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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural policy in Spain: processes and dialectics

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The redistribution of powers concerning cultural policy corresponds to a specific historical trajectory as well as to political and commercial dynamics. Thirty years since the 1978 Constitution, Spain is a quasi-federal state. Their cultural life and policies have expanded and have been decentralized. The redistribution process is a result of the search of effectiveness confronted with the question of the legitimization of power. Legitimacy is a permanent theme of debate as well as a discursive and strategic instrument between institutional actors, and it sheds light on the apparent inconsistencies of the multi-level governance of cultural policies. To study the different aspects of these relationships, the article principally focuses on three areas. The first is an institutional analysis, which allows us to determine the place of each institutional actor within the network of cultural policies as well as the horizontal and vertical interactions. The second is an analysis of the public financing of culture, which permits us to measure the quantitative impact of cultural policies within the centre–periphery dynamic. The third is an analysis of public policies, which allows a comparative approach to the dynamics of the autonomous community regime. The dialectic between differentiation and standardization, a mark of cultural policies modernity in the context of centre–periphery relationships, is a result of the pressure from the main players on the different Spanish cultural and territorial markets. Examples of “good practices” mimicry as well as of “new” pattern models, like the new Arts Council of Catalonia, are used to expose the non-existence of a formal Spanish model of cultural policy, but shows the process of innovation-reply product strategies, and the dialectic between political autonomy and homogenization processes.

Keywords: cultural policies; legitimacy; efficiency; multi-level governance; public financing of culture; Spain

Introduction

Spain holds in tension a quasi-federal philosophy and the reality of a state that constitutionally continues to incarnate a nation and to govern a partially unified society. It is in this that it distinguishes itself from a federal government, but also from a centralized regime *à la française*, a regime from which it has however borrowed certain traits such as provincial divisions and administrative or regulatory traditions. Nor does Spain follow the principle of the devolution of powers as found in Britain (with the partial exception of historic nationalities¹), since its transfer of powers does not concern two or three specific nations but the totality of Spanish “regions”, albeit in a different way. This situation has arisen in large part because of the specific model of democratic transition which, in Spain, has combined the democratization of the post-Franco regime with the decentralization of its power structure. The Spanish cultural policies – a plural

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we will fully justify later – have inherited a great deal from this historical process. They thus present themselves as a singularly pertinent example of the dynamic relationships between centre and periphery in cultural terms.

To study the different aspects of these relationships, we will focus principally on three areas. The first is an institutional analysis, which will allow us to determine the place of each actor within the network of cultural policies as well as the horizontal and vertical interactions which link them within an historical perspective. The second is an analysis of the public financing of culture, which will permit us to measure the quantitative impact of cultural policies within the centre–periphery dynamic. The third is an analysis of public policies, which will allow a comparative approach to the dynamics of the autonomous communities.

Our first part will define a theoretical framework in which we shall analyse the two-fold dialectic surrounding the relationship between cultural policies and the centre–periphery dynamic: the tension between legitimization and efficiency on the one hand, and on the other, the combination of differentiation and standardization. In Part 2, we will consider the tensions between the principles of legitimacy and of efficiency in cultural policies as they manifest themselves within the centre–periphery dynamic. This part will allow us to explore the origins of these relationships, their historical evolution and the political issues Spanish cultural policies must face. Here, we shall also devote some time to the implementation of an original political formula within the field of culture: that is to say, the experience of the National Council for Culture and Arts of Catalonia. In Part 3, we will expand upon factors such as the institutional system, the market, the non-profit sector and the political strategies that lead to the conflicting tendencies of these sub-national policies, that is, their differentiation and their standardization, before concluding on a more general note.

Part 1: Cultural policies and the centre–periphery dynamic: a double dialectic

An analysis of centre–periphery systems and their impact on cultural policies rests upon two fundamental questions. The first concerns the tension between legitimacy and efficiency, the two principles used to justify transfers of power within the cultural sphere as well as in other domains of public policy. The second question is one of calibrating the differentiation and standardization of policies within sub-national levels.

