

Cultural Statistics in Governance: A Comparative Analysis between the UK and Finland

Authors : Sandra Toledo

Abstract : There is an increasing tendency in governments for a more evidence-based policy-making and a stricter auditing of public spheres. Especially when budgets are tight, and taxpayers demand a bigger scrutiny over the use of the available resources, statistics and numbers appeared as an effective tool to produce data that supports investments done, as well as evaluating public policy performance. This pressure has not exempted the cultural and art fields. Finland like the rest of Nordic countries has kept its principles from the welfare state, whilst UK seems to be going towards the opposite direction, relaying more and more in private sectors and foundations, as the state folds back. The boom of the creative industries along with a managerial trend introduced by Thatcher in the UK brought, as a result, a commodification of arts within a market logic, where sponsorship and commercial viability were the keynotes. Finland on its part, in spite of following a more protectionist approach of arts, seems to be heading in a similar direction. Additionally, there is an international growing interest in the application of cultural participation studies and the comparability between countries in their results. Nonetheless, the standardization in the application of cultural surveys has not happened yet. Not only there are differences in the application of these type of surveys in terms of time and frequency, but also regarding those conducting them. Therefore, one hypothesis considered in this research is that behind the differences between countries in the application of cultural surveys, production and utilization of cultural statistics is the cultural policy model adopted by the government. In other words, the main goal of this research is to answer the following: What are the differences and similarities between Finland and the UK regarding the role cultural surveys have in cultural policy making? Along with other secondary questions such as: How does the cultural policy model followed by each country influence the role of cultural surveys in cultural policy making? and what are the differences at the local level? In order to answer these questions, strategic cultural policy documents and interviews with key informants will be used and analyzed as source data, using content analysis methods. Cultural statistics per se will not be compared, but instead their use as instruments of governing, and its relation to the cultural policy model. Aspects such as execution of cultural surveys, funding, periodicity, and use of statistics in formal reports and publications, will be studied in the written documents while in the interviews other elements such as perceptions from those involved in collecting cultural statistics or policy making, distribution of tasks and hierarchies among cultural and statistical institutions, and a general view will be the target. A limitation identified beforehand and that it is expected to encounter throughout the process is the language barrier in the case of Finland when it comes to official documents, which will be tackled by interviewing the authors of such papers and choosing key extract of them for translation.

Keywords : Finland, cultural statistics, cultural surveys, United Kingdom

Conference Title : ICCPM 2018 : International Conference on Cultural Policy and Management

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : April 05-06, 2018