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Title: At the Roots of Finnish Cultural Policy: Intellectuals, Nationalism, and the Arts

Year: 2007

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Sokka, S., & Kangas, A. (2007). At the Roots of Finnish Cultural Policy: Intellectuals, Nationalism, and the Arts. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 13(2), 185-202.

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At the Roots of Finnish Cultural Policy: Intellectuals, Nationalism, and the Arts

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In this article we argue that the role of intellectuals was essential (1) in the formation of Finnish cultural policy and (2) for the development of national cultural administration and public arts subsidy system in the country in the period leading up to World War II. The actions of the intellectuals can be considered as political choices in a contingent socio-political realm, and arts as an essential part of the signifying system. In Finland, intellectuals remained active in the intertwining areas between the state and civil society. We highlight the impact of their actions especially through a study of archival materials obtained from the State Arts Boards. At these Boards, the intellectuals served as representatives of their own fields of arts in general, and of certain professional and civic associations and societies in particular. These intellectuals acted in various roles depending on the subject matter at hand, and as a result the decisions made by the boards reflected predominantly the interests of some groups over those of others.

Keywords: cultural policy and politics, hegemony, public intellectuals, expertise

Introduction

In examining the history of governmental intervention in culture, it is difficult to generalise about the evolution of cultural policies, e.g., in Western Europe, owing to the scarcity of comparative research and standardised data, the differing definitions of ‘culture’ adopted by policy makers, and other variables reflecting particular national contexts, such as state ideologies and political, social, and strategic priorities. Nonetheless, in spite of the significant divergences both between and within individual countries, it is possible to outline a general

trajectory in the evolution of the different arguments used by politicians and policy makers to justify cultural policy outlays.

Development of Public Cultural Policy in Finland: Three Shifts

Looking at the Finnish case, Kangas (1999, pp. 159—167; 2004, pp. 21—41) has analysed the country's changing cultural policy in the context of three major historical shifts affecting the overall society, spanning from (1) nation building (1860—1960) to (2) the welfare state (1960—90) and to (3) competitiveness society (1990—) .

(1) Ending a long drought following the annexation of the country to Russia in the aftermath of the Finnish War of 1808—09, the Finnish Estates convened again in 1863 after a break of more than 50 years, and legislative work could commence in the country.[1] During the ensuing period, construction of national identity and creation of national unity based on common history and cultural heritage became of paramount importance. In the aftermath of the civil war of 1918 and faced with the external threat posed by the newly established Soviet Union, national unity and national identity attained ever greater significance as objectives of public policy in general and arts initiatives in particular. Given the country's status as a small nation whose independent statehood could never be viewed as a thing taken for granted, in Finland the role of the state was to remain central both before and after the 1917 declaration of independence. Accordingly, the state evolved into a core of social activities and functions on which political action was focused. To effect reforms, agents in cultural life had to ally themselves with the state. Various civil society organizations began to apply for funding from

[1] Following the conquest by Czar Alexander I, the country's new status was established as a semi-autonomous Grand Duchy and formally recognized at the Diet of Porvoo in March 1809. In this arrangement, the country was able to retain its own legislative organ as well as its existing model of social organization (including free peasantry, Lutheran religion, and inherited institutions of law and government).

the state, increasingly identifying themselves as political agents and thereby adjoining the sphere of government.

During the first decades of the 20th century, Finland was thus caught in processes of state formation, with the young national authority busy defining its tasks in the realm of cultural policy as well. The older ideas of creating nationally representative art were now officially sanctioned and public funds were funnelled into the maintenance of art institutions. One of the key instruments of financial support for the arts, the state lottery, was set up in 1926, with part of its profits earmarked for subsidies to art and science. Arts became one of the instruments at the state's disposal helping to mould the citizenry into a national community bound by a sense of political unity and cultural identity. Grants, pensions, and professorial appointments created national artists; state support for the function of various art institutions and associations enabled a cultural policy that recognized linguistic and political minorities; monuments, festivities, the press, radio, and later on also broadcast television helped unify the people; and the expanding national system of education ensured uniform levels and content of schooling.

(2) It was not until the 1960s that this basic orientation changed in Finland, with the transformation of cultural policy from its role as an instrument of nation building into an articulated sector of the welfare state. As part of the welfare state ideology, cultural policy acquired new elements. The new cultural policy was based on the idea of the arts and the artists as a resource for national economic and social development. Cultural democracy and democratization of culture now came to form the main objectives of a cultural policy that during the 1970s became integrated with other economic and social goals. New public organizations were created in the cultural sphere that were given, and still carry on, the task

of supporting professional art forms and art education, and of encouraging people to take part in cultural activities. The point was to lower the barriers between high and low, elitist and popular, cultures.

(3) The third time Finnish cultural policy was refocused was in the 1990s during a period of deep economic recession. Far-reaching governmental interventions associated with the welfare state, with its extensive and all-pervasive administrative steering mechanisms, were now subjected to criticism. The concepts of neoliberalism, new public management, innovativeness, globalisation, and creative industries were included in the cultural policy discourses. In a neoliberal market society, instead of seeing the individuals as something needing to be fostered to collective responsibility, new cultural policy views them as independent subjects: public administration is managed like a business, companies change from being institutions of production into targets of investment, and "competition" is stressed both as a cognitive model and in common speech.