With regard to the axis of legitimization–efficiency, we can say that, generally, changes in the centre–periphery relationships originate in a crisis of governmental legitimacy. This can be seen in the cases of Germany and Italy after the Second World War. But it is also the case for many countries in Central and Eastern Europe which, following the Polish model, combined democratic transition with the decentralization of the system of cultural policies. The thesis that has been advanced the most often to explain this phenomenon argues for a linear succession between these two phases. Over the course of the transitional period, the central issue is the loss of the old regime's legitimacy and the elaboration of an invented legitimacy for the new order. This is the reason for which the political élite are to be found directly at the heart of the new framework. While the new regime is being implemented, however, it is the efficiency of the system that is the central preoccupation. Consequently, commercial interest groups and professionals are seen as less important to the political system. In other words, the justification for political change raises the question of legitimacy, whereas the justification for its manifestation raises questions as to the effectiveness of the new system (Schmitter, 1995).

Our point of view rejects this linear vision, showing that the question of legitimization (as a process) and of legitimacy (as a goal) are permanent dimensions of centre–periphery relationships (Figure 1). Germany provides a good example of this phenomenon, with claims as recent as this last decade for the federal government to constitute a veritable cultural ministry. The

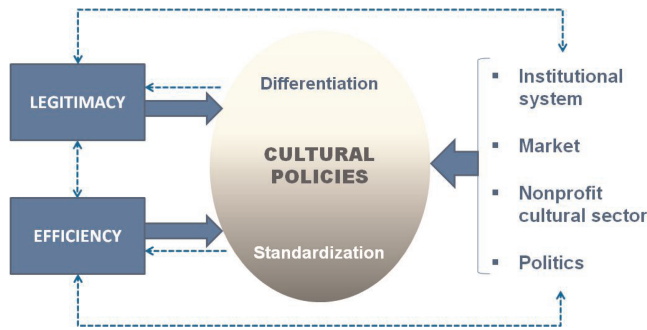


Figure 1. The differentiation-standardization effect in the dialectics between legitimacy and efficiency of a centre–periphery distribution of cultural competences.

same situation held true for Italy at the end of the 1990s. In Spain, we will demonstrate the analytical benefits to be had from viewing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the system not within the framework of a pendulum or through mutually exclusive processes, but instead as a dialectic. It will allow us to understand the failure of certain forms of large-scale regulation of cultural policies as well as, in Spain, the shape that the multi-level governance of these policies has taken. Cultural policies are not an exception among other social policies, but a good example of the particular federalization development of the Spanish welfare state (Moreno, 2001).

The second question raised by an analysis of centre–periphery relationships concerns the varying combinations of territorial differentiation with the standardization of cultural policies. Indeed, regardless of the constitutional regimes that surround these relationships (devolution, federalism, regionalism, decentralization), the distribution of power between central and peripheral authorities implies a certain recognition of the differences within the system. It also leads us to analyse the diverse forms of homogenization this plurality of cultural policies can give rise to.

This dialectic between differentiation and standardization is not only the result of legislative design. It is influenced by four types of actors whose importance and impact on cultural policies must be weighed.

The first category of actors is that of *institutional systems*, in which participate the ensemble of public organs, both central and peripheral, that intervene in the field of culture. Usually, they are seen as dedicated to the status quo, as they only integrate differences incrementally, through the impetus of new norms. The institutional variable apparently tends towards standardization. But this tendency is not systematic. The case of France thus shows that the coercive implementation of new norms in the framework of centralization can produce greater regional differences, even though these norms were inspired by the values of territorial equality (Négrier, 2003). On the other hand, if we apply our analysis in terms of mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to the horizontal level in which new norms of cultural policy are acquired, we observe that the importation or transfer (Radaelli & Schmidt, 2004) of policy instruments or of “good practices” often runs up against the inter-dependence between the transferred element (the action model) and the non-transferable elements (political culture, level of economic development, geographical placement) that have paradoxically rendered this transfer possible. In other words, the factors that appear to lead to homogeneity can indeed be vectors of differentiation. Spain offers a striking example of this phenomenon.

