theoretical framework will be composed of existing research that describes key features of Nordic cultural policy and various writings on city cultural policy. Methodologically, this article will apply critical discourse analysis as developed by Norman Fairclough (1992, 2003) focusing in particular on how recent cultural policy documents from Helsinki, Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Reykjavik frame the dominant discourses within their policies. Specific attention will therefore be given to orders of discourse and the ideological and political effects of discourse.

In this regard, Fairclough emphasises a critical view of ideology in which bodies of texts are analysed from the perspective of their effect on power relations. Indeed, in Fairclough’s view, ideology should be perceived as ‘a modality of power’ and as ‘representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation’ (2003: 9). Texts therefore have social effects and can be analysed as ‘bundles’ or as what Fairclough refers to as discourse practice and social practice. In this discourse practice context, the important concepts are those of *interdiscursivity* and *intertextual chains*. The former is useful ‘to specify what discourse types are drawn upon in the discourse sample under analysis, and how’ (1992: 232) while the latter is useful ‘to specify the distribution of a (type of) discourse sample by describing the intertextual chains it enters into, that is, the series of text types it is transformed into or out of’ (1992: 232). Finally, on a social practice level, the general objective is to specify ‘the nature of the social practice of which the discourse practice is a part’ (1992: 237). In other words, the aims are to explain why the discourse practice manifests itself the way it does and to identify how the discourse practice affects the social practice. Again, from this perspective, the analysis focuses on orders of discourse and the ideological and political effects of discourse. Orders of discourse aim ‘to specify the relationship of the instance of social and discursive practice to the orders of discourse it draws upon, and the effects of reproducing or transforming orders of discourse to which it contributes’ (1992: 237–238) while emphasis on the ideological effects of discourse is useful for scrutinising how these affect systems of knowledge and belief, social relations, and social identities.

In terms of limiting the scope of the article as well as establishing its contemporaneity, recent cultural policy documents of significance to the five Nordic capitals will be analysed. However, it is important to note that ‘cultural policy documents’ belong to different levels and have different roles in communicating and determining a given city’s cultural policy. In some cases, municipalities have produced specific visions that have been discussed and debated in the city councils and therefore take the role of leading policy documents within the field. This is, for instance, the case for the key documents ‘Culture is a Human Right’ (Reykjavik) and ‘The City of Copenhagen Cultural and Leisure Policy’ (Copenhagen). Although these reports represent good starting points for inspecting the privileged discourses within these cities’ cultural realms, they are both supplemented by actions plans that translate the policies into specific efforts<sup>1</sup> and thereby form intertextual chains with these documents. In contrast, the City of Oslo, the City of Stockholm, and the City of Helsinki do not frame their cultural policies with such overarching visions, and in these cases I have been advised<sup>2</sup> to make use of city council strategies, strategy programmes, annual reports, action plans, cultural reports, and comprehensive publications with facts and figures regarding the cultural sector.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the five cities have different institutional structures for organising the cultural sector and have different ways of framing their cultural policies makes the comparative dimension a tricky one. These are organisational issues that feed into and affect the general policy outcomes, but as noted above, the production of documents also resides on different levels and is dependent on different governance strategies. In comparative terms, this is, however, not a recent challenge to the field of cultural policy. Kawashima (1995) points to lack of approaches that are ‘comparative in methodology’ (292) and suggests a framework based on identifying issues and choice of scope, policy objectives, policy measures, policy results, and cross-national policy research.

1. I wish to thank Signý Pálsdóttir, Head of Cultural Office at the City of Reykjavik’s Department of Culture and Tourism, and Lisette Liljedahl Gøth, Specialist at the Office for Culture and Leisure at the City of Copenhagen, for providing me with this information.
2. Many thanks to Sara Kuusi, Cultural Planning Officer at the City of Helsinki Cultural Office; Mats Sylwan, Specialist at the Cultural Office, City of Stockholm; and Karianne Kampevold Sætre, Head of Department for Cultural Development, Department of Culture, City of Oslo.
3. These are ‘Aðgerðir sem fylgja markmiðum í Menningarstefnu Reykjavíkurborgar 2014–2020’, ‘Culture is a Human Right’, ‘Borg með hjarta: Starfsáætlun 2014’, ‘Fjölbreytt menning – friðsæl borg: Starfsáætlun 2015’, ‘The City of Helsinki Strategy Programme 2013–2016’, ‘City of Helsinki Cultural Office: Year 2014 in Brief’, ‘Arts and Culture in Helsinki’, ‘Helsinki Strategy Programme 2013–2016’, ‘The City of Copenhagen Cultural and Leisure Policy 2011–2015’, ‘En by i “bevægelse”’: Handleplan’, ‘Kulturrapport 2014 Stockholms kulturförvaltning’, ‘Verksamhetsplan 2015 för Kulturförvaltningen’, ‘Kultur i ögonhöjd: För, med och av barn och unga’, ‘Förslag til kulturvision: Strategisk plan för kulturen i Stockholm stad’, ‘Kulturnämnden: Kulturförvaltningen’, ‘Årsberetning 2014 Kulturetaten’, ‘Årsberetning 2015 Kulturetaten’, ‘Byrådets forslag til budsjett 2016 og økonomiplan 2016–2019’, ‘Oslos kommunes strategi for det visuelle kunstfeltet’, and ‘Nye regler for disponering av midler avsatt til Oslo kommunes kunstordning og regler for mottak av kunstgaver’.