The Finnish experience thus clearly points to the fact cultural policy discourses do not exist in isolation from the major debates (ideologies) of the day. At the same time, there is also continuity across the periods: In the transition from one historical period to the next, a new policy rationale does not just neatly replace the previous one; instead, the process of cultural policy evolution resembles more of an accumulation, with the coexistence of old and new foci over time. Thus, practises of the earlier periods often continue exerting influence on the subsequent forms that governmental instruments may take. Interestingly, the development of cultural policy in Finland has followed largely the same path that we see in other Nordic and European countries, even if it is possible to characterise the country's overall structural

development as having unfolded in a fashion more backward—more unbalanced and more sudden—than, e.g., in the other Nordic countries (Alestalo 1986, p. 17).

The Aims of the Article

In the Finnish case, many contemporary practises and instruments of cultural administration have their origin in the 19th century society. Substantially, they reflect the actively engaged relationship between the state and civil society. In the earlier part of the century, the executive positions in the societies with an interest in the arts were held by Swedish-speaking intellectuals (such as academic specialists and civil servants), with Finnish-speaking intellectuals and professional artists from both language groups starting to make their presence felt from the latter part of century on (Sokka 2005, pp. 116—118; Sokka & Kangas 2006, pp. 130—131; Reitala 1974, p. 9).

In what follows, we examine the roots of Finnish cultural policy (the so-called Patron State period).[2] Our aim is twofold: (1) to trace the origins of the forms of cultural administration that specifically led to the establishment of State Arts Boards, and (2) to analyse the different roles played by intellectuals within these boards. We investigate how and why these intellectuals channelled the official art subsidies in certain directions, looking at the conception of the world they represented in doing so.

To these ends, we develop our discussion in an Arendtian fashion, considering the actions of these intellectuals as political choices in a contingent socio-political realm. As Arendt herself put it (cf. Palonen 1989), the politics behind the actions cannot be separated from the persons

[2] In our earlier article published in *Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidskrift* (2006), we examined the Finnish cultural policy against recurring ideas that underlie the creation of the Finnish nation state—nationalism, liberalism, the civilizing mission, and the political role of the public authorities.

responsible for these actions. And, just as importantly, political actions are possible only within a public space that is shared with other individuals. In this view, controlling the possibilities to act in public equals power; and it is for this very reason that Arendt compared politics to theatre (Palonen 1989, pp. 22—30.) Arendt helps us to see a certain ever-present recurrence in the construction of society (see Pulkkinen 2003, pp. 219, 224)—in short, to see the politics behind the dominant forms of action.

Another view that helps to clarify the interrelationship between the actions of intellectuals and domination derives from Antonio Gramsci, who draws the distinction between ”traditional” and ”organic” intellectuals. In the first place, there are the traditional professional intellectuals—literary, scientific, and so forth—whose position at the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura about it but ultimately refers back to past and present class relations, concealing this attachment to various historical class formations. Secondly, there are the organic intellectuals, the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental-social class. The organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their professional affiliation than their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong (Gramsci 1978, pp. 121—25.) As Jerome Karabel (1976, p. 147) expresses it, “Those intellectuals who emerge along with the rise of a new social class are organic intellectuals.”

We can understand intellectuals as persons (or groups) capable of constructing and propagating ideas and ideologies; it should not be surprising, therefore, that they play a central role as national symbols. In Finland, the intellectuals who were active in the national movement were of upper-class origin and projected their own conception of the ‘people’ onto the public. This was connected to the need to present a common ideology that could provide

support for the project of the nation-state (e.g., Alapuro 1995; 1997, pp. 21—22; Liikanen 1995, p. 40; cf. Ma 1999).

We will therefore probe the role of intellectuals mainly from two perspectives. We look at them (1) as important subjects in the development of the ideological context at a given historical juncture, and (2) as figures acting politically and striving for certain interests pertaining to their own socio-political context.

Finnish Nationalism: Emergence and Evolution

For most of the 19th century, Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire. Both ideologically and in terms of its economic structure during that period, the country could be described as a centralized, state-controlled society (e.g., Haapala 1995, p.12). During the early decades of the century, it was still underdeveloped in many areas, including economic activities. From the 1840s on, the government began to develop the infrastructure in an effort to diminish the obstacles standing in the way of economic growth. These actions, aided by other initiatives, resulted in progressive growth and the arrival of industrialization beginning in the 1870s (Haapala 1995, p. 11; Kuisma 1995, pp. 54—55; Peltonen 1995, pp. 119—20.) Annexed by Russia in 1809 during the Napoleonic wars (from Sweden), the country nonetheless retained intact its old legal and administrative system inherited from the preceding period. This particularity afforded Finland a special status in comparison with the other parts of the Russian empire. Vis-à-vis Russia, the cultural border remained pronounced, even self-explanatory; but in order to more sharply differentiate the country from Sweden, *Finnish* culture (literature in Finnish language, cultivation of Finnish artists, education of Finnish-speaking masses) had to bee fostered.

It can be said that the tradition of Finnish-language high culture was weak (e.g., Alapuro 1988, p. 98). Hroch (1985, p. 66) describes how high culture, or art, can be influential for the development of nationalism, as part of the linguistic and cultural establishment.[3] In this light he considers Finns as an example of a politically oppressed nation, which, for want of political possibilities, had to turn to cultural and linguistic activities to boost national sentiments. Literature in the people's own language, in particular, proved essential from this point of view. Later in the development of Finnish nationalism, other aesthetical areas also became involved, such as "national" music, fine arts, and architecture (Hroch 1998, pp. 18—19, 21—22).