The second category of actor is the *market* and, more generally, the private cultural agents that participate in the commercial development of this sector. The existence of such a category of actor seems to pull the system towards a certain standardization of public policy. Indeed, interest groups, as can be seen on all levels of government, concentrate their lobbying efforts on removing

political and regulatory obstacles to the circulation of their goods. We can observe that here again Spain is certainly not deprived of examples of this, but they do not necessarily demonstrate the standardization of cultural policies. Indeed, with such a diversified cultural economy and far from all commercial interests having a global reach, some cultural enterprises depend on a system that opposes homogenization. Thus, the market, so often considered as a tool for neutralizing differences, can also be a vector of differentiation in public policies.

The third category is the cultural *non-profit sector*. Demographically, it is much larger than the previous category, though weaker in its ability to act, notably because of its fragmentation. In certain cases, however, it can occasionally become more important, depending on the windows of political opportunity that allow the construction of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1999). As opposed to the two previous actors, its influence tends towards differentiation. Indeed, this vast non-profit sector intervenes for the most part on the local level. It thus finds itself placed in a situation of asymmetrical interdependence with respect to local institutions from which it draws the largest part of its social resources. This sector, in which we find all the actors who express a willingness to involve themselves in the cultural field, also has certain tendencies towards standardization. Thus, the demands that it places upon local institutions can be considered as claims to a certain standard of cultural policy, as is frequently the case for localized demands for equipment.

The fourth and final category of actors is to be found in the *political sphere*. As with the preceding category, it is oriented towards differentiation. Indeed, one of the most classic questions concerning public policies (namely, does politics matter?) is particularly well illustrated in the field of cultural policies. Certainly, one could consider that the very existence of these policies is the historical result of a certain meta-partisan consensus on the necessity of supporting the arts, but, in the present moment, we are witness to a plurality of discourses on culture that run from its secondary character in times of crisis (the liberal tendency to reduce public expenditures in this domain) to a strategic sphere of activity whose symbolic yield cannot be outsourced (Florida, 2002). Behind this discourse, however, one can ask if the effects of political change on the substance of cultural policies are as direct and linear as we are to believe. Once again, we shall see that Spain provides eloquent examples of this political ambivalence with respect to culture.

Part 2: The formation of the cultural institutional system of Spain: tension between legitimacy and efficiency

Until well into the twentieth century, Spain retained a fairly heterogeneous regional (national) identity. Strong differentiated linguistic and cultural communities lived side by side the dominant Castilian one. The authoritarian state, which predominated in the previous two centuries, unsuccessfully tried to homogenize regional identities and cultures. Its incapacity to formulate a consistent and efficient cultural and educational policy made it impossible to integrate the country into a shared national body (Fernández Prado, 1991; Rubio Aróstegui, 2003).

With the death of General Franco and with him Spain's last authoritarian and centralist regime, the country entered into a period of political transition, which culminated in the approval of the 1977 constitution and its later entry into the European Union in 1986. The constitution established cultural and linguistic pluralism as a guiding principle (Prieto de Pedro, 1993). This is expressed in the recognition of the country's cultural and linguistic plurality, and in the right of nationalities and regions to self-governance.² The constitution also established a new institutional order – neither federal nor unitary – with the establishment of autonomous communities (the name given to the new regional entities). Their role and the limits of the respective legislative and executive responsibilities granted to the central government were established in

the constitution and in each of the statutes of autonomy.³ By these laws, most artistic and heritage activities are under the responsibility of the autonomous communities, leaving only some national institutions and domains under the central state's responsibility (like the prohibition against exporting or damaging national heritage, the intellectual property system, or the basic norms governing the press, radio and television). Another of the state's responsibilities is to facilitate cultural communication between autonomous communities, with their consent.

Nevertheless, the conflict among the central government, Catalonia and the Basque country over responsibilities forced the Constitutional Court to pronounce that "culture is something which is the responsibility of both the State and the autonomous communities, and, we could even say, of other communities".⁴ The argument used was that culture, as an inherent manifestation of any human community, does not have its limits perfectly defined, and thus cannot be considered uniform and exclusive. So, even though all statutes hold that culture is the exclusive responsibility of its respective autonomous community, in practice the court has legitimated it as a concurrent duty. And, importantly, this was the first round in the continuing battle for standardization in which the courts intervened.