While suggesting certain themes as relevant for such comparative investigation, Gray also accounts for the complexity of the field of cultural policy by maintaining that ‘clearly there is no *single* approach to the study of cultural policy; instead a multi-dimensional approach is best suited to the analysis of this area of policy depending upon what the analyst is interested in comparing’ (1996: 214). Gray thus highlights the significance of decoding the given context. The aim of the present article is not to undertake a general comparison between, for instance, municipal expenditure, decision-making and administration, legal provisions governing the field, or municipal cultural institutions, as is done in the *Compendium – Cultural Policies & Trends in Europe* project.<sup>4</sup> The aim is instead to account for dominant discourses underlying visions, policies, and strategies and their ideological and political effects as well as how these relate to established views on the Nordic cultural model.

### THE NORDIC CULTURAL MODEL AND CITY CULTURAL POLICY

The ‘Nordic Cultural Policy in Transition’ research project, which culminated in the extensive volume *The Nordic Cultural Model* (2003), was comprised of national studies as well as comparative studies of selected sectors. In terms of kinship with other cultural policy models, Duelund places the Nordic variant firmly within the ‘architect model’ (Hillmann-Chartrand & McCaughey 1989) but maintains that there are significant differences from other such models within Europe. These are, according to Duelund (2003: 523), ‘greater emphasis on the egalitarian dimension in cultural policy’, ‘formalised funding programmes for *individual* artists’, ‘an “arm’s length” with input from *artists*’, Nordic contract laws in terms of copyright, ‘high degree of public funding of the arts and cultural institutions because of insignificant private sponsorship, little support from non-profit organisations and low earnings on admission fees’, ‘high degree of participation by a socially diverse sector of the population in public cultural activities’, and ‘relatively high degree of autonomy for small cultures manifested by self-administration and independent cultural institutions.’

These final two differences feed directly into city cultural policy as access and participation are recurring terms in the Nordic capitals’ cultural policies, and the same can be said for the importance of cultural institutions and cultural housing. Although Duelund’s summary does not treat cities specifically, the linkage between the national, regional, and local is important since the framework set up by state authorities inevitably affects cultural manifestation at the local level. It is thus worth noting these two points from Duelund’s account of common elements: ‘In all these countries, the overriding objectives have been created as part of welfare policy, with the aim of promoting artistic freedom, cultural diversity, ‘aesthetic education’ and democracy, as well as in order to

4. The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe is a public information and monitoring service that contains cultural policy profiles of 43 countries.

construct national identity and a sense of community' (522). And again: 'The overriding objectives, measures and organisational forms, despite variations, have been characterised by similar changes, which have led to the situation where the original welfare-based doctrines from the last two decades have gradually been exploited for industrial/political purposes and for political legitimisation' (522).

First, it is interesting to inspect the role capitals play in enhancing objectives of welfare policy, cultural diversity, education, and democracy. Second, it is interesting to examine how these discourses feed into national discourses in terms of identity politics and what Duelund calls 'sense of community'. Are the cities interested in these national constructions, or do they aim to create their own local city identities? Third, one of the major conclusions of the 'Nordic Cultural Policy in Transition' project is that there has been an escalation of instrumental rationales in terms of using the cultural field and cultural policy instruments to achieve goals in other areas, for instance to enhance economic and political goals. Indeed, when accounting for the Nordic rationales for cultural policy from 1960 to 1995 (and onwards), Duelund maintains that Nordic cultural policy has moved from phases in which democratisation of culture and cultural democracy were at the forefront to a current phase of increased social and financial instrumentalisation of policies for arts and culture, scaling down of educational aims, and scaling up of interests promoted by cultural industries. Duelund frames the aims of the most recent phase he discusses as follows: 'The aim of this new strategy is to exploit the arts and culture in order to stimulate economic growth' (516). This overall progression accords with other writings on the Nordic cultural model (Bakke 2001; Duelund 2008; Mangset, et al. 2008; Skot-Hansen 2005) as well as those that take a European city cultural policy perspective (Navarro & Clark 2012).