Smith (see 1998a, 1998b) includes Finland in the group of countries in which nationalism preceded industrialization. For Smith, nationalism bridges ethnical past and modernisation, bringing them together in the environment of the nation-state. In this view, Finnish nationalism has its roots in the agrarian past of the people living in a particular area, which forms the culture of the nation. Another writer on the subject, John Hutchinson (1999), cautions us not to regard cultural nationalism solely as a linguistic movement, lest we fall prey to erroneous conclusions: language is but one national symbol among many. Hutchinson explicitly refers to the Finnish epic of *Kalevala*, not merely as an example of linguistic nationalism, but also as a carrier of patriotic meanings. For Hutchinson, "historians, philologists, artists of all kinds—these, not legislators, are the primary leaders of cultural nationalism" (Hutchinson 1999, pp. 392—94, 399.) This point resembles the notion that

[3] Hroch identifies three phases in his description of the development of nationalism: phase A (the period of scholarly interest), phase B (the period of patriotic agitation), and phase C (the rise of a mass national movement). Hroch considers the period of patriotic agitation as the "most important" phase in this development (see Hroch 1985, p. 23). In the Finnish case this phase can be located in the second half of the 19th century.

intellectuals and artists are the “real keepers of national flame,” as Harvie (1999) formulates it considering the case of Scottish nationalism.

In Finland, inherited ideologies and attitudes became manifest through a division into two political currents: Fennomania, centred around the question of the Finnish language,[5] and liberalism, which remained Swedish speaking throughout the century. The stance on the status of the Finnish language, the question of the relationship between individuals and the state, and the issue of the role of culture all to varying degrees remained tied up with politics (the positions taken depending on attachment to either liberalism or Fennomania). From the 1880s on, the first generation of intellectuals who spoke Finnish as their mother tongue grew increasingly more engaged on the political arena. As a consequence, diverse groups aspired to a position in the public sphere from which to shape a dominant ”national” ideal. Towards the end of the 19th century, also new, by origin rather lower-class actors were emerging in the arena of public political discussion. Often this happened via membership in civic associations and organisations (see Alapuro, Liikanen &, Smeds 1989; Sokka 2005).[6]

In spite of its peripheral position in Europe, associational life in the Grand Duchy of Finland was comparable to the contemporary levels elsewhere in the continent. Also publishing activities increased, especially from the 1860s on (see, e.g., Stenius 1995, pp. 176—81). As the opportunities to express one’s opinions multiplied, the different ideological currents began to gain publicity. Debate on the new ideas and lines of thought was essential for the development of the nation-state, but it also bore a seed of conflict. Klinge (e.g., 1967, 1982),

[5] In the early 19th century, Hegelianism became prominent in educational debates through the personal influence of Professor J. J. Tengström. Tengström’s successor J. V. Snellman developed his predecessor’s work further, advancing the cause of civilising the *Finnish* “nation” and nationalising the educated classes. This became the ideological basis on which Fennomania flourished.

[6] In the 1860s and 1870s the associations remained elitist and mainly liberalist. In the 1880s and 1890s, new Fennoman organisations emerged, broadening their membership. Finally, towards the end of the 1890s, also members of the working classes began to organise *on their own terms* (see Alapuro & Stenius 1989, pp. 30—39).

for one, has pointed out the many roots leading to the growth of Finnish nationalism. Ideological and political currents went hand in hand with a mounting awareness of nationalism and the idea(s) of a state called Finland (see Jussila 2004, pp. 270—290). During the second half of the 19th century, these ideas began to spread beyond the cloistered academic world as well. This was largely the result of the work of associations[7] in which intellectuals were active.

Cultural Politics and the State

Many of the administrative instruments subsequently considered an integral part of public cultural policy were already formed in the course of the 19th century, at a time when the concept of cultural policy (*kulttuuripolitiikka*) did not even exist yet. During the period, intellectuals were active within civil society and took part in the development of cultural administration. They were influential both from within the government itself and through the work of the associations independent or semi-independent from it. As a result, Finnish cultural policy substantially reflects the active relationship between the state and civil society. In fact, the origins of most of the cultural policy instruments can be traced back to this relationship. There are several examples of this development: a mention might be made of copyright legislation,[9] cultural heritage policy, pre-release examination of commercially distributed films, development of art institutions and art education, and popular education.

[7] In the early 19th century, associations were rare, but not prohibited, in Finland. After 1849 they had to obtain the approval of the emperor before they could become active. After 1883, this imperial power was given to the Finnish Senate, which exercised it briefly until 1889 when it was transferred back to the emperor during ”The First Russification Period” (Smeds & Stenius 1989, p. 69). Here, associations (or “societies”) are taken to include *organised* groups with rules and regulations and an elected leadership.

[9] In the 1870s the Finnish Association of Artists (*Konstnärsgillet i Finland*) actively pushed for an agenda involving copyright protection (see Sokka 2005).

Let us briefly look at the formation of heritage policy. The National Archives are the central archival institution in Finland, with its roots going back to 1817 when the first archivist was appointed for the Senate. In 1869, the Archives of the Senate were renamed the State Archives of Finland. Together with the Finnish Antiquarian Society it provided the main impetus for the development of Finnish antiquities legislation and administration. The Decree on the Protection of Ancient Monuments was issued in 1883, and the following year the Archaeological Bureau (later renamed the State Archaeological Commission) was founded, charged with a task defined as "the general care of country's ancient monuments." The 1920s saw the establishment of the Finnish Museums Association and the first Provincial Archives. In due time, cultural heritage policy came to form one of the expert areas of cultural policy.