Although the first democratic Ministry of Culture was formed in 1977, democratic cultural policies truly came into being in 1979 with the election of the first democratic city governments. The Ministry concentrated its first efforts on the transformation of fascist structures (censorship, mass media control, low budgets and inefficient cultural administration programs and routines, among others) into acceptable democratic organs and policies (Fernández Prado, 1991). But, from 1979 to 1986, with the transfer of duties and their attendant budgets from the central state to the autonomous communities, another round in the battle for responsibilities thus began. While the autonomous communities were defending the exclusivity of their responsibilities, the Ministry of Culture was searching for its own sphere of legitimacy. One of its first goals was to provide the capital city of Madrid with a set of world-class art institutions, especially as they were conspicuously absent under the Franco regime. Javier Solana, first minister of culture under the Socialist administration (1982–88), was the main implementer of this policy (Rubio Aróstegui, 2003). He set the foundation for institutions like the National Auditorium, the Royal Theatre, the Reina Sofia Fine Arts Centre and Museum, the Spanish National Ballet and the National Company of Classical Theatre, among others. He also established the institutional structure of the Department of Culture, which is still in existence and didn't change during the Popular Party's 8 years of government. Additionally, he implemented a highly efficient cinema policy and proposed new laws such as the Law of the Spanish Historical Heritage.

By the end of the decade, the relations between the Ministry of Culture and the autonomous communities entered into a more stable phase. Some forms of technical collaboration were initiated, mainly with communities governed by the socialists (Bonet & Négrier, 2007). The central government reached an agreement with the communities to make joint investment in the regions (the construction of auditoriums, the renovation of old theatres, and the restoration of major cathedrals), most of which were carried out through the financial support of the Ministry of Public Works.⁵

Nevertheless, the difficulty of establishing a normalized relationship between central and peripheral powers is well reflected in the sporadic collective meetings between the Spanish minister of culture and the ministers for cultural affairs of the autonomous communities. For long periods of time, the central ministers were unable to organize an official joint meeting including all of their colleagues from the communities, despite bilateral meetings among them.⁶ A combination of reasons explains this disharmony. Many autonomous governments tend to prefer a bilateral relation with the central ministry (which gives them a greater possibility for agreement on joint projects) over a multilateral policy approach (which would force them to agree upon common strategies, and grant the leading position to the party controlling the central government). A

more extreme position has been defended by the Catalan and Basque nationalist parties, which argue for the elimination of the Ministry of Culture due to its symbolic import (an institution for a single Spanish national culture). Throughout this debate, two main positions have persisted: first, there are the defenders of more coordination and a leading role of the central ministry in order to allow for more efficient policies; and second, there are the defenders of those administrations which are closest to citizens and thus legitimated both by their efficiency as well as by more subsidiary arguments. The real question remains whether the central or periphery authorities have more power, since the argument based on efficiency is only used to support one or the other position.

Budget allocation has only been partially used in this fight. Most of the ministry money has been expended on its own activities and investments, with very little transfers to other public or private organizations as a means of influencing their policies.⁷ In 1987, 2 years after the constitution of the last autonomous communities, the overall budgetary capacity of all of the autonomous communities combined barely exceeded that of the Ministry (around a fifth of the total budget allocated in Spain by all levels of government); in 2006, 19 years later, this had been doubled (Figure 2). In this period, the autonomous communities' share grew to 30% of the total amount of governmental money (1807 million Euros in 2006) because of a significant increase of budget allocations (an annual growth rate of 3.7%, adjusted for inflation). The Ministry's share, on the other hand, was reduced to 14.6% of the whole, scarcely maintaining its contribution in constant terms (880 million Euros in 2006). Throughout these years, municipalities had been the largest donors to cultural activities, accounting for 45% of the total allocated by public bodies, and an annual growth rate of 1.7% (2676 million Euros in 2006).