However, as this brief discussion shows, Nordic cultural policy is far from a coherent policy with consistent aims. Indeed, several discourses emerge differently in accordance with the different contexts of the nation-states in question. Even though particular discourses, such as those privileging the symbiosis of cultural and economic realms, can be said to be dominant during specific phases, this does not mean that discourses on cultural participation, cultural diversity, cultural democracy, and cultural citizenship have vanished. To the contrary, it seems more as though cultural policy seeks to include multifaceted discourses within its realm. Returning to Fairclough, we must be aware of the ideological and political effects of discourse. When, for instance, do these multifaceted discourses bundle and emerge as discursive formations in the Foucauldian manner, i.e. when do numbers of statements define regularity in terms of positions, functionings, and transformations (Foucault 2002)? What, for instance, are the ideological and political effects of promoting both amateur cultural activities and running professional cultural institutions largely composed of works by professional artists? What are the effects of promoting welfare policy at the same time as encouraging symbiosis between cultural activities and the economic realm? Can the city policies in question promote these

different positions of regularity simultaneously, or are there detectable discursive formations that privilege certain positions at the expense of others?

The editors of *International Journal of Cultural Policy*'s special issue on Nordic cultural policy are attentive to these tensions as they rhetorically discuss whether 'international geographical mobility may render classic nationalistic cultural policy meaningless' (Mangset, et al. 2008: 3) or whether such statements have actually resulted in substantial structural change. This is an important point since discourses on city branding and the city as a creative hub are internationally oriented, and global, cosmopolitan cities are often seen as being associated more with other cities than with their national contexts. Indeed, these narratives are often constructed around the identity of the city rather than national identity. However, the national dimension surely cannot be abandoned, as historical legacies are instrumental in constructing the wider frames in which cultural policy operates: 'Contemporary cultural policy regimes result from these various national histories, which have led to various notions of viewing culture and its political aspects, and provided various legacies in terms of institutions, types of funding, and modes of organization' (Dubois 2015: 461). However, as Dubois also states, it is not just historical legacies that determine these wider frames, that which Ahearne terms 'explicit cultural policy', but also what Ahearne terms 'implicit cultural policy'. While the former is focused on 'any cultural policy that a government labels as such' (2009: 143), implicit cultural policy is 'any political strategy that looks to work on the culture of the territory over which it presides' (143), widening the focus on culturally related issues within other sectors, such as education, media, foreign policy, and economics. This is a convenient way of demonstrating the complexities of framing cultural policy, and its intersection with other policy areas such as urban policy, welfare policy, education policy, immigration policy, and economic policy.

Returning to the 'Nordic Cultural Policy in Transition' project, one of the main conclusions from a local/regional perspective is 'that an instrumentalisation of art and culture has occurred in tandem with regionalisation, in part through the introduction of performance control in the administrative system at national, regional and municipal levels and between these three levels, the desire to promote a stronger symbiosis between art and industrial development, and the achievement of greater private sector financing of cultural activities' (Duelund & Larsson 2003: 407).

Here, the conclusion is that what seems to have occurred at a national level also accounts for regions and municipalities. Even though these conclusions seem rather decisive, Kangas and Vestheim do claim that the Nordic model remains resilient with regards to this liberal direction and that it can still be characterised as a cultural policy based on public funding rather than a market-driven cultural policy. However, even if their conclusions suggest that the field of cultural policy and cultural institutions has not changed overnight, they also share the common assumptions that 'from the 1990s the concepts of new public



management, technology and innovation, globalisation, and creative industries were included in the cultural policy discourses' (2010: 278). Furthermore, they claim that competitiveness is increasingly a key issue as 'more public funding is targeted to support instrumentalisation of art and culture (cultural industries, creative industries, innovation) to strengthen national economical competitiveness' (275). Even though their focus is at the national level, this is an interesting statement in the light of city cultural policy as well.

It is significant that the cities discussed in this article are capitals since the state's overall cultural policy administration and its leading cultural institutions such as national museums, national galleries, and national theatre are located in these cities. The cultural atmospheres of these capitals therefore cannot be separated from the state's involvement in the field. Indeed, a city's manifold cultural manifestations are partly outcomes of an amalgam of the state's and the city's intervention within the cultural field, alongside other external factors that meet Ahearne's notion of implicit cultural policy. Bell and Oakley take up this point when they maintain that a city's cultural dynamics rarely represent deliberate cultural policy because they are 'much more often the legacy of education policy, transport policy, planning and licensing laws, migration and housing policy, of philanthropy and commercial hard sell – mixed together with a variety of cultural assets, public and private' (2015: 80).

This is, of course, true for all policy. Policy is not independent but is instead, as Dubois remarks, intermeshed with historical contexts and the prioritisation of certain topics and fields at the expense of others. As Kangas and Vestheim note, 'policy is about choice; the choice of reasons for (in)action, the choice of policy instruments, the choice of how to respond to the consequences of policy outputs' (2010: 275). Although there are multiple factors that support concrete policy, the capitals in question also host considerable cultural policy interventions in which particular discourses are prioritised. In general terms, Bell and Oakley link city cultural policy with emphasis on flagship projects, often manifested by grandiose buildings or festivals, and on cultural quarters and clusters. These are closely linked with creative industries and strategically used to brand cities.