Similarly, the call for pre-release examination of commercially distributed films intensified in 1908 thanks to the active pressure from civil society. Especially religious and pedagogical circles showed great concern for the impact of cinema on, above all, children and youth. Upon the initiative of the *Kolmisointu* society, the Senate Act of 1911 stipulated that local police authorities henceforth preview all films to be released. The oppressive political and cultural climate during the so-called Second Russification Period under way in the country only helped to make these temporary Senate provisions remain in force until the spring of 1919. Consequently, the Finnish development followed the model of neither Sweden nor Norway. In these two countries, the pre-release examination of films was instituted by law by 1913, whereas in Finland the corresponding procedure was not implemented until 1946 (Nenonen 1999, pp. 25—35). However, the first board of film censors was set up by the Finnish Senate in 1919.

Art education and both national and local arts institutions were closely connected to the work of associations and followed their ideological pedigree. On the national level, Finnish National Gallery, National Museum of Finland, and both Swedish- and Finnish-language national theatres have their roots in the work of associations (Sokka 2005, Helminen 2006). In the local context, too, the system of subsidising fine arts evolved from within a civilizing ethos and out of the initiatives of arts associations and other societies (such as *Soitannollinen Seura* [an association for the advancement of music], labour movement and local workers' associations, temperance movement, local fire brigades, and the rural youth association movement). In urban areas, local cultural initiatives were funded through profits from the sales of alcohol. This practice derived from the "Gothenburg model" in Sweden and meant that the funds raised from liquor sales were (partially) returned to the broader population and consumers. Towards the end of the century, popular enlightenment *par excellence* started receiving stronger support in the local context. For instance, influenced by the Norwegian example and also the North American public library movement, the number of public libraries was substantially increased (see Helminen 2006). School libraries had been established juridically through a paragraph in the Statutes on Primary Schools already in 1866. It was not, however, schools or school authorities that became the central actor in the library development, but instead the Society for Popular Education, established in 1874 within nationalist Fennoman circles to produce and distribute cheap popular literature and stimulate desire for knowledge and culture among the common people (Vatanen 2002, p. 210.) In the national context, obligatory popular education was incorporated into the law of 1898.

State Arts Boards as Reflective Exercises

The arts were one instrument the state had at its disposal when moulding citizenry into a national community bound by a sense of unity. Conversely, state support for artists (through grants, pensions, and professorships) proved crucial in validating the arts in the country. Different mechanisms were available for awarding state grants and prizes: the Senate could request these to be awarded by various arts associations, or it could nominate expert boards to either award the grants themselves or issue an opinion on whom they should be awarded. The first such art board was set up in 1865, for the purpose of awarding the first State Prize in Literature (Sokka 2005, p. 41; Tuomikoski 1977, p. 56.)

In this way, during the period of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, State Arts Boards took shape as a public policy instrument in the field of culture. The model for the board system initially emerged from within the activities of the associations, with the perspective here being rather highbrow—'the people' and 'the nation' were both defined from an elitist cultural viewpoint. After the country gained its independence in 1917, the State Arts Boards retained their image as clubs for sophisticated, educated intellectuals advocating the cause of 'culture'. As such, the boards represented the legitimised idea of culture and hegemony in society, and could be said to have been enlisted to articulate the great narrative of their time. Culture and art were used actively by diverse groups to promote their own view of defining what was to be understood as genuinely Finnish. In this respect the first State Arts Boards were influential in the construction of the idea of the Finnish nation and in the definition of the exact content of this notion. (Sokka 2005, pp. 116—124; Sokka & Kangas 2006, pp. 130—131.)

State Arts Boards for visual arts, music, architecture, drama, and literature were regularised in 1918. Their core tasks and functions were established in 1918 as follows: (1) to monitor

developments within the art form represented by the particular board; (2) to issue official statements (most importantly in connection with the allocation of subsidies, but also on, e.g., copyright and other legislative measures); and (3) to make initiatives benefiting the art form they represented (e.g., regarding taxation or involving art institutions) (see Tuomikoski 1977, 56).

In 1918, the influence of the first chairmen of the boards showed itself to be considerable, as in this capacity they could themselves personally decide on who would be invited to join the boards as their members. Soon afterwards, however, it fell upon the boards themselves to collectively propose new member appointments on their own. Eventually, there were six members in each board (from 1925 onwards), appointed for four years at a time.[10] In the five boards there were a total of 78 members (chairs included) during the period 1918—1939, which means that members were frequently re-appointed after finishing their four-year terms. In addition, during this 21-year interval there were only a total of three chairs in each board, with 30% of all new chair appointments made solely because of the death of the sitting chair. Thus, the socio-cultural background of the board members remained fundamentally homogenous and basically unchanged throughout the period of the First Republic (1918-1939).

Each of the initial chair appointees was a professor (see TABLE I) and the boards were formed on terms of the (more or less) bourgeoisie intelligentsia (Sokka 2005, pp. 109—113; Autio 1986, p. 219).[11] All of the first chairs were also specialists in aesthetic theory—most

[10] The analysis here is based on research using primary sources: minutes of meetings and reports by the State Art Boards from 1918—1939.

