



Cultural policy research spread across disciplines and administrative sectors

Introduction to Issue 1/2020

This issue of the *Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift / Nordic Journal of Cultural Policy* reminds us that academic research is not just about analyzing the subject matter (in this case, cultural policy) with scientific methods. It also relates to science politics and power hierarchies, both between and within institutionalized research fields. This is nicely illustrated in professor Per Mangset's commentary article, "An account of the academic institutionalization of cultural policy research. A Nordic perspective", which could be called his "memoirs" of how cultural policy research has gradually taken its place as an interdisciplinary area of research.

Mangset nicely shows how institutional settings often are designed to cater to bigger, more traditional disciplines (like sociology, political science, etc.), and do not always recognize new, interdisciplinary areas of interest. Ultimately, this is also one of the reasons why this journal is published, and why international, Nordic and national conferences for cultural policy research are organized. Obviously, Mangset tells a somewhat subjective story of what has happened. The perspective derives from someone who has been deeply involved. In case anyone feels that Mangset leaves gaps in the history of the academic establishment of cultural policy research, they should remember that we publish commentary articles, and encourage researchers to discuss, even debate.

Besides Per's "memoirs", this issue contains two referee articles and two book reviews. They illustrate how cultural policy as a research field covers a broad range of actions. Ole Marius Hylland shows how digital cultural politics in Norway has been a miscible effort involving different sectors, agencies and actors. Hylland refers to Bjarki Valtysson, who has defined digital cultural politics as follows: "a broad term meant to cover what traditionally is referred to as cultural policy, media policy and communication policy, how these converge and which effects this has on archival politics, institutional politics and user politics." Gradually, this has led to what can be described as digital cultural *policy*, which Hylland describes as "a field of hyperconvergence, where ideas, political tools, technology and policy areas are entangled to an increasing degree."

The second referee article by Linnéa Lindsköld, Mats Dolatkhah and Anna Lundh also takes us away from the cloisters of art and culture departments. Basically, they analyse Swedish education policies during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, as a form of cultural policy. They argue that "research on the politics of reading in Sweden can be reinvigorated by exploring the governance of cultural practices emanating from policy fields other than

explicit cultural policy.” Looking at these two referee articles, I’m sure you can see how I came to choose the title for this editorial. But it does not end here. The two book reviews, for their part, give food for thought about where, how and on which topics cultural policy research takes place.

Sofia Lindström Sol reviews *Kunst, Kultur og Deltagelse*, a work published in Denmark last year. It is a mix of articles, some of which are scientific and others more pragmatic descriptions of participation. Lindström Sol reminds us that participation in arts and culture always also relate to political and social questions. Art policies then become entangled with topics that have traditionally been the responsibility of other policy areas, for example social policy, equality, integration and inclusion.

In the other review, Matilda Hellman writes about the book *Är Trump postmodern?*, published in Sweden last year. Hellman, like the book, deals with post-modern intellectuals, relativism and ways of reasoning. In her opinion, “there has been a shift from paying attention to structures, institutions and cultures to seeing things in straightforward interest-relationships.” To some extent, such a shift might very well have happened. The good news is that due to its nature as a research area, cultural policy research has an indigenous cure against a shift of this kind. Otherwise it would not be research on cultural *policy* that always deals with institutional settings and guiding structures that have effect on the formation of culture.

Hellman also ends up criticizing contemporary social science of having become detached from “other societal institutions” (than university departments). There might be a link between this observation and how Mangset in his commentary article describes the development of cultural policy research. After all, many of us who do cultural policy research (including myself) still operate in between academic and more applied research. Whether this is seen as something positive (which it in my opinion is) or not depends on who you ask.

Lastly, I remind you of our calls for papers. In addition to the continuous general call, a new call for a thematic issue in 2021 about the **The Aesthetics of Cultural Policy** will be open until October. Please see the last pages of this issue for more information about both calls and share it in your respective networks.

I wish you a nice read!

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