The Ministry of Culture has concentrated its budget on the administration of its direct facilities and own activities (Figure 3). Most of them are state museums and other major heritage sites (with heritage receiving 44% of the 880 billion Euro budget in 2006). The only exceptions to external

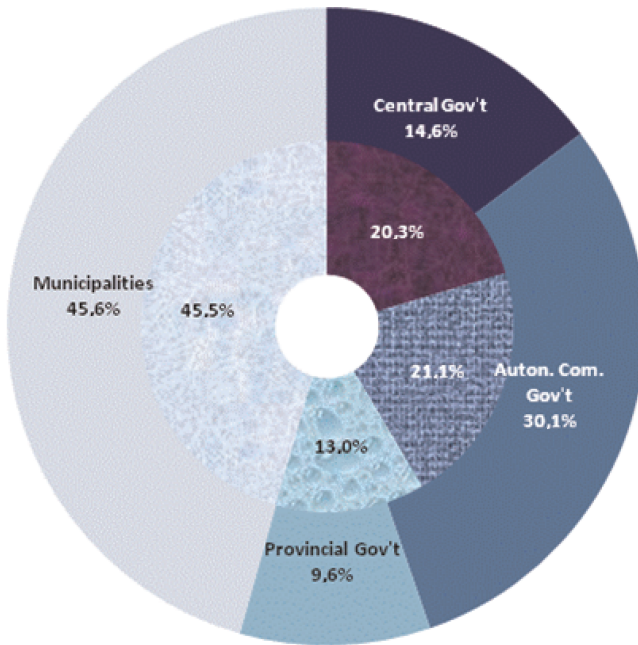


Figure 2. Budget distribution in terms of governmental levels in Spain, 1987 (internal circle)–2006 (external circle) (no consolidate transfers among levels, in percentages). Initial data from Bonet, Dueñas, and Portell (1992) and www.mcu.es

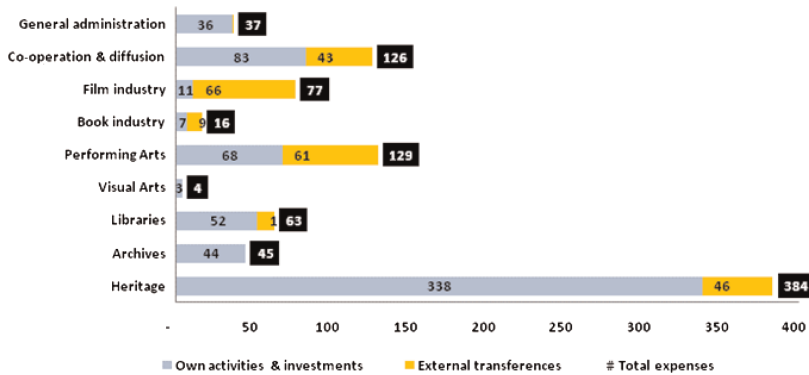


Figure 3. Ministry of Culture budget by sectors: own activity and investments, transference to external bodies and total expenses, 2006 (billions of Euros). Data adapted from www.mcu.es

support are grants to the film and book industries, two minor slices of the budget, with an 86% and 57% total budget transfer to external institutions, respectively. The performing arts provide a more ambivalent case since some of the ministry's own production companies are legally external bodies. This is also the case for some state museums (like the Prado museums). The other policy concerning major grants to external organizations (public or private) targets cultural co-operation and diffusion. This policy, with a total budget of 126 billion Euros (14% of the ministry budget), distributes annually around 43 billion Euros. This is not a significant amount for a ministry with the constitutional task of assisting cultural co-operation among autonomous communities, as well as the implicit ambition of leading Spanish cultural policy.

Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities, with quite large demographic, cultural and economic differences among them (Ariño, Bouzada, & Rodriguez Morato, 2005). With the exception of Madrid, all of them have a governmental department in charge of cultural affairs. In 11 cases, arts and heritage are the main focus of the Department of Culture, although most of the time the department also includes such responsibilities as tourism, sports, youth or media. In four other communities, cultural responsibilities are diluted in the larger department of Education. When the Popular Party won the Spanish general elections in 1994, the Ministry of Culture was absorbed into the Ministry of Education (until 2004, with the return of Socialists to power). This trend was emulated within some regional governments under the Popular Party's rise to power (this was the case for the four communities that even today attach cultural duties to the Department of Education). The aim was to reduce public expenses; but, even in the most relevant case (at the level of the ministry) the only significant reduction was that of the minister's salary and not in the ministry's organic structure (Rubio Aróstegui, 2005). Following this same argument, the government of Madrid simply abolished the Department of Culture, as well as two other "irrelevant" departments, tourism and sports, in April 2009.