[11] Following its independence, Finland drifted into a civil war between the bourgeois ”Whites” and the left-wing ”Reds.” The Whites came off victorious, both camps having suffered heavily and the war leaving many scars in the societal fabric. After the war, the ideal of a cohesive nation was still cherished, while many members of the elites had grown disappointed with the actions of the ”people,” expressing desire to now keep a

immediately Hirn, who was a professor of aesthetics and literature, and Tikkanen, an art history professor (see Kuisma & Riikonen 2005). These intellectuals applied their expertise in various arenas, exerting influence on how to define and recognize ”good” art: In their publications (e.g., Hirn 1900, 1902, 1914 [reprinted in 1924 and 1949]; Tikkanen 1925a, 1925b, 1926a, 1926b) they theorised on the nature of aesthetically valid art; in their professional capacity and public roles they trained new generations of intellectuals and allocated tangible resources among applicants for public funds.

The members of the State Arts Boards represented (political) positions that could likewise be classified as bourgeois. Recruitment to the boards was done from both language groups (Finnish and Swedish). In the arts boards, however, the dividing line seemed to have been drawn between the bourgeois and non-bourgeois worldviews rather than based primarily on language politics, even though the language mattered, too: there was clear tendency towards dividing the positions evenly between the two linguistic groups (Sokka 2005, pp. 109—113; Autio 1986, p. 219). During the interwar period, the fiercest struggles over language within the administration were already abating. In its stead, the question of (party) political representation was becoming more and more paramount (Tiihonen & Ylikangas 1992, pp. 245—246.)

As regards the membership of the arts boards, the most notable shift occurred in 1925, when one new member for each board was to be chosen from among the representatives of the artistic activities of the working classes. The initiative for this change came from the Ministry

firmer hand in steering the nation into future (Alapuro 1995, pp. 212, 227). Nationalism was often paralleled with politicising tendencies within the art world as well. Most of the visual artists, for example, fought on the White side, and nationalism could later on mediate the content of the art. Later on, in the 1920s, such prevalent national orientation often found itself at cross-purposes with international influences making headway in the country, with Left critics and the younger (avant-garde) generation of artists calling its premises into question (Reitala 1973, pp. 2—3).

of Education.[12] During this time, socialist parties were in majority in the parliament. Designation of the so-called working class representatives to the boards was an attempt to formally bind them to the existing system and, predictably enough, the impact of this augmentation was far from revolutionary: the reasoning and justifications behind the board resolutions remained practically unchanged even in the years after 1925, as it was the boards themselves that made the proposals identifying the suitable candidates for the membership.

In the 1920s, governments were short-lived and weak, and the Parliament—with Social Democrats as the largest party in it—maintained a pivotal role in the politics (Nousiainen 2006, pp. 203—212). The Socialists could exert greater influence on the allocation of art subsidies through their activities in the parliament than through arts boards (e.g., the Workers' Theatre Association and the Workers' Music Association received their first state subsidies by decisions made in parliamentary committees, not by the State Arts Boards).[13] Also, in their political outlook the new board members could not be characterised as representing radical left—to be sure, anything else would have been impossible, too, at a time when the Communist party remained outlawed. In some cases, new influences were brought to bear upon the boards by fiat: from time to time, the Ministry of Education could resort to

[12] The Senate's Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs was the predecessor of this ministry. Following the Independence (1917), the Department was gradually transformed into the Ministry of Education (1922). The Department prepared ecclesiastical and educational matters for discussion at the Senate. In addition, the Department dealt with an increasing number of questions relating to culture. The Ministry appropriated most of the department's functions unchanged. (Autio 1986, pp. 466—467; Heikkilä 1985, p. 461.)

[13] In 1922, The Workers' Theatre Association (*Työväen Näyttämöiden Liitto*) secured state subsidies through a parliamentary resolution that was not submitted to the Government (see State Board of Drama, annual report 1922). In 1923, the Workers' Theatre Association and the Workers' Music Association (*Työväen Musiikkiliitto*) both applied for financial support from the state. The Parliamentary Committee for Education and Culture pre-approved 75 000 FIM for each organisation. The applications were then submitted to the Finance Committee, which approved 50 000 FIM for the Workers' Theatre Association. Also, most of the revenue of the Workers' Music Association in 1923 (its total budget was at 85 300 FIM) came from state subsidies (see *Työväen Näyttämötaide* [*Workers' Theatre Journal*] 1922:11, p. 228, and 1923:4, p. 92; *Työn Sävel* [*Workers' Music Journal*] 1923:5, p. 5). Without support in the Parliament, this funding structure would not have been possible. For instance, in 1922 the State Board of Music refused to handle the application of the Workers' Music Association, as—"despite the Association's importance in the field of popular enlightenment"—the application was considered to be lacking in content as regards "compositional art *par excellence*." The Workers' Theatre Association finally received its first subsidies in 1925, with the backing of the Board of Drama. In the case of the Workers' Music Association, the first subsidies granted to it by the Board of Music were paid out in 1929 to assist in the organisation of a composing competition.

the use of its power to amend or reverse board resolutions (in response to pressure from the parliament). This, however, did not occur frequently. Yet in 1919 and at the beginning of the 1920s, for instance, the Parliament and the Ministry did venture to modify the resolutions made by the Board of Drama, adding certain workers' theatres to the list of recipients for state subsidies.