This link to the creative industries and the creative classes is important as it has strongly affected cultural policies in the Nordic countries over the past 15 years. Florida's work on cities and creative classes were particularly influential at the dawn of the new century, celebrating the three T's of tolerance, talent, and technology, and his indexing system for cities was based on aspects such as a city's child-friendly score, creativity index, bohemian index, and gay index ranking (2002). Florida's analysis here focuses on the dynamics of cities, a point that he underlines in a later work in which he more specifically discusses urban policy, cities, and competitiveness (a keyword for his analysis): 'Urban policy must be resurrected from the backwaters of social policy and become a cornerstone of national competitiveness planning. A strong urban policy is as important to our nation's future as a strong innovation policy' (2005: 259).

Competitiveness, innovation, and creativity are keywords in such analyses, and in these contexts cultural policy and urban policy often converge with economic aims to form an important urban policy agenda.

Despite being influential in many urban planning strategies, Florida has attracted criticism. One noteworthy criticism from a cultural policy perspective is that of McGuigan (2009), who specifically mentions the broadness of Florida's definition of the creative class and its supposedly constant thirst for experiences. In terms of the creative city, McGuigan states that Florida is more interested in economic policy and 'how it may be enhanced by cultural means, thus reducing culture to economics' (294). McGuigan takes an example of the influence that Florida's ideas have had on UK cultural policy, in which the notion of the creative economy and the creative industries were high on the agenda, resulting in a development similar to that identified by Duellund in the Nordic cultural model: 'Thus, cultural-policy discourse has, in effect, been infected by economistic reasoning and, indeed, turns into a branch – and a weak branch at that – of economic policy' (295). McGuigan's account of cool capitalism also serves well to demonstrate how the concept of 'cool' is increasingly leveraged to ensure capitalist legitimacy, 'hence the role of "cool" in translating disaffection into acceptance and compliance' (2009: 1). McGuigan provides a wide range of examples when discussing the effects of the appliance of 'cool' in capitalism and how it shapes mass consumerism and consumer culture. One of these is the use and political impact of the creative industries, in which McGuigan highlights Florida's argument as 'the very epitome of cool-capitalist thinking' (162). Commenting on Florida's work, McGuigan claims that to the cool creative classes, creative capital exceeds social capital, and these creative people in the cool cities are individualistic and expressive: 'They like "cool" scenes in which to hang out and where they can interact with similar go-getting bobos without necessarily reinventing the intimate communal ties of small-town America' (164). While Florida frames his theory within an American context, these reflections have wider implications in a Nordic city context.

Florida's writings on the creative class and creative industries (and McGuigan's critique of the same) are important because the message they convey has proved influential for state cultural policies in the Nordic countries, and Florida's ideas resurface in policy documents considered below. This is particularly the case for policy attempts that aim to bring together the cultural and economic fields. However, as Bell and Oakley rightly point out, when focusing on specific forms of experience, cultural policies are primarily segmented at certain class, in this case the creative class, which can result in gentrification and discrimination against those falling outside of that segment. Bell and Oakley therefore encourage policymakers to be more precise when it comes to whose culture is being discussed and privileged: 'The long-standing debates between supporters of "high art" and "popular culture", between public and private investments and old and new cultural institutions is given fresh perspective by the argument that culture feeds into and can influence levels of social well-being' (2015: 95).



This emphasis on influencing levels of social well-being resembles the emphasis the Nordic cultural model has placed on egalitarian and socio-cultural goals. Gilmore takes this up specifically when maintaining that there is a tendency to measure cultural participation from the perspective of established cultural forms provided by established cultural institutions: 'Practices and values associated with everyday, quiet and vernacular participation are obscured by official knowledge which privileges legitimate forms and institutions and neglects the local contexts of participation' (2013: 94). This can be said to be a symptom of the concrete measurement tendency that is concomitant with new public management, in which quantifiable results are privileged. According to Bell and Oakley, the alternative would be 'to concentrate on funding a diverse mix of activities, particularly at a highly localised level' (2015: 95). The question is then whether the cultural policies of the Nordic capitals favour discourses that promote these socio-cultural aims at a localised level or whether they are preoccupied with measurable results, for instance with highly visible flagship projects with effective branding potential?