Another way to compare autonomous communities is through the per capita expenditure on the local and regional levels (Table 1). The Basque Country, Navarre and the Canary Islands enjoy special tax systems that, particularly in the two first cases, allow them to spend much more money on cultural affairs. Another trend towards differentiation, but without a clear budget consequence, is the existence of more than one official language and the grants allocated to protect them.

One of the most interesting cases for understanding the battle between efficiency and legitimacy, as well as the tension between standardization and differentiation, is the creation in May 2008 of the Arts Council of Catalonia. It is the result of 4 years of debate in the Catalan Parliament

Table 1. Spanish Autonomous Communities cultural policy, basic data.

Autonomous Communities	Inhabitants		Dept of Culture	Cult. Industry agency	Gov't Ideology	Access to autonomy	Number of official languages	2006 Local & regional Gov't Cult. expend per capita	2003 Cult. Gross value added per enterprise	2003 % cult GVA/total GVA	
	(Millions)	1/1/2007									
Andalusia	8.1	Yes	Gen Dir	Left	Art 151	1	88 €	74,736 €	1.8		
Aragon	1.3	with Educ	No	Left	Art. 149	1	109 €	179,773 €	3.7		
Asturias	1.1	Yes	No	Left	Art. 149	1	113 €	104,459 €	2.3		
Balearic Islands	1.0	with Educ	No	Left	Art. 149	2	100 €	97,690 €	2.6		
Basque Country*	2.1	Yes	No	Left	Art. 151	2	205 €	—*	—*		
Canary Islands*	2.0	with Educ	No	Right	Art. 149	1	121 €	—*	—*		
Cantabria	0.6	Yes	No	Right	Art. 149	1	107 €	103,254 €	1.9		
Castile-La Mancha	2.0	Yes	No	Left	Art. 149	1	109 €	98,516 €	1.9		
Castile-Leon	2.5	Yes	No	Right	Art. 149	1	114 €	122,901 €	2.3		
Catalonia	7.2	Yes**	Institute	Left	Art. 151	3	122 €	216,449 €	6.3		
Extremadura	1.1	Yes	No	Left	Art. 149	1	104 €	54,416 €	1.2		
Galicia	2.8	Yes	Agency	Right	Art. 151	2	112 €	93,625 €	2.0		
La Rioja	0.3	with Educ	No	Right	Art. 149	1	110 €	81,134 €	1.7		
Madrid	6.1	abolish	No	Right	Art. 149	1	100 €	367,489 €	11.0		
Murcia	1.4	Yes	No	Right	Art. 149	1	117 €	117,630 €	2.5		
Navarre*	0.6	Yes	No	Right	Art. 149	2	217 €	—*	—*		
Valencian Com.	4.9	Yes	No	Right	Art. 149	2	98 €	111,367 €	2.9		
SPAIN	45.2	Yes	Gen Dir	Left		1	112 €	190,462 €	3.9		

*The Basque Country, Navarre and the Canary Islands enjoy special tax systems which give them much higher budget allocations. These special regimes do not allow the calculation of their regional Gross Added Value through a standard methodology (Garcia Gracia, Zofio, Herrarte, & Moral, 2009).

**Catalonia has both a Department of Culture and an Arts Council, a new arm's length body.

Initial data from www.ine.es and Garcia Gracia et al. (2009).

among the main political parties under pressure from a very active group of cultural associations. The key argument of this long debate was over the legitimacy of grants distributed to artists and arts organizations. Is a democratically elected governmental department more legitimate than an independent and specialized arm's length body? Which is more efficient? Many institutional innovations are a result of a form of mimetic isomorphism, replicated from other sectors or from prestigious countries. The success of another arm's length body, the Catalan Council of the Audiovisual,⁸ explains only part of the decision. Other reasons for the creation of the Catalan Arts Council in a country without this tradition of administration might be its marginal budget, the growing popularity of any form of participation from civil society, the growing prestige of the Anglo-Saxon management models and, fundamentally, the unity of the cultural sector, which has been pushing for it throughout this entire period. But, it is unclear that such a kind of institutional innovation will be easily reproduced in other Spanish regions.