In the board meeting records, politics appear seldom manifest. Nevertheless, reviewing the minutes of the board meetings, one can detect a certain consistency in the award criteria behind the decisions that set apart some applicants as worthy of public support and some as not. The Board decisions were sharply criticized by the organizations of the Left, which claimed that, behind the reasoning, "[O]ne can still detect views that underestimate the workers' desire for art…Such a conservative outlook again made itself manifest in the decisions on how the state subsidies for theatres would be distributed" (*Workers' Theatre Journal* 1925:5).

Implicitly and indirectly, the board decisions reveal intriguing contents. When the actions of the State Arts Boards are fitted into a larger context, the significance of the boards' work grows, reaching beyond the confines of the art world: through the considerations going into them, these decisions tell us much about the social and political realities, conflicts, and contradictions during the time period in question. From 1918 onwards, each board recorded its mission and functions in the meeting minutes. Many of the tasks were inherited from the pre-independence period and adapted to the needs of the art form represented in each particular case (and to the already formulated instruments which the boards were to control).

The Role and Functions of the Arts Boards

Examining their work more closely, we see that, in practice, the actual functions of the different state boards evolved in interaction with the art world and in response to shifts in the broader political alignments, apparent, for instance, from the gradually more favourable attitude the boards developed towards applications by workers art organizations. In spite of such changes, however, the form and functions of the boards remained more or less the same for decades, with the boards even able to resort to specific means to protect their position of power within art governance. At any event, the core of their activities consisted in allocating resources to select applicants, and in discharging their duties the arts boards could in this manner gain and maintain control over the criteria of official art, at the same time representing and often also reforming the contents of culture.

TABLE II reconstructs and depicts characteristic actions by the boards based on information gleaned from minutes of the meetings and reports of the State Arts Boards dating from the interwar period. Based on this data, we can distinguish four different roles that the boards de facto performed, reflecting the complex nature of the actions of the boards. Each of these roles encompasses a number of separate judgments that need to be carefully culled from the diverse arguments sometimes only implicitly there in the meeting minutes. In practice, the different roles overlap or are intertwined, but identifying them separately makes it possible to point out certain fundamental, constitutive presuppositions behind the seemingly individual and contingent decisions taken by the boards.

As **intermediaries** (see TABLE II), the boards were working in an in-between position, catering to both the professional associations in the fields they represented and the relevant governmental authorities. “The bipolar situation faced by the board poses a dilemma in which

the board must equally take into account the needs of the field and remain loyal to the government…" reported the Board of Drama in 1920. In this capacity, the boards served as a buffer between the state and the different fields they represented; in other words, they reduced the risk of direct collisions in the course of the interaction between the two sides.

On the one hand, it was imperative for the boards to remain loyal to the government if they were to attain and maintain their power position; on the other hand, they had to safeguard their own autonomy to preserve their credibility and legitimacy vis-à-vis the different fields they were to represent. There were several occasions when one or more of the boards protested against the edicts and decisions of the Ministry of Education. Ultimately, such protests failed to substantially change anything and the boards continued to operate as before. At the level of board membership, the exigencies of this role as an intermediary manifested themselves with the force of a quasi-criterion influencing the selection of individual members. Not everyone was suitable for membership; one had to be acceptable for both the art field, the state (ministry), and the sitting members of the board. The ability to respond to multiple interests was obviously circumscribed by the power relations and social networks of the individuals in question. This was seen explicitly in 1922, when the Board of Architecture resigned en masse after the Finnish Association of Architects had failed to back the Board's decision to re-elect one of its current members, proposing instead a nominee of its own. Eventually, all the original members (except the contested one) were reappointed to their positions when a compromise candidate suitable for all parties was found.

The boards, however, did not merely serve as a buffer facilitating the interaction between the state and the different arts fields; they also controlled this interaction. In practice, they were able to demarcate and stand guard over the boundary line between the two parties. By

deciding whom to let in and whom not (strategies of inclusion/exclusion), the boards had the power to keep certain views (groups) out of the sphere of the ”official cultural policy.” In this way, their work reflected the role of intellectuals as important subjects in the development of ideologies, and as actors affected in turn by their own socio-political context, thus inviting the question of exactly who or what it was that became endorsed through their actions.

The boards effectively used their power to select the worthy ones from among all the applicants striving to attain a legitimate standing in the field through the “official endorsement” by the boards. In this way, the boards acted as **gatekeepers** (TABLE II). This legitimating function the boards’ actions was linked to hegemonic projects affecting the broader society. The level of artistic achievement attained could be played down in the interest of promoting a particular worldview. As observed at one of the boards, “these works of art might not meet all the standards of high quality, but…their patriotism and pedagogical significance more than compensate for their deficiencies” (Board of Literature, 1920).

The arguments expressing concern for popular taste provide a good example of the two-sidedness of this situation. The boards were engaged in a mission to civilize the masses, with art education offering one way of doing this; but at the same time, the view of culture they represented in public was but a particular one (their own). Gatekeeping in this fashion was carried out on at least three different levels: the boards could effectively demarcate the boundaries of the art world (assert the validity of their own art form); but they could also engage in political demarcation (often by arguing for ”pure art”) and in the demarcation of the concept and the contents of the nation (“Finnishness”). Here the background of the board members is of foremost importance, bearing in mind that the politics behind the actions

cannot be separated from the persons responsible for these actions (cf. Palonen 1989; Palonen & Walker 2003).