However, before turning to how the Nordic capitals frame their cultural policies, few words will be dedicated to how discourses concerning urban policies relate to city cultural policies. The notion of 'urban' is increasingly transforming into that of 'culture' in city cultural policies. Here Grodach and Silver (2013) apply the term 'politics of urban cultural policy' and argue that similar patterns can be detected. This is similar to McGuigan's identification of how the concept of 'cool' allows economic rationales to move to the forefront. Grodach and Silver maintain that cities consistently refer to culture when addressing broader urban issues. Indeed, they claim that, in this process, 'established concerns such as artistic excellence, cultural appreciation, heritage, arts education, and accessibility have been remade and reprioritized alongside urban economic revitalization objectives' (2013: 2). But this remaking and reprioritisation comes at a cost, resulting in disagreements between different objectives of cultural policy: 'More broadly, political conflicts, coalitions, and compromises have emerged between groups seeking support for artistic excellence and those seeking investment in commercial creative industries, access to cultural opportunities for diverse populations and aspirations for global creative city status, and between support for artistic production and opportunities for arts consumption' (Grodach and Silver 2013: 2). Grodach and Silver thus point to a similar tension as do Bell and Oakley in terms of gentrification and exclusion of those who do not fit the narrative of cultural economic urban development, in which they specifically mention the urban poor, ethnic minorities, and paradoxically enough artists: 'Thus, as urban policy lays greater emphasis on place character as a development tool, arts and cultural actors become implicated in economic and spatial polarization and conflict in contradictory ways' (4).

Thus, the 'urban', the 'cool', the creative classes, and the creative industries are prominent concepts when discussing the various contours of city cultural policies. That said, both city cultural policies and national cultural policies are

always subject to a specific order of discourse, which prioritises certain discourses at the expense of others. While this has mainly been described at a national level in a Nordic context, I wish to conclude this discussion of city cultural policy by referring to a well-known study that focuses on cultural policy and urban regeneration from a Western European perspective. Bianchini (1993) identifies similar trends from a European city perspective, arguing that ‘the basic aim of 1950s urban cultural policies of promoting high-quality art and widening access to it remains one of the reasons for cultural funding at municipal level. Equally, the 1970s objective of endowing community and marginalised social groups with an independent cultural voice retains much of its validity’ (18). Bianchini’s study demonstrates the well-known tension between anthropological community-based policy making and policy making that focuses on the artistic/intellectual: ‘There are conflicts between the goal of maintaining prestigious facilities for “high” culture marketed to wealthy visitors which emphasise “exclusiveness”, and of opening up popular access to them. Even more problematic is reconciling the need to develop elite “flagship” schemes to enhance urban competitiveness with decentralised, community-based provision of more popular cultural activities, targeted in particular at low income and marginalised social groups’ (18–19).

Bianchini further states that, in the attempt to receive financial support from the government and the private sector, city decision-makers within the cultural sectors often focus on elite flagship projects rather than decentralised community-based cultural activities. Finally, he traces a similar tendency as do Bell and Oakley in terms of internationalisation and city branding from a global perspective, i.e. a tension between the Floridian focus on attracting the creative class and the development of pre-existing local and regional identities as well as ‘the cultures of often socially and economically disadvantaged immigrant communities’ (19).

### CULTURAL POLICIES IN THE FIVE NORDIC CAPITALS

The discussion thus far has scrutinised the Nordic cultural model and pinpointed how some of the dominant discourses driving the model relate to city cultural policy. In the following analysis of the cultural policies of the five Nordic capitals and in line with Fairclough’s approach, special attention will be given to the orders of discourse and the ideological and political effects of discourse in a wider social practice context. It is important to be attentive to how ideology works as a mode of power and how the cultural policy documents of the five capitals in question draw upon specific types of discourses and create intertextual chains with similar discourses as those at a national level. The approach taken in the following analysis is not structured in accordance with the cultural policy of each capital but instead in terms of the overarching discourses that emerge from the empirical evidence. The analysis is thus structured in terms of the city cultural policy’s emphasis on *coolness and economics-driven cultural policy*; on *educational and cultural values*; and finally

on *egalitarian aims, participation, and access*. The analytical categories do not accord with those previously identified at the national level, with the omission of the category of artistic excellence and the high arts being particularly notable. This implies that the cultural policies in the Nordic capitals promote and prioritise different discourses than what might be perceived at the state level.

### Coolness and economics-driven cultural policy

As mentioned above, one of the main conclusions of various research into the Nordic cultural model is that it seems to be moving towards cultural economics, in which city culture and cultural life are key to city branding strategy, image, and identity – an approach akin to McGuigan’s account of cool capitalism. This is evident in the cultural policy documents from all of the Nordic capitals. Copenhagen links these discourses not only to the city itself but also to the larger Capital Region and Øresund Region: ‘Coherence within the region makes it extremely attractive in the global competition for investments, labour and tourism. The challenge is to plan the city so that it can accommodate population growth, support the potential of culture and sports for generating economic growth and develop cooperation with stakeholders outside the City of Copenhagen’ (The City of Copenhagen Cultural and Leisure Policy 2011–2015 2012: 7). In terms of large-scale festivals and the city branding potential of such events: ‘Events and festivals support Copenhagen as a great and exciting place to live, work and visit – and present the city in new, alternative ways. Copenhagen should be an international metropolis. The city should therefore sponsor mega events influenced by cultural diversity and which promote a distinct Copenhagen identity, as well as put the city on the international event calendar’ (16). Furthermore, it is claimed the ‘Copenhagen’s festivals are developed for larger national and international audiences. This means that there must be a large pool of resources earmarked specifically for festivals and events’ (16). The Copenhagen vision is thus so attentive to branding potential that it proposes that, at least once every four years, the city should host such an event ‘that puts the city in the international spotlight’ (16). This vision links such discourses of coolness, branding, and image with overall urban planning and what it calls creative entrepreneurs: ‘Culture is also growth, finances and jobs. The challenge is to help the growth areas and talented people to move forward with their creative and innovative ideas to transform ingenuity into actual growth. The goal is for cultural entrepreneurs to stand on their own two feet as independent businesses’ (19).