Finally, a paradox in this tension between efficiency and legitimacy is to be found in the relationship between civil society and governmental institutions. In general, cultural associations are relatively weak and highly dependent on government grants in Spain (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2006). Yet, the leading actors of each sector have pushed for the creation of representative or lobby platforms, from the Network of Public Theatres (Bonet & Villaroya, 2008) and Auditoriums to the Federation of Associations of Publishers and the Spanish Film Academy. These corporate associations are quite efficient in the defence of each sector's interest. This influence reaches to the nomination of crucial jobs, like the current minister of culture (a former president of the Film Academy) as well as many previous general directors of both the book and the film industries (with previous corporate responsibilities in their sector). In these cases, we are again in the dialectic between efficiency (they are experts within their sector) and legitimacy (do they really look to the general interest?).

Part 3: The tension in Spanish cultural policies between differentiation and standardization in the centre–periphery relationship

The dialectic between differentiation and standardization is a result of both ideological positions and their effect on programmes and legislative design, and the lobby capacity of four categories of actors: the institutional agents, market forces, the non-profit sector and the political sphere.

In the Spanish case, the institutional system tends more towards differentiation than standardization due to the tension between central and periphery institutions. Nevertheless, factors that appear to lead to differentiation can indeed be vectors of homogenization, and vice versa. Many local and regional politicians interested in their own success and in competition with their neighbours have a tendency to replicate the “good or popular practices” of other governments. Another factor leading to standardization is the values and general rules of public administrations, a factor that can be attributed to civil servants' desire to maintain the status quo.

The fight for responsibilities among levels of government, but essentially for a leading position in the definition of the main programmes, results in a lack of political co-ordination among different levels of government. Each government (local, regional or central) backs its own programmes and flagship arts institutions. Nevertheless, as we said before, politicians replicate the most successful or trendy models around the country, from huge institutions (the Guggenheim syndrome) to big festivals or centres for contemporary art. Paradoxically, then, in a country where very few will accept the dominant role of any other administration, some local and regional strategies are quite similar everywhere. This is less true in the case of institutional formal structures. These depend fundamentally on the ideological orientation of each government (as is the case for the inclusion of cultural responsibilities in the Ministry of Education), and of its region's own possibilities (the dynamics of the cultural sector, demographics and budget resources).

The most important way to standardize cultural policy is through legislative harmonization. Although regional parliaments have quite a large legislative capacity, the general norms regarding the protection of heritage, the regulation of cultural markets and taxation are determined by the Spanish Parliament. In the last few years, most of the key laws approved (such as those concerning copyright or the book industry) tend to favour the interests of the largest actors (major media and culture corporations, major heritage sites, big performing arts companies, successful festivals or big private foundations). Central government and large corporations both support the standardization of processes at the national level: mechanisms of support adapted to its size and to specific programmes to conquer international markets. On the contrary, both regional governments and small and medium-sized private organization have the shared interest of promoting support mechanisms and specific regulation adapted to the regional context.

Madrid and Catalonia, both with a very dynamic cultural sector, have quite different institutional systems (see Table 1). Both have the highest proportion of cultural added value and the largest companies (especially Madrid). But Catalonia invests more public money than Madrid, and has a specific institute to promote cultural industries (with representatives from the private sector on its board). These fairly different models of cultural policy are the result of market interests and the political sphere. Corporations based in the capital (the largest in Spain) prefer a direct relationship with both the autonomous and the central government to obtain support and to lobby for new regulations.

Catalonia is a fairly innovative place for more flexible and legitimated forms of arts administration. Those that aim for more efficient ways of management are rapidly extended to the rest of Spain, such as the externalization of governmental services to private organizations. But others, such as the participation of non-profit organizations in the board of trustees of public cultural institutions or the establishment of arm's length bodies, are much more difficult to replicate. The success of the Catalan Council of the Audiovisual has only been replicated in Andalusia and Navarre, for example. The Catalan Institute of Cultural Industries has been more or less adapted in Andalusia and Galicia, and, in a very different way, by the central administration with the new general direction of policy and cultural industries.