In addition, the State Arts Boards were also **representatives** and **supporters** of their designated fields (TABLE II). The boards each strove to sponsor their own art forms, as opposed to others competing for the same resources. On one side of this role we can thus see a vested interest, evident in statements like "The board has shown that, as regards state pensions, actors are in a much worse position than, e.g., musicians and authors" (Board of Drama, 1921). As representatives, the boards worked together with the associations. For example, the associations (later on also institutions) in the field had to be consulted before the nomination of (some of the)[14] board members could be confirmed. The relationship could be sometimes more intimate, sometimes more distant, depending on the standing of the association. In this way, the role the boards had as representatives and supporters partly overlapped with their function as gatekeepers: for example, in 1922 the Board of Music stated that it could not favour subsidies for the Workers' Music Association because the association did "not meet the artistic standards [expected of it]."

Due to the complexities inherent in their role, the boards were able to increase the autonomy of their actions on behalf of the art forms they represented. Usually the board decisions fell more in line with the aims of those associations that were represented among the board members than those that were not. There was thus also pure professional self-interest involved. Each of the boards drew upon its prestige to promote its own reference groups in the statements it issued, and it is possible to see a clear connection between the particular conception of art the board stood for and a rather particularistic kind of collective self-interest

[14] Two of the members in each Board had to be artists, and the "leading association(s) of the art form in question" would have to be consulted in connection with their appointment.

exhibited by an occupational group. For instance, in 1918 all of the members of the Board of Music were representatives of classical music (or, as they themselves put it, “higher art music”), which was to be performed by symphony orchestras only.

The boards, furthermore, made decisions that had rather more directly political consequences, thereby acting as **politicians** (TABLE II). They made initiatives and issued statements taking positions in ongoing discussions involving their own fields. In their role as politicians, the boards could openly propose actions concerning policy practises and instruments as well as art institutions. Take, for instance, the matter-of-fact observation that “a request was submitted to the Council of State urging it to take measures to build an art museum in Helsinki” (Board of Visual Arts, March 23, 1927). The boards could also move from practical questions on to a more openly ideological level, for instance to buttress the prevailing conception of the nation: “First and foremost we must recognize the work done by the applicant in promoting the culture of our kindred nations” (Board of Literature, 1933). Acting in this fashion, to be sure, tells much of the context of the time: the board resolutions show us that, in the 1920s and the 1930s, it was possible to adopt an openly patronizing attitude towards the “lower classes” and see a “unique patriotic responsibility” in the call to foster close relationships between “kindred nations.” Such statements give away something of the worldview represented by the board members.

Conclusion

We can locate the beginnings of the state’s art administration and the origins of the State Arts Boards in Finland in the relationship between the state and civil society in the 19th century. Many instruments created at the time are still today elements of public cultural policy.

Through the State Arts Boards, intellectuals exerted their power of expertise to demarcate the art world. One can see them acting as agenda setters for the art forms represented by the boards. At the same time, these intellectuals acted in their capacity to strengthen the respectable standing of these same art forms with respect to other ones. The actions of these intellectuals can be interpreted as form of exercising judgment: the relatively small group of individuals in question wielded considerable influence on (1) what was considered to be art and (2) what was ”good” art deserving of public support. Many of the members of the expert boards were in a position to define artistic quality also in larger contexts and in public discussion, in their role as academics, critics, and representatives of art associations. Moreover, many of the expert board members were also board members in private foundations providing financial support to the cultural sector.

The intellectuals were acting at a certain historical conjunction, each of them with personal affiliations bearing on his or her actions. It is possible to find a political dimension in any given practise (cf. Palonen & Walker 2003). It is also possible to interpret certain actions as choices in a pluralistic reality. If action is understood in this Arendtian fashion, it is also bound to be political by nature.

The role of civic associations and organizations has been important in the practice of democracy, and politics has played a major role in how ‘culture’ has been defined. Here it was a matter of “inventing the tradition” for the Finnish nation, of hegemony and of legitimating the interests of some of the actors (Sokka & Kangas 2006). The early phases of Finnish cultural policy could be defined as a period of nation building, with the civilizing mission and national prestige growing increasingly important to the interests of a ‘nation’ groping after independence (Kangas 1999, 2004). In this article, we have more specifically

wanted to shown how the actions of a group of intellectuals contributed to the maintenance of hegemony and power over the contents of certain specific areas of social life. To this end, we looked at some of the arguments employed in the service of this goal.

It has been said that in spite of this power of the State Arts Boards, the measures adopted to attain specific artistic goals still had to make their way through the screen of the party politics, given the position the boards were in as governmental organs (Autio 1986, p. 225). For example, it has been claimed that in the 1920s, the Expert Board of Drama made a conscious effort to weaken the conditions for working class theatre groups (Niemi 1982, p. 363). The board resolutions show that at least a certain spirit of opposition existed towards working class theatres, but that the arguments used to express this opposition were not often explicitly political; the politics operated behind the argument for ”pure art,” defined to fit the tastes of the bourgeoisie.

Controlling the contents of the art forms they represented, the boards were in a position to determine who was assigned an officially legitimate status as an artist. The total number of members in all the boards combined was rather small; thus, these intellectuals formed what was basically a small circle in which practically everyone knew everyone else. The board appointments were usually for a long period, and the selection of new members was made based on the consent of the sitting members. This way, there were no drastic changes in the board decisions over time, and the power remained entrenched in the hands of a small group of likeminded arbiters.