Similar discourses can be traced in the cultural policy of the other Nordic capitals. Reykjavik’s policy makes the link between identity and creative innovation one of its three main guidelines: ‘The City’s identity is based on creative innovation, initiative, and cultural heritage, and reflects international trends’ (Culture is a Human Right 2014: 7), ‘creative arts are to be integral components of the city’s social and economic fabric’ (9), and ‘Reykjavik will strengthen its image, both domestically and internationally, while also enhanc-

ing social and economic well-being' (9). Furthermore, it is maintained that 'it is important to emphasise the ways in which culture, arts and other creative fields contribute to the economy, both directly and indirectly' (9). Like Copenhagen's vision, Reykjavik's vision emphasises the city as an international, cosmopolitan city of culture: 'Cultural life in Reykjavik is to be defined by its cosmopolitan character, based on a combination of a unique cultural identity and participation in the international community' (21), a trend that is also detectable in the policy documents from Helsinki, Stockholm, and Oslo.

As noted above, Helsinki, Stockholm, and Oslo do not tailor their cultural policies as specific visions and policies in the manner of Reykjavik and Copenhagen. As a result, their cultural policies must be located within a wider policy framing. In *Helsinki's Strategy Programme 2013–2014*, culture (in its explicit definition) is, for instance, not particularly visible. The city has three main visions: 'Helsinki is a community for all its residents and a capital with good services, open decision-making processes and flourishing science, art and creativity scenes. Helsinki is a world-class business and innovation centre and its success will benefit the residents' wellbeing and the whole country. The Metropolitan Area will be developed as a uniformly operating area, surrounded by nature, i.e. a good place to live, study, work and do business' (2013: 3). The city's main values are resident orientation, ecological approach, fairness and equality, economy, safety, involvement and participation, and enterprise friendliness. Culture is, however, implicitly quite prevalent in Helsinki's strategy, both in terms of involvement and participation and in terms of economic policy, wellbeing, and constituting a good place to live. This is also the case when it comes to city branding, where Helsinki is said to be full of life, internationally known, fun, and attractive. Entrepreneurship, tourism, and leisure activities go hand in hand.

Similar discourses emerge in Stockholm's strategic plan for culture, *Proposal for Cultural Vision*. Culture is seen as 'a rapidly growing part of the service industry and as such has great significance for Stockholm's economic and social development' (Förslag til kulturvision n.d.: 7).<sup>5</sup> There are three pillars to this vision: the city is full of experiences and is attractive, the city is accessible and welcoming, and the city is provocative and innovative. This overarching vision is further framed in the following way: 'Stockholm shall grow with culture! The city attracts people from Sweden and the rest of the world who are drawn by the city's pulse, a place for international meetings and creative potential as well as space offering alternative lifestyles and cultural forms' (4). Generally speaking, this vision is preoccupied with combining the local and the global, with presenting Stockholm as both a dynamic local place and, in tandem with the city's official marketing slogan, as 'the Capital of Scandinavia' (10). The vision furthermore emphasises the relationships between culture, cultural entrepreneurship, and incubator businesses, for instance by suggesting new forms of collaboration between these sectors.

5. The author translates excerpts from documents that are not in English.

The 2014 and 2015 annual reports from Oslo's cultural department are less rewarding with regards to overarching visions and strategies, but they do give a detailed overview of the city's five main goals and how these are to be achieved. There is a focus on egalitarianism, access, participation, and cultural education. The first and the fifth goals are broadly formulated. The department is meant to act as an 'active organiser, developer, and co-operator for versatile and innovative arts and cultural life in Oslo' (Årsberetning 2015: 16) and must be 'a relevant premise supplier for the field of culture and other sections of the municipality' (16). This permits an implicit cultural understanding, which the annual report links directly to urban planning. It is, however, firmly stated that the department is 'safeguarding the interests of cultural life in processes of urban planning' (16), highlighting that the cultural sector is prioritised at the expense of other sectors. Oslo City Council's budget proposals are clearer with regards to this link to the creative industries, stating that 'cultural industries provide jobs, generate value and strengthen the city's attractiveness' (Byrådets forslag til budsjett 2016 2015: 11).