Conclusion

The redistribution of powers concerning cultural policy corresponds, in Spain as elsewhere, to a specific historical trajectory as well as to political and commercial dynamics which are in some ways comparable and in others specific to each country. This redistribution does not go back to a simple problem of effectiveness which varies according to each institutional structure. From the beginning, it is confronted with the question of the legitimization of power in general and in particular with each level within a system that is becoming more and more embedded. This question of legitimacy has not been posed once and for all. We have seen that it is a permanent theme of debate as well as a discursive and strategic instrument between institutional actors. It sheds light on the apparent inconsistencies of the multi-level governance of cultural policies.

Centre-periphery relationships raise another classic question – that of the intensity and limits of horizontal differences. It is this issue that is often thrown up, particularly in France, as a way to oppose the decentralization of powers. We have shown that in order to understand these differentiations, one must also shine a light on the forms of standardization that are at times hidden behind the façade of diversity. We have defined four categories of actors who each play a role in favour of the differentiation and standardization of “peripheral” cultural policies: the institutions, the market, the non-profit sector and the political sphere. It is this dialectic that allows us to show at the same time the diversity of public policies and their potential interactions. The latter can originate in the process of mimetic isomorphism where some autonomous communities (Catalonia,

for example) serve as a cutting-edge model. These interactions also originate in the professionalization of cultural policies and the relative homogeneity of the professional training of public administrators of culture. But the tendencies toward standardization face strong limits, notably the incapacity of the Spanish state in guaranteeing a real coordination of autonomous policies (Rodríguez Morató, 2007).

One might object that, by presenting the more or less contradictory tendencies of standardization and differentiation by turns, we were able to demonstrate our thesis without proving it. On the contrary, it seems to us that the dialectic between differentiation and standardization is the principal mark of the modernity of cultural policies in the context of centre–periphery relationships. Indeed, it is precisely because the standard set by these policies is also differentiation that this dialectic is one of our analytical resources. It allows us to explain the robust development of territorial benchmarking strategies whose hypothesis appropriately contains the following paradox: namely, that to distinguish oneself is to compare oneself.

In the 30 years that have passed since the 1978 Constitution came into effect, enormous changes have taken place in both Spanish cultural life and policies. In many respects, Spain is now a quasi-federal state. Its cultural life has expanded and has been decentralized. In spite of inevitable errors and of the asymmetric regional and national identities of Spain (Bonet & Négrier, 2008), it can be affirmed that the model is fairly well consolidated. Spanish wealth, freedom and diversity have benefited from these changes, and this is positive development for the culture of any country in a time where cultural contents are becoming homogenized and culture itself is becoming increasingly internationalized.

Notes

1. The Spanish Constitution differentiated between nationalities and regions, and gives to the former easier access to autonomy through Article 151.
2. There is neither a list, nor a clear conceptual legal differentiation between nationalities and regions, but the historic nationalities (Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, those with an Autonomous Statute during the Second Spanish Republic) obtained a stronger status (Article 151 of the Constitution) and the first two enjoyed a right to provisional government similar to the devolution model in 1978, before the approval of its respective Statutes of Autonomy.
3. The Statute of Autonomy is the name given to the constitutional law of each Autonomous Community.
4. Sentence of the Constitutional Court 49/1984, 5 April.
5. The law requires the government to set aside 1% of the budget of public works for cultural investment.
6. The Ministers Conference of Culture only met once in the third Legislative period (1986–89), twice during the fourth and fifth periods (1989–93 and 1993–96), and not at all under the Popular Party (1996–2004) (Rubio Aróstegui, 2005). However, it met quite regularly with the last two Socialist governments.
7. The matching-grant system used in the United States would be a classic counter-example to the Spanish case.
8. The Catalan Council of the Audiovisual was created by law in 1996, and enjoyed enlarged responsibilities in 2000 and even later.

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