The boards did follow the developments in their respective fields closely, keeping an eye on the new trends and the avant-garde, however ultimately opting to side with caution when it

came to legitimating new contents. They remained suspicious about the social and political standing of the applicants. Thus, they could be characteristically rigid when it came to the socio-political context, at the same time as they showed a capacity for flexibility and innovativeness in artistic issues that conformed to the worldview of the board members.

The function of the expert boards has remained practically unchanged to this day. Above, we referred to four different roles that we detected in the way the boards and the intellectuals working within them functioned: that of (1) an intermediary, (2) a gatekeeper, (3) a representative and a supporter, and (4) a politician. Through our analysis of these roles of the expert boards, we showed that the boards did not function outside of their own socio-political context, or purely based on the maxim "art for art's sake." We further examined the way in which certain social categories were able to influence the shape and form obtained by, or assigned to, 'culture'. The actions of the boards can be analyzed as political choices or political judgments. The question of hegemony and power, at least on a symbolic level, was never absent from the work of State Arts Boards. The decisions the boards took always benefited some interests more than others; and at any rate, to the extent that one, as an intellectual, acts in the public sphere, the presence of ideologies and politics is always implicitly there.

Interesting questions for further research would ensue from an in-depth investigation into (1) the nature of the judgments made in these boards (cf. Benhabib 1988, Steinberger 1990, Parvikko 2003); (2) the backgrounds of the members compared to the ideological standings they represented and the positions they held in the field; and (3) thereby the subtle mechanisms through which societal structures are culturally constructed, maintained, and re-constructed.

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Tables

TABLE I: The First Chairmen of the State Arts Boards in 1918				
MUSIC Professor Robert Kajanus	**ARCHITECTURE** Professor Eliel Saarinen	**LITERATURE** Professor W. J. Söderholm	**VISUAL ARTS** Professor J. J. Tikkanen	**DRAMA** Professor Yrjö Hirn

TABLE II: The Roles of the State Arts Boards

ROLE	ARGUMENT(S)
• **INTERMEDIARY**	* "The bipolar situation faced by the board poses a dilemma in which the Board must equally take into account the needs of the field and remain loyal to the government…" (Board of Drama, 1920) * The boards wanted to keep the appointment of new members in their own hands to a maximum extent possible. * In May 1921, the Board of Visual Arts turned down a parliamentary proposal to "simplify" the structure of the boards. * The members of the Board of Architecture resigned en masse in 1922 owing to the failure of a government ministry to heed the board's opinion in a matter involving appointment of new members. * "Neither do the artist's [Reino Partanen]…works…meet the criteria of high artistic standards nor can the Board place its trust solely on references involving foreign authorities." (Board of Visual Arts, April 14, 1924) → The Ministry's subsequent decision to nonetheless award the grant to Partanen caused the resignation of three board members. * "The Board wishes to express its concern on account of the actions the Ministry has taken to amend the previous resolution of the board …" (Board of Drama, 1930)
• **GATEKEEPER**	* "… many churches are still being built that provide a model with a ruinous effect on people's taste..." (Board of Architecture, 1919) * "These works of art might not meet all the standards of high quality, but…their patriotism and pedagogical significance more than compensate for their deficiencies…" (Board of Literature, April 9, 1920) * "… subsidies only ought to be given to visual artists proper." [concerning subsidies for unestablished art forms] (Board of Visual Arts, May 21, 1921) * The Board of Music did not support subsidies for the Workers Music Association because it did "not meet the artistic standards" expected of it by the Board. (Board of Music, 1922) * "This [a grant for the artist Väinö Aaltonen] would constitute a recognition for…an artist to whom his fatherland remains indebted…" (Board of Visual Arts, April 9, 1924) * "This Board does not consider photography as belonging to the visual arts represented by it…" (Board of Visual Arts, March 23, 1934)
• **REPRESENTATIVE** and **SUPPORTER**	* "The Board reminded that…the needs of art music are more pressing than those of other art forms, which should be taken into consideration…" (Board for Music, 1919) * "In the statement [concerning subsidies to theatre], the

	Board noted that it could not count workers' theatres among the professional theatres." (Board of Drama, 1921) * "The Board has shown that, as regards state pensions, actors are in a much worse position than, e.g., musicians and authors." (Board of Drama, 1921) * "The Board cannot…deviate from the principle of *not* withholding subsidies from those [theatres] which have already been receiving them in previous years." (Board of Drama, 1922) * "Actions were discussed that should be taken in response to newspaper articles jeopardising the position of architects working in construction business." (Board of Architecture, January 11, 1932)
• **POLITICIAN**	* "…Finland ought to join the international Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works…" (Board of Literature, October 15, 1918) * "The Board of Architecture should draw attention to the whole field, not just specific artistic questions…" (Board of Architecture, 1919) * "…the Viipuri Art School…teaches its students, especially those coming from lower classes, to recognize good taste…" (Board of Visual Arts, April 7, 1922) * "…A request was submitted to the Council of State urging it to take measures to build an art museum in Helsinki." (Board of Visual Arts, March 23, 1927) * "Finland has a unique…patriotic responsibility to cherish its close cultural ties with its sister nation Estonia." (Board of Visual Arts, October 26, 1928) * "There was a discussion concerning the lack of public competitions for designers of new buildings." (Board of Architecture, January 15, 1931) * "… first and foremost we must recognize the work done by the applicant in promoting the culture of our kindred nations." (Board of Literature, May 9, 1933) * In 1938 the Board of Architecture took the initiative of introducing a[n originally Swedish] model according to which 1 % of the total cost of each new building would be expended in art acquisitions.