The capitals thus stimulate discourses that adhere to the concept of cool, to economic policy, image, and city branding by applying culture in these specific contexts. Even if this is the case, however, none of the capitals make this a central theme of their policies. Indeed, they are equally preoccupied with educational and cultural values, and even more so with egalitarian objectives, in which access and participation are of primary concern.

### **Educational and cultural values**

As mentioned above, educational and cultural values are prominent in all of these policies. Reykjavik's cultural policy highlights that 'culture contains value in itself, thus ample space is to be created for unexpected development and robust growth within culture and arts' (9) and that 'a city's culture and arts contain the seeds from which future endeavours will flourish' (9). This complements educational aims since 'arts and culture are to be important parts of education for children and youths in the city,' and 'preschools, elementary schools and leisure activity centres are to maintain good working relationships with artists, museums and other cultural institutions' (11). Although cultural values are also prominent, these are not tailored to the sublime or artistic excellence but instead focus on art's disruptive nature and social purpose: 'In order for art to serve its social purpose as a source of new and original ideas, it needs freedom to grow and develop on its own terms. Art is not only a source of pleasure. Its role is also to disrupt – it surprises and points out things we might not otherwise notice, or perhaps not wish to see' (15).

Similar patterns can be traced in Copenhagen's policy, which states that 'the arts, culture and sports have value in themselves, expressed in the desire to experience, participate and reflect' (6) and furthermore that 'they also provide opportunities to address other challenges outside of their immediate scope of action. Among other things, cultural and leisure activities play an important

role in dealing with challenges related to health, social issues and inclusion' (6). These values are not grounded in a specific artistic/intellectual understanding of the culture concept, but as is claimed in the policy, the 'fundamental values are diversity, involvement, desire, quality, democracy and openness to change' (6).

Among the main aims of Oslo's department of culture are to spread knowledge about art and culture and to make these accessible to all. There is a special emphasis on children, youths, and new user groups. Generally speaking, Oslo's annual reports are preoccupied with safeguarding and promoting the interests of the cultural institutions that are under its auspices, and this is repeatedly framed on the basis of art and culture. Educational aims are also prevalent, for instance in Oslo's budget proposal for 2016: 'Children and youths will have better chances of experiencing art and culture and participating in the city's cultural arenas' (11).

Helsinki's strategy is likewise preoccupied with educational values and gender equality: 'The unique city culture of Helsinki will be developed. Culture is at everyone's disposal. Attention is paid to culture and art education for children and youths in schools and in other City operations. In culture and sports services, equality between genders is noted' (17). Finally, Stockholm's policy is preoccupied with culture as a significant factor in democracy, personal development, education, experience, and creativity (7).

Even though economic policy, branding, and identity politics play a role in these city cultural policies alongside a clear emphasis on cultural and educational values, all of the cities place significant weight on the final theme discussed in this paper, namely egalitarian aims, access, and cultural participation.

### **Egalitarian aims, access and participation**

In Stockholm's strategic plan, accessibility, welcoming character, and attractiveness are key elements in the city's cultural vision. This emphasis on access and cultural participation underlie all of the elements of the vision, realised through concepts such as openness, tolerance, diversity, meeting places, democracy, and multiculturalism: 'Culture's new meeting places should be characterised by diversity. This means that these meeting places should include everyone: people living in Stockholm with non-Swedish backgrounds, different family constellations, those who seek company, or those who enjoy it together. Stockholm welcomes all people and families, no matter their cultural background' (n.d. 9).

Helsinki's strategic plan similarly emphasises young people's participatory potential, improved local environments, enhanced participation by immigrants, civil participation, the openness of cultural houses to all kinds of communities, the ability of cultural houses to 'offer a possibility for small groups



to put on their own shows and presentations' (17), enhanced availability of cultural and library services, and the openness of the city's art and museum collections in the spirit of open data. Finally, participation and immigrants' roles in these processes are phrased as follows: 'The versatile production of culture offers many possibilities for participation. Immigrants' roles as consumers and producers of art and culture are reinforced' (17).

Copenhagen's policy is preoccupied with access to and use of facilities, whether cultural institutions, cultural houses, or liminal zones that are temporarily used for cultural events: 'A dynamic and vibrant major city requires institutions that are available many hours a day. Longer opening hours, both staffed and unstaffed, means more opportunities for the new, larger entities' (10), and '[I]ibraries, sports facilities and cultural centres should be open for electronic access outside the staffed opening hours, thus making the spaces available to users for more hours a day' (10). In terms of access, use, and cultural institutions, the policy furthermore promotes active citizens through processes of co-creation, in which users should be 'involved in projects and initiatives of short duration and can develop, together with the employees, specific initiatives in the institutions' (14). This is further emphasised by the phrase 'accessible institutions', including not only venues for cultural activities but also meeting places for people living in the city: 'It is the institutions that tie the general goals in with local needs and contribute to implementing the policy in practice. They should signify openness and accessibility and should be developed for varied, daily use. They should also mirror the needs of the users, both those that are well known and the ones that are less obvious' (15).

