

Measuring the Full Impact of Culture: Social Indicators and Canadian Cultural Policy

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Abstract : This paper argues that there is an opportunity for PCH to further expand its relevance within the Canadian policy context by taking advantage of the growing international trend of using social indicators for public policy evaluation. Within the mandate and vision of PCH, there is an incomplete understanding of the value that the arts and culture provide for Canadians, specifically with regard to four social indicators: community development, civic engagement, life satisfaction, and work-life balance. As will be shown, culture and the arts have a unique role to play in such quality of life indicators, and there is an opportunity for PCH to aid in the development of a comprehensive national framework that includes these indicators. This paper lays out approach to understanding how social indicators may be included in the Canadian context by first illustrating recent trends in policy evaluation on a national and international scale. From there, a theoretical analysis of the connection between cultural policy and social indicators is provided. The second half of the paper is dedicated to explaining the shortcomings of Canadian cultural policy evaluation in terms of its tendency to justify expenditures related to arts and cultural activities in purely economic terms, and surveying how other governments worldwide are leading the charge in this regard.

Keywords : social indicators, evaluation, cultural policy, arts

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