The annual reports from Oslo's cultural department are clear concerning access and participation in terms of both the public and artists: 'Many of the department's cultural estates are open as meeting places for activities and dissemination of art and culture to the general public. The department experiences great interest from actors, who desire access to facilities both for cultural productions and dissemination' (11). This is also linked to urban planning and use of temporary housing for artistic and cultural purposes, as is for instance detectable in the Copenhagen vision as well. In Oslo's case, this is formulated in terms of the department 'focusing on and arranging for the city's temporarily empty facilities to be filled with cultural content' (16). Access and participation are also high on the agenda in Oslo's budget proposals for 2016, which state that 'Oslo is a city for everyone. All residents should have the possibility of living a good life, regardless of sexual orientation or social, ethnic, religious, or cultural background' (13).

Reykjavik's policy also goes a long way in this direction since one of the main guidelines is that 'cultural life is characterised by diversity, collaboration and active participation by both residents and visitors' (7). It is furthermore emphasised that the capital should 'serve as the country's leader in nurturing an image of cultural diversity' (9), and in terms of participation 'children, youths and their families are to be encouraged to participate in cultural activities and their

contributions are to be highly valued' (11). The policy even has a specific chapter on access and participation: 'Cultural life in the city is to be accessible to all and characterised by diversity, open mindedness, unity and respect. The city's cultural life is to enhance public participation and be conducive to positive social development' (17). As in the other Nordic capitals, participation is not primarily a matter of visiting 'classic' cultural institutions and events but rather of participating in local communities, sharing a sense of belonging, and celebrating diversity: 'The city's cultural life should be open to everyone so that each person has a sense of belonging and has equal access and can participate on his or her own terms. It is also important that the city encourages active participation' (17). Finally, this part of the policy is also preoccupied with equality and mutual understanding: 'In accordance with its human rights policy, the city regards equality and civil rights as guiding principles in all its activities. It is important that cultural diversity is acknowledged and supported by freedom of expression' (17).

## CONCLUSION

The texts scrutinised in this paper have interdiscursive and intertextual relations at the level of discourse practice, which produce ideological effects that influence systems of knowledge and belief, social relations, and social identities. The cultural policies of the Nordic capitals affect these systems of knowledge and belief and impact residents' everyday lives and social belonging. These interdiscursive and intertextual relations are formed within national boundaries since historical circumstances of state cultural policy affect cultural manifestations at a city level. But these relationships also form between the cities, as capitals of the Nordic countries. The former can be detected in the emphasis by all of the cities on egalitarian aims, access, use, and participation. As noted above, this is a key characteristic of the Nordic cultural model, which is clearly transmitted at a local city level.

However, even if this is the case, other discourses also arise, which focus on the city as an urban construction with its own identity and kinship to other cities. This can be detected in discourses on economic policy, image, and city branding and is ever clearer in the implicit application of these policies in which there is a blurring of the lines between cultural policy, urban policy, and social and welfare policies. Economic instrumentalisation cannot be said to be the primary policy objective at present, at least not according to McGuigan's account of cool capitalism and its relationship to the creative industries and the creative classes. Economic objectives in line with cool capitalism are simply overshadowed by cultural policy's role in promoting their 'cosiness' over their 'coolness'. Nordic city cultural policy is more preoccupied with allowing many discourses to reside and aims perhaps not for the 'whole way of life' but instead the 'good way of life', the Scandinavian style. In terms of class, there is no emphasis on the creative class, meaning that the cities avoid criticism related to exclusion. Instead, inclusion is high on the agenda, for instance by

focusing on a broad, anthropological understanding of the culture concept and by constructing implicit cultural policies that prioritise topics such as immigration, welfare, and social inclusion. These policies are attentive to cultural inclusion from the perspective of class, but unlike much of the literature on city cultural policy, the emphasis is not on the creative classes. This is also the case when seen from the perspective of the politics of urban cultural policy, which do not take the form of economic instrumentalisation but are instead more attentive to discourses concerning cultural diversity and cultural participation, particularly local contexts of participation. This is contrasting much of recent writings on the Nordic cultural model, which indeed have been emphasising economical development within Nordic cultural policy. The case here, is that many discourses co-exist, and judging by the documents analysed in this article, it is indeed not the economics-driven ones that are the most dominant, but rather the ones that celebrate egalitarian aims.

Thus, by emphasising openness, collaboration, versatility, multiculturalism, creativity, public participation, access, and use, the cultural policies of these cities help construct their identities and, perhaps paradoxically, their brands and images. This construction is, however, focused neither on the coolness of the creative classes and economic instrumentalisation nor on artistic excellence. Instead, it reinforces the inclusive, egalitarian dimensions of the Nordic cultural